



Arsenal striker Robin van Persie (L) goes airborne to shoot and score the opening goal past Tottenham Hotspur defender Ledley King (C) during their Premiership encounter at the Emirates Stadium on Saturday.

Arsenal shatter Spurs

AGENCIES, London



Arsenal swept aside Tottenham on Saturday as two goals from Robin van Persie inspired a 3-0 victory over their north London rivals at the Emirates Stadium.

Arsene Wenger's side moved second in the Premier League table thanks to their first win against Spurs since December 2007, although they will be passed by Manchester United if the champions avoid defeat against Blackburn later on Saturday.

The Gunners had been frustrated for much of the first half but shattered Spurs with two goals in a minute just before the break.

Dutch striker van Persie opened the scoring in the 42nd minute when he turned in Bacary Sagna's cross at the near-post.

Tottenham were still recovering from that blow when Gunners captain Cesc Fabregas stole possession from the re-start and surged through the visitors' defence before sliding his shot past Heurelho Gomes.

Van Persie piled on the misery for Harry Redknapp's team in the 60th minute.

Referee Mark Clattenburg waved play on after Benoit Assou-Ekotto fouled Eduardo and, as Tottenham's defenders stood and watched, Sagna crossed for Van Persie to deflect the ball home from close-range.

"It's difficult to judge just how good this Tottenham team is but they certainly have potential and they have a big, talented squad," wrote Gunners boss Arsene Wenger in his programme notes.

Unfortunately for Harry Redknapp, three of his most attacking talents were unavailable as Luka Modric and Aaron Lennon were injured and Jermain Defoe suspended - so the Spurs boss chose to match Arsenal's formation and play Peter Crouch up front on his own and Robbie Keane on the left.

The plan worked well initially, with the home fans starting to get restless in frustration

until the two goals in as many minutes just before the interval.

Spurs did not create much themselves but limited their rivals to half-chances, aside from when Ledley King's tackle on Andrey Arshavin fell for Fabregas with most of the goal to aim for. Even then Heurelho Gomes threw himself to his left to save the effort and grab the rebound from Nicklas Bendtner's toes.

Keane's pre-match comments suggested Spurs' squad was as good as Arsenal's, although their gameplan relied on stifling Wenger's side through hard work and punting the ball forward to Crouch.

Former Arsenal winger David Bentley, predictably jeered throughout, typified the work ethic. He snapped at heels on the right flank and was fortunate not to receive a booking when he cynically tripped Thomas Vermaelen, with referee Mark Clattenburg happy to keep his cards in his pocket during a feisty opening.

Clattenburg was referee during Arsenal's last defeat, seven weeks ago at Manchester City when Emmanuel Adebayor kicked Van Persie. Despite dropping points since, Arsenal have shown massive improvement since that match and eventually they came good against Spurs.

It emerged during the interval that the Spurs bench complained to stewards about the behaviour of Arsenal fans near the dug-out.

Tottenham "died" after Arsenal scored their first goal in the north London derby, according to man of the match Robin van Persie.

"They played with the right attitude, good spirit," he said. "It was a tight, tough first half hour, but from the moment we scored the first goal they died basically."

Van Persie said Fabregas' strike had more to do with his ability than Spurs' defensive frailties.

"(It was) his brilliance," said the Holland striker. "Straight from the kick-off (Wilson) Palacios lost the ball, he went past Palacios and through Ledley King. To do that you need a lot of technique."

C'Ron wants Rooney

Football

SOCCERNET

Cristiano Ronaldo says he would love to see his former Manchester United team-mate Wayne Rooney follow him to Real Madrid, and that the England star has all the qualities to be a raging success in Spain.

Ronaldo left Old Trafford in the summer for a record £80 million fee to complete a dream move to the Spanish giants, following in the footsteps of former United stars Ruud van Nistelrooy and David Beckham in recent times. Now Ronaldo thinks Rooney should walk the same path.

The Portuguese winger immediately impressed with Madrid scoring nine goals in seven games before suffering an ankle injury which has kept him on the sidelines for the past

month. And while he admits Rooney is unlikely to leave England any time soon, Ronaldo believes the 24-year-old would fit in at the Bernabeu.

"Wayne would be a sensation out here. I think we could do with Rooney to help us out," Ronaldo told The Sun. "He would be brilliant if he came. This is the ideal place for the world's best players and there's little doubt he is one of them."

"Wayne has all the skill and determination you need to make a fine career here. He has shown just how good he is over the last few years in England. And there's no doubt he would be the same sort of player in Spain. It would be lovely to see him here one day at Real Madrid."

"I realise it would take a lot for him to move from England. He loves the country, he loves Manchester and he is a Liverpool boy. And United is a good club for him. But you never know what could happen in the future."

No spitting please

Football

AFP, Bucharest

The Romanian Football League on Saturday called on players not to spit pitchside amid fears of potentially spreading swine flu.

"Following information linked to the spread of the H1N1 virus the League is recommending that officials of top flight clubs ask players and technical staff no longer to spit on the grass nor expel water used to rinse out their mouths," the statement said. "We suggest that coaches unable to desist (from spitting) wear a protective medical mask," the League went on, adding, with a hint of irony, that they could also use a sealable receptacle for expelled saliva.

The League statement came at the end of a week which saw Romanian health authorities order the first school closure in the country after discovering 20 cases of swine flu among pupils in the northeastern town of Iasi.

More than 400 swine flu cases have been registered in Romania, none fatal.

Swine flu has become an increasing concern in football with last week's French first division

clash between Paris Saint-Germain and Marseille postponed after three Parisian players were diagnosed with the ailment.

Saturday's second division French rugby match between Lyon OU and Tarbes was also called off after five Tarbes players were diagnosed as showing symptoms. Top flight side Castres had two matches postponed earlier in the season.

Spanish second division team Real Betis requested Thursday that its game Sunday be postponed after 13 players became sick with the virus, which has also hit English Premier League sides Blackburn Rovers and Bolton.

However, UEFA said Friday that European matches would go ahead as scheduled as long as clubs had sufficient fit players, barring any major logistical problem for local authorities.

The body made the statement ahead of Wednesday's Champions League match between Dynamo Kiev and Inter Milan in the Ukrainian capital.

Ukraine had earlier confirmed its first swine flu deaths, prompting Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko to order schools and cinemas closed and ban public gatherings for three weeks to contain the spread of the virus.

Moyes's silent protest

Football

SOCCERNET

David Moyes has revealed he chose not to address the media following Everton's Carling Cup loss against Tottenham on Tuesday because he was unhappy about his side's fixture congestion.

Having lost 5-0 at Benfica in the Europa League on Thursday and 3-2 at Bolton on Sunday, Everton's defeat at White Hart Lane marked their third away match in six days. Moyes did not attend the press conference that followed the Carling Cup game and has now revealed that it was his form of protest against the timing of that fixture.

"It would have given us an opportunity to recover the players," Moyes said. "That's the normal sort of thing you might do - play Saturday then Tuesday or Sunday then Wednesday. That would be the normal recovery time for most teams to make it relatively fair, and it wasn't fair. Tottenham had the chance to play on Saturday and we had to play on Sunday and then Tuesday."

"People have said that I'm whinging about it. I hope I'm not. When I tried not to talk about it, it wasn't to affect the media in any way. It was my only chance to put over a point which wasn't getting heard by the people who were organising the tournament.

"The hardest part was that I would have liked

to have given the Everton supporters some information about the team and my feedback on the game after it, so I hope I have in no way offended them, but some way we had to try and get heard - or not heard in this case - and I thought the best way to do it was to give the competition no credit by speaking about it.

"We are trying to battle on all fronts and get an English club through in Europe, but the authorities decided it was not worth putting us on a Wednesday night."

Everton have had a difficult start to the season, with Mikel Arteta, Phil Jagielka and Phil Neville among the players to have suffered significant injuries, and the club are currently 14th in the table. Moyes remains optimistic that a home victory against Aston Villa on Saturday could turn things around, though, after draws against Wolves and Stoke in their previous games at Goodison Park.

"We're okay - obviously we're sore and disappointed that we didn't do better in the games," Moyes said. "I think there were some mitigating circumstances in it, but we don't hide behind excuses here. We take it on the chin and we get on with it. It's not been the best week but we'll do something about it. We're always looking for a good result and if it can turn your fortune then that is what we would like it to do."

"This week has not been particularly good and we were disappointed, but probably the bigger disappointment was that we didn't take

Diego recalls Cambiasso

INTERNET, undated

Argentina coach Diego Maradona has called-up midfielder Esteban Cambiasso for the first time ahead of next month's international friendly against Spain in Madrid. Cambiasso, 29, had been a regular for Argentina, winning 45 caps for his country before Maradona took charge of the national team last November.

The Inter Milan midfielder was overlooked for the final eight games of a stuttering 2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa qualifying campaign, during which Maradona came under increasing pressure for his high rotation of players. Argentina only secured their place at next summer's finals with a 1-0 win over Uruguay in their final game.

Cambiasso is joined in being recalled to the national team by Real Madrid's Fernando Gago and Atletico Madrid's Maxi Rodriguez, both of whom missed the crucial match in Montevideo.

Maradona, who turned 49 on Friday, also sprung a surprise by including uncapped left-back Cristian Ansaldi, who plays for Russian champions Rubin Kazan.

Argentina meet Spain in their friendly at the Vicente Calderon in Madrid on 14 November.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Sergio Romero (AZ Alkmaar/The Netherlands), Mariano Andujar (Catalonia/Italy)

Defenders: Fabricio Coloccini (Newcastle United/England), Martin Demichelis (Bayern Munich/Germany), Gabriel Heinze (Marseille/France), Nicolas Pareja (Espanyol/Spain), Cristian Ansaldi (Rubin Kazan/Russia)

Midfielders: Jonas Gutierrez (Newcastle United/England), Maximiliano Rodriguez (Atletico Madrid/Spain), Javier Mascherano (Liverpool/England), Fernando Gago (Real Madrid/Spain), Esteban Cambiasso (Internazionale/Italy), Angel Di Maria (Benfica/Portugal), Pablo Aimar (Benfica/Portugal)

Forwards: Lionel Messi (Barcelona/Spain), Gonzalo Higuain (Real Madrid/Spain), Carlos Tevez (Manchester City/England), Sergio Aguero (Real Madrid/Spain), Ezequiel Lavezzi (Napoli/Italy)

Schalke to sell stars

AFP, Berlin

Schalke 04 coach Felix Magath admitted Saturday the cash-strapped Royal Blues are looking to sell some of their stars as the Bundesliga side try to reduce their wage bill.

Last Thursday, Schalke announced they had trimmed 25.5 million euros off their debts - reported to be in excess of 180 million euros - but their top names could be sold to

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Venus, Jelena in semis

Tennis

AFP, Doha

Defending champion Venus Williams reached the semifinals of the WTA Championships without hitting a ball on Friday as organisers avoided potential embarrassment over the event's scoring system.

Williams reached the last four - along with Jelena Jankovic and Caroline Wozniacki - despite losing two of her three round-robin group matches.

The American was assured of joining sister Serena in the semifinals when Svetlana Kuznetsova defeated Elena Dementieva 6-3, 6-2 in the concluding Maroon Group match.

On Saturday, Serena will face Wozniacki while Venus tackles Jankovic for places in the final of the 4.55 million dollar tournament.

Under a complicated qualifying system, Venus pipped Dementieva for a last four place despite both players having a win apiece and with the Russian

having defeated the American when they met on Tuesday.

Venus went through having won more sets.

In the White Group, Jankovic also made the last four, comfortably defeating US Open runner-up Wozniacki 6-2, 6-2.

Wozniacki then faced the possibility of being eliminated from the tournament despite having two wins.

However, the blonde Dane was saved when best friend Victoria Azarenka was forced to retire injured against Polish replacement player Agnieszka Radwanska.

Azarenka had led 6-4, 5-2 before becoming severely restricted by a right thigh and back injury which needed constant attention.

She was eventually forced to quit in floods of tears in an echo of Wozniacki's injury-hit win over Vera Zvonareva the day before.

Radwanska, who had in turn replaced an injured Zvonareva and goes home with 200,000 dollars for her day's work, was leading 4-1 in the final set when the Belarussian hobbled away.

"I feel so sorry for Victoria, because I know how she's feeling. It's never fun to pull out with an injury, especially in such a big tournament," said Wozniacki.

"But I'm in the semifinals and I'm happy about that. I've also been fighting on the court."

Jankovic came into her match far fresher than 19-year-old Wozniacki, the world number four.

The 24-year-old Serbian had spent just 95 minutes in total on court in two matches after Dinara Safina withdrew through injury from her second tie after only 12 minutes.

In a dramatic contrast, Wozniacki needed 5hr 48min to see off Azarenka and then Zvonareva, only surviving the clash with the Russian after

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Serbia star Jelena Jankovic celebrates after winning against Denmark's Caroline Wozniacki in the WTA Championships in Doha on Friday.

Senna back in F1

AFP, Abu Dhabi



The Senna family name will return to Formula One next season when Bruno Senna, nephew of the late three-times world champion Ayrton, races with the Campos Meta team.

The Spanish team confirmed Senna's place in the team in a statement on Saturday.

Senna, runner-up in the 2008 GP2 series, said he was very happy to secure finally a drive in Formula One after months of speculation and weeks of talks.

He confirmed the news in a brief statement in which he said: "I want to thank everyone. After weeks of negotiations, we were finally able to close a deal."

"I am very content and want to share my happiness with the fans. It's time to put my head down and prepare for next year. There is a lot of work ahead of me."

Campos Meta chief executive officer Enrique Rodriguez de Castro said: "For Campos Meta, it is an extraordinary honour to return the name of Senna to Formula One."

"The deal with Senna confirms and reinforces our prime objective of being not only the first Spanish Formula 1 team, but rather the first Iberian-American F1 team."

"The 2014 World Cup, the 2016 Olympics, and three drivers in F1 - it's clear that Brazil is coming!"

Ayrton Senna, who won the drivers world title three times, was killed in an accident at the 1994 San Marino Grand Prix.

Bruno Senna added: "I'm absolutely delighted to fulfil a lifetime dream. Now it is time to set new targets. The project that Campos Meta 1 developed is designed to succeed both on and off the track."

De Castro said he was surprised at the progress Senna had made from single-seater racing as a junior only a few years ago to reaching Formula One.

He added: "We have followed him closely since his early days in minor series and testified how quickly he developed his speed and skills at GP2 to become one of the most promising up-and-coming drivers of his generation."

It is astonishing how fast he is entering the F1 scenario after just a few years in motor racing."

IN BRIEF

Puyol extends with Barca

AFP, Madrid

Barcelona's longtime captain Carles Puyol on Friday signed a three-year extension to his current contract which will keep him at the Spanish and European champions until June 2013.

"I am very happy with the trust that my peers and the club has shown in me," the 31-year-old Spanish international defender told Barcelona's website after signing his new contract.

"The fans also played a key role in my decision to stay since they have constantly supported me, in the good times and the bad," he added.

The release clause of Puyol's new contract was set at 10 million euros (14.7 million dollars), the club said in a statement. It provided no other financial details.

Puyol rose through the ranks of Barcelona's youth team and has been a mainstay of the Catalan giants since making his debut for the club's first team in 1999.

Capello defends Doha trip

AFP, London

Fabio Capello insists England's trip to Qatar to face Brazil in a lucrative friendly next month is a worthwhile exercise.

The English Football Association have come under fire for agreeing to the fixture in the middle of a hectic period of Premier League and European action.

Stars like Wayne Rooney, John Terry and Steven Gerrard face a draining 6,500-mile round journey for a relatively meaningless match.

Manchester United boss Sir Alex Ferguson, while not specifically mentioning the Doha fixture on November 14, is frustrated by "the intrusion of a friendly game in some unknown country" in the midst of the club season.

But England coach Capello insists his players will return from international duty fresher than those from other countries.

Several teams are involved in World Cup play-offs and will play two matches during the break, while Germany, Spain, Italy and Holland are also scheduled to play twice.

Capello said: "I don't understand what this is all about. Most other countries are playing two games but we are only playing one match and returning the players on Sunday, four days earlier than the other countries."

"We did this out of respect to the players and their clubs at such a busy time in the fixture calendar."