

Everton stun Chelsea

AFP, London



Louis Saha had a night to remember by scoring both of Everton's goals in a 2-1 win over Premier League leaders Chelsea that threw the title race wide open again on Wednesday.

The Blues were left just a point in front after second-placed champions Manchester United held on for a 1-1 draw away to Aston Villa after playing most of the match a man down after Nani was sent-off.

Elsewhere Abou Diaby revived Arsenal's title bid with the only goal in a 1-0 victory at home to Liverpool.

At the other end of the table, West Ham and Wolves moved out of the relegation zone with 2-0 and 1-0 wins over Birmingham and Tottenham respectively to drop Lancashire duo Burnley and Bolton into the bottom three.

Saha, whose goals came either side of a missed penalty that would have given him a hat-trick, scored twice after Chelsea had taken the lead against an Everton side who came into this match on the back of a Merseyside derby defeat by Liverpool.

Chelsea went ahead after 'keeper Petr Cech's goalkick was flicked on by Didier Drogba and Florent Malouda lashed home a shot from 16 yards to give the visitors a 17th minute lead.

But Everton refused to lie down and equalised through Saha's header from US international Landon Donovan's 33rd minute corner after the French striker got in front of Terry.

Saha then saw a penalty, awarded after Ricardo Carvalho brought down Donovan, saved by Cech.

But he scored Everton's second 15 minutes from time when he again beat Terry, this time to a

long ball, before shooting through Cech's hands.

Arsenal, beaten 2-0 by Chelsea last weekend, bounced back thanks to Diaby's 72nd minute header from Tomas Rosicky's cross, to move within six points of the leaders.

Liverpool manager Rafael Benitez insisted his side should have been awarded an injury time penalty after Cesc Fabregas appeared to handle the ball while blocking a free-kick from opposing captain Steven Gerrard.

In Birmingham, Villa went ahead in the 19th minute when Carlos Cuellar headed into the top corner.

But four minutes later United were level when Nani's cross was volleyed back across goal by Ryan Giggs and went in off Villa's James Collins for the visitors' 10th own goal of the season.

However, United found themselves down to 10 men when Nani was sent-off for a two-footed challenge on Stiliyan Petrov.

West Ham gave their new owners David Gold and David Sullivan, previously in charge at Birmingham, something to celebrate when they scored on the stroke of half-time through Alessandro Diamante's superb curling free-kick.

The Hammers doubled their lead at Upton Park in the 67th minute when striker Carlton Cole dived to head home Julien Faubert's cross.

Wolves did the double over Tottenham with a 1-0 win secured by David Jones's 27th minute strike.

Blackburn saw off 10-man Hull 1-0 to leave the Tigers a point above the relegation zone after Martin Olsson's cross was turned into his own net by goalkeeper Boaz Myhill.

Hull's evening went from bad to worse when George Boateng was red-carded for an aerial challenge with Morten Gamst Pedersen.



Aston Villa defender Carlos Cuellar (C) celebrates scoring the opening goal against Manchester United during their Premier League encounter at Villa Park on Wednesday. Villa went on to hold United to a 1-1 draw.

PHOTO: AFP

Inter extend lead

AFP, Rome



Italian champions Inter Milan extended their lead at the Serie A summit to nine points after substitute Mario Balotelli struck a second-half equaliser to earn them a 1-1 draw at Parma.

Parma, who have slipped down the table after a strong start to the season, took the lead early in the second half at the Stadio Ennio Tardini through on-loan Manchester City forward Valeri Bojinov.

Balotelli - who angered coach Jose Mourinho a week ago at his reaction to being substituted - was introduced from the bench in response and he slammed home the equaliser barely two minutes after coming on.

The hosts finished the game with 10 men after Francesco Valiani was sent off with 18 minutes to play.

Inter missed out on the chance to build an 11-point advantage over second-place Roma but they are still on course for a fifth successive Italian title with 15 games of the season to go.

Parma, promoted from Serie B last term, climb one place to 12th.

In a game initially postponed due to heavy snow, Goran Pandev threatened early on for the visitors but his instinctive snapshot was palmed

around the post at full stretch by Antonio Mirante.

Inter enjoyed the lion's share of possession in the first half but they struggled to make their dominance count and were troubled on the counter-attack by the pace of French forward Jonathan Biabiany.

Mirante kept the scores blank shortly after the half-hour mark when he blocked a half-volley from Diego Milito after the Argentine striker had been picked out by a deep pass from Thiago Motta.

The hosts began to commit more men forward in the early stages of the second period and they were rewarded in the 54th minute.

Inter goalkeeper Julio Caesar reacted well to keep out Cristian Zaccardo's header from a corner but Bojinov was on hand to convert the rebound.

Mourinho responded by summoning Balotelli from the bench in place of Motta and almost immediately the substitute drew his side level, firing into the top corner after Lucio flicked on a corner in the 59th minute.

Parma's hopes of victory were effectively extinguished in the 72nd minute when Valiani picked up his second yellow card for a foul on Lucio, but on-loan Inter man Luis Jimenez spurned a late chance in injury time for the hosts.



Bayern Munich star Franck Ribery (L) celebrates his goal with teammate Philipp Lahm during their German Cup quarterfinal against Greuther Fuerth in Munich on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Ribery's instant impact

Football

AFP, Berlin

France star Franck Ribery made an immediate impact on his first start for Bayern Munich in more than four months on Wednesday as he scored in their 6-2 German Cup quarterfinal win over Fuerth.

The 26-year-old attacking midfielder, who had been out with knee tendinitis, was in sparkling form and set up Thomas Mueller for Bayern's first - the young German star was to score another eight minutes from time - in the fifth minute before scoring himself in the 61st minute.

Despite the final scoreline Bayern were not

at their best in the first half, with their second-division opponents drawing level and then taking a shock lead in the 40th minute.

However, Dutch international Arjen Robben put the German giants on level terms in the 58th minute before Ribery's goal finally extinguished their brave challenge.

Another second division side, Augsburg, did upset top-flight opposition on Wednesday as they beat Cologne 2-0, but Schalke's former German international striker Kevin Kuranyi made sure there was not a shock in his side's match as his goal was enough to see off third division Osnabruck.

Holders Werder Bremen qualified for the semifinals on Tuesday when they beat Hoffenheim 2-1.

Hull, Arsenal fined over brawl

AFP, London

Hull and Arsenal have been hit with fines of, respectively, 40,000 pounds and 20,000 pounds, following a mass confrontation between their players in a Premier League match at the Emirates in December.

Hull had admitted the charge while Arsenal contested it, but the Football Association's disciplinary commission upheld the case against both clubs, although the involvement of the home team's players was deemed less serious.

The melee, which involved 21 of the 22 players on the field, erupted after Arsenal's Samir Nasri appeared to tread on the ankle of Hull midfielder Richard Garcia late in the first half.

Hull boss Phil Brown subsequently slammed Nasri for what he regarded as a deliberate provocation while Arsenal's manager, Arsene Wenger, claimed the Hull players had over-reacted to a relatively minor incident.

Nasri and Hull's Stephen Hunt were both booked for their roles in the confrontation while Hull's Nick Barmby picked up a yellow card for continuing to remonstrate in the tunnel at half-time.

Arsenal took the lead shortly after the confrontation and went on to win the match 3-0.

Argentina edge Jamaica

AP, Buenos Aires

Martin Palermo and Ignacio Canuto scored late goals to give Argentina a 2-1 win over Jamaica in an international friendly on Wednesday.

Argentina's team featured few players expected to be included in their World Cup squad later this year in South Africa.

Jamaica opened the scoring with a header by Ryan Johnson early in the second half. The Caribbean side then concentrated on holding the lead, with most of their players settling back in defence.

Palermo equalized seven minutes from time and Canuto, who came on as a substitute in the final minutes, scored the winner in injury time.

Boca Juniors forward Palermo was one of the few players in the match expected to play a role in South Africa.

The match, featuring only players from the domestic Argentina league and absent of any Europe-based players, was another chance for coach Diego Maradona to look at talent. He has called up over 100 players since he took over as coach 15 months ago.

Terry flies to Dubai

Football

AFP, London

Troubled Chelsea star John Terry on Thursday boarded a flight to Dubai, where his wife has taken refuge from a media storm over the former England captain's reported affair with an underwear model.

Terry was stripped of the national team's captaincy last week following newspaper reports of an extra-marital relationship with Vanessa Perroncel, the former partner of England teammate Wayne Bridge, and other indiscretions.

The centreback has been granted a long weekend break by his club in order to facilitate what the Guardian described as his "date with the doghouse in Dubai."

Toni Terry, the mother of his toddler twins, could claim a huge chunk of Terry's current fortune and future income if she decides to divorce the defender, who earns 170,000 pounds a week at Chelsea.

Terry is reported to be determined to save his marriage and is hoping for a St Valentine's Day reconciliation with his long-term partner, whom he married in 2007.

The 29-year-old looked sombre as he was escorted to the plane at London's Heathrow airport shortly after 0830GMT, wearing blue jeans and a white, hooded top.

Chelsea have given Terry the weekend off as they are involved in an FA Cup tie against Championship

side Cardiff from which some of their top players would have been rested in any case.

Terry had performed well for his club in the first two matches he played after the news of his alleged affair broke, but there were signs that the strain of the last few weeks was beginning to take its toll during Wednesday evening's match at Everton.

Terry's mistakes contributed to both Everton goals in their 2-1 victory and Chelsea's assistant manager Ray Wilkins confirmed after the match that club boss Carlo Ancelotti had agreed to him taking a break.

"John will not play this weekend. Carlo is giving him a bit of time off," Wilkins said. "He will come back and prepare for our game against Wolves (on the 20th). They just had a little chat, John and Carlo, and decided that would be the best for all concerned."

Chelsea's management and supporters and Terry's team-mates have all rallied strongly behind the player with Ancelotti making it clear that the player's private life will have no bearing on his status at the club.

That was reflected in the way Wilkins played down the uncharacteristic lapses of concentration that allowed Louis Saha to claim both of Everton's goals on Wednesday.

"You have got to give Louis Saha credit - he is a very tough opponent to play against," said Wilkins. "John has been outstanding for us all season. If it was down to his mistakes it was the slightest of blips."

Terry may be hoping his wife takes a similar view of his conduct off the field.

Milan hope to rebound

AFP, Rome



AC Milan will be hoping to bounce back to winning ways at home to Udinese on Friday night in a bid to re-ignite their faltering league title aspirations.

Milan have not won in their last four matches in all competitions and have picked up only two points from their last three league matches.

That run also saw a shadow side beaten 1-0 at home by Udinese in the quarterfinals of the Italian Cup.

In fact Milan have lost their last three matches against the northerners, including a 1-0 reverse in Udine earlier this season.

In mid-January the seven-time European champions looked in rude health, through to the last eight of the Italian Cup, the last 16 in the Champions League and closing in on league

leaders Inter Milan, holding a deficit of six points but with a game in hand.

But their recent run has seen them slip to 11 points behind the champions, although still with a game in hand -- but a tricky one at that, away to Fiorentina later this month.

They desperately need a victory to cut the gap to eight points and give themselves some hope of pushing Inter down the straight.

All seemed lost following the 0-0 draw against Bologna last weekend, a second straight draw against lowly opponents, which left Milan 10 points behind their bitter city neighbours.

But the champions were held to a surprise 1-1 draw at Parma on Wednesday and while the title race is hardly back on, there is a glimmer of hope for Milan.

But with young Brazilian forward Pato still missing, the rossoneri lack both his cut and thrust and his pace up front.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 6



Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard (R) poses with a waxworks model of himself at Anfield on Thursday. The model, made by Madame Tussauds, will be displayed at the London visitor attraction alongside England teammates Wayne Rooney and David Beckham.

PHOTO: AFP

IN BRIEF

Raul keen on US move

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid veteran Raul is set to join the New York Red Bulls in the United States for next season, Marca sports daily reported on Thursday.

The 32-year-old striker, who is Real's all-time leading goal-scorer has already made it clear that he would be interested in running out his career in North America and the Red Bulls have expressed their interest in him.

Raul seldom starts for Real these days as 22-year-olds Karim Benzema and of France and Gonzalo Higuain of Argentina fill the positions up front.

Giggs sent for X-ray on arm

AFP, Birmingham

Manchester United midfielder Ryan Giggs has been sent for an X-ray on the arm injury he sustained in his side's 1-1 draw against Aston Villa on Wednesday.

Giggs injured himself in a clash with Steve Sidwell during the second half at Villa Park and held his arm in obvious pain.

The Welshman, who was replaced by Dimitar Berbatov, left the ground with his right arm in a sling and United manager Sir Alex Ferguson confirmed the need for an X-ray.

"We have sent Ryan for an X-ray to see if there is any damage," Ferguson said. "It is very painful but hopefully he is going to be all right."

United don't have a match this weekend, but Giggs still needs to make a quick recovery to be fit in time for United's Champions League first knockout round first leg at AC Milan on Tuesday.

Brazil WC winner Pecanha dies

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

Orlando Pecanha, who played for Brazil when they won the World Cup for the first time in Sweden in 1958 has died from a heart attack at the age of 74, the Brazilian Football Federation said on Wednesday.

Born in Rio de Janeiro in 1935, Pecanha was capped 34 times for his country and was regarded as one of Brazil's best ever defenders.

He started his career with Vasco de Gama in 1954 winning two league titles before moving to Argentina to play for Boca Juniors. He returned to Brazil in 1965 to play for Santos where he was a teammate of Pele.

Pecanha also played in the 1966 World Cup in England before hanging up his boots in 1970 at the age of 35.