



PHOTO: AFP

Everton midfielder Diniyar Bilyaletdinov scores a stunning equaliser against Manchester United during their Premier League encounter at Goodison Park on Saturday.

## Everton upset MU

AFP, Liverpool



Everton dealt a potentially telling blow to Manchester United's attempt to retain the Premier League title as David Moyes's side claimed a shock 3-1 win over the champions on Saturday.

Goals from Diniyar Bilyaletdinov, Dan Gosling and Jack Rodwell cancelled out Dimitar Berbatov's strike at Goodison Park and left United one point behind Chelsea, having played a game more than the leaders.

Berbatov gave United an early advantage with an emphatic finish but Bilyaletdinov levelled just two minutes later with a long-range drive for his seventh of the season.

Gosling touched in at the far post with a quarter of an hour remaining for Everton and Rodwell came off the bench to fire in Everton's third to inflict a sixth Premier League defeat of the season on United, who came back down to earth with a bump after their mid-week Champions League win over AC Milan.

It was also just Everton's second win over United in their last 30 Premier League matches.

Jonny Evans found life difficult in Milan and the United defender had another awkward moment when he was easily beaten by Leon Osman, only for the Everton midfielder to scuff his shot in the early moments.

Wes Brown was forced to head over his own bar to prevent Louis Saha reaching Bilyaletdinov's flick as Everton continued to

shade the opening exchanges.

Saha also hit a drive from 25 yards that Edwin van der Sar palmed away.

After 15 minutes, United pulled ahead through Berbatov. Wayne Rooney found Antonio Valencia with a cross-field pass and the Ecuador winger's cross was controlled by Berbatov and thumped in off the bar.

But Everton hit back just two minutes later with a strike of real quality.

A long ball forward from Johnny Heitinga was won by Saha against Evans, allowing Bilyaletdinov to hit a shot from 25 yards that left Van der Sar with no chance.

The Russian should have given Everton the lead when Landon Donovan lifted the ball through to Leighton Baines and Saha dummied the cross from the left-back, only for Bilyaletdinov to slice well wide from six yards.

South Korean star Park Ji-Sung then cut in from the left and had a low shot saved by home goalkeeper Tim Howard.

Donovan also wasted a great opportunity when Baines's cross from the left was not dealt with by Brown but the American failed to get a shot away.

From a Rooney lay-off, Darren Fletcher just failed to hit the target with a powerful effort from just outside the area.

In-form Rooney was struggling to influence the match against his old club and poked wide after he was played through by Fletcher.

Fletcher also glanced wide with a header from Patrice Evra's cross as United failed to

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

### IN BRIEF

#### Ribery to miss local derby

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich's French winger Franck Ribery will miss the Bavarian club's local derby with 17th-placed Nuremberg at the weekend after picking up a foot injury, coach Louis van Gaal said on Friday.

The 26-year-old returned from a four-month lay-off a fortnight ago but strained his left foot in Wednesday's Champions League 2-1 win against Fiorentina.

That game was the first time Ribery had completed an entire 90 minutes since his comeback.

"It's a preventative measure," Van Gaal said. "It's better that he doesn't play but he could feature in the game against Hamburg."

Bayern meet Hamburg, Dutch striker Ruud van Nistelrooy's new club, on February 28.

#### Drenthe out for several weeks

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid's left-sided Dutch midfielder Royston Drenthe will be out for between two and three weeks with an injury to his left leg, the club announced on Friday.

Drenthe, who can also play as a left-back, underwent scans following training on Friday.

The scans revealed a muscle tear in his left leg that will require "two to three weeks" to fully heal, according to a Real medical bulletin.

The 22-year-old Dutch international joined the Spanish giants in 2007 but has featured sparingly for Manuel Pellegrini's side this term.

He has made just four starts and three substitute appearances in Real's 22 league games to date.

#### Briatore quits QPR hotseat

AFP, London

Flavio Briatore quit as chairman of Queens Park Rangers (QPR) on Friday while the family of Indian billionaire Lakshmi Mittal increased its stake in the English second division strugglers.

The controversial Italian, who effectively co-owns the west London side with Mittal and Formula One supremo Bernie Ecclestone, had been at the helm at Loftus Road for nearly two and a half years.

A club statement on Friday said that Ishan Saksena, the current QPR chief executive and managing director, would succeed Briatore, who remains a shareholder.

## Mancini facing mini-crisis

AFP, Manchester



Roberto Mancini is facing his first mini-crisis as Manchester City manager ahead of his side's crucial home encounter with Liverpool at Eastlands here on Sunday.

The victors will take a significant step towards winning the battle for fourth place and Champions League qualification.

But Mancini's preparations for a game that represents the Italian boss's sternest test since taking over from Mark Hughes and in which the outcome could define City's season, have been hit by a series of setbacks.

Friday saw Patrick Vieira ruled out after the City midfielder was banned for three games by the Football Association (FA), having admitted a charge of violent conduct for a mid-week challenge on Stoke's Glenn Whelan.

"Patrick made a mistake, now we won't have him for three important games and it will be a problem," Mancini said.

Mancini will also be without star striker Carlos Tevez, who has decided to remain in Argentina to be with his wife after she gave birth prematurely, while Martin Petrov has suffered a setback in his recovery from a knee injury and will

be unavailable for up to another month at least.

Meanwhile, Mancini has also been forced to deny reports of a training ground bust-up with Craig Bellamy over the winger's recovery from a slight knee injury.

Mancini is confident his relationship with Bellamy is still intact, but does admit to having had a slight disagreement with a player who has been one of City's finest and most consistent performers this season.

"I read that I have a problem with Craig, I read that I shouted at him. Craig was training yesterday (Thursday), Craig was training two days ago," Mancini said.

"Craig is training this (Friday) morning. I have spoken with him face-to-face, manager to player, but I never shouted at him."

"These things can happen in your job, in my job, but I say everything face-to-face. I haven't a problem with him. If his knee is okay, he is available on Sunday."

"I did not send him away for three months. He is here training. This can happen between players and players, manager and players."

"I have spoken with him in my office but these are normal things that I speak about with one player. When we have a problem, we solve the problem face-to-face, but we don't have a problem."

## Blues players warned

Football

AFP, London

Chelsea's players have been warned of "severe disciplinary consequences" if their private lives tarnish the Premier League leaders' image, club officials revealed on Friday.

Blues chief executive Ron Gourlay and coach Carlo Ancelotti held a 10-minute meeting with the players this week in a bid to avoid a repeat of the kind of lurid headlines that cost John Terry the England captaincy and have once again seen Ashley Cole making front-page news.

"We had a meeting this week with the players," Ancelotti, who has been a staunch supporter of Chelsea captain Terry, said on Friday.

"It was a good meeting. Ron Gourlay was there as well. We spoke to the players and explained to them the behaviour that is required of the players in this club."

"Now they know very well what they have to do and what behaviour is expected of them when they're in the Chelsea shirt."

"We are interested, me and the club, in protecting the image of this club. Not only the players and the manager, all the staff -- the people who work in this club -- have to protect that image."

"That is one of the most important things, the image of the club. We want to carry that forward. And I think the players and all the staff know very well what they have to do."

"All the players were there. Ron spoke for the club, for the owner (Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich), and the players listened."

"It was a private meeting and I don't like to speak about what exactly was said. But, to confirm, the most important thing is that everybody has to pay attention to protect the image of the club."

Chelsea travel to Wolves on Saturday with a one point lead at the top of the table.

But they will be without England midfielder Frank Lampard (virus) and Brazilian defender Alex (knee injury).

"We have some injuries for the next game," said Ancelotti. "Lampard is not available as he has a virus and Alex is also out."

"Alex had an injury yesterday (Thursday) and he has a scan today on his knee. We have to wait to assess him, the Italian added."

Terry, who was given a break to spend time with his wife following revelations of an alleged affair with French lingerie model Vanessa Perroncel, the ex-girlfriend of former team-mate Wayne Bridge, is back with the squad.

"John Terry has returned and trained very well this week. He's able to play tomorrow (Saturday) and is in good condition," Ancelotti said.

Asked if Chelsea could win the title and deny second-placed Manchester United a fourth straight Premier League triumph, Ancelotti said: "Until the end of the season, we have 90 days. It depends on us what happens at the end of the season."

"If we do us very well in these 90 days, we can have a good result at the end of the season."

## FIFA slashes WC ticket prices

AFP, Johannesburg

World football body FIFA has cut ticket prices for South Africans in a bid to allow the hosts to fill the stadiums during Africa's first World Cup in June, media reports said on Saturday.

According to the Saturday Star, FIFA has slashed the price of at least 30 per cent of category 2 and 3 tickets, which cost up to 840 rand (110 dollars/80 euros), to 140 rand.

"We made it clear right from the start of ticketing that tickets would be recategorised at a later stage," the statement said.

The local FIFA organising committee could not be reached to confirm the announcement.

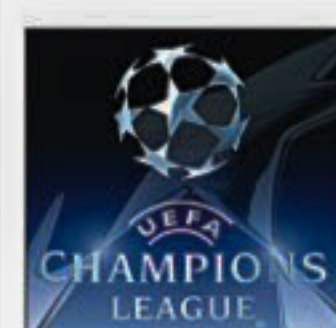
Local fans had expressed unhappiness about the high cost of tickets and the rigid online application process, which has resulted in low sales in the country.

On Thursday FIFA chief Sepp Blatter, said he was worried that ticket prices were scaring away fans for the world's largest sporting event and asked tour operators to cut costs to help fill stadiums in South Africa.

About 450,000 international fans are expected to visit the country for the June 11-July 11 event.

## Leonardo hits back

AFP, Rome



AC Milan coach Leonardo on Saturday hit back at club president and Italy Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's criticisms of his team.

Berlusconi slammed Milan for the way they played in Tuesday night's 3-2 Champions League defeat at home to Manchester United, a result that has made their chances of reaching the quarterfinals look remote.

But Leonardo backed his players and said that if he isn't welcome any more he would happily walk away.

"I'm always very calm, our agreements are very, very clear," he said. "We have a stable policy and I have no problems with that."

"If the president wants me to leave, he just needs to say the word."

And Leonardo made no attempt to hide the fact that he wasn't happy with Berlusconi's words.

"The most important thing we need to progress is calmness and these things don't help a team," he added.

"But it doesn't do any harm either because we have a mature team. I've been at this club for 13 years and the president only needs to say one word, one."

"I don't have contractual problems (i.e. a long and expensive contract making it hard for Milan to sack him), this club would never pay two coaches (sacked coaches usually remain on the payroll until they find another job and quit)."

"Against Manchester we were the better side and that warrants defending. We lost but those things need to be analysed with logic."

Milan travel to Bari on Sunday on the back of a run of just one win in their last six matches in all competitions.

They sit nine points behind Serie A leaders Inter Milan in third place but have a game in hand.

## Jose rubbishes Real link

Football

AFP, Rome

Inter Milan coach Jose Mourinho on Friday dismissed Spanish press reports linking him with the Real Madrid job next season.

The Portuguese is one of the most successful and sought-after coaches working in the game having won titles in three different countries and guiding Porto to the Champions League crown in 2004.

It means his name is often linked in the press with prestigious posts, but Mourinho had no intention on elaborating on those.

"I'm not getting involved in this game. There are two things that are difficult to accept in the world," he said.

"One is that I almost only talk in press conferences, I hardly ever give extra interviews."

"I know that for some this is hard to accept. I know that in England they want me to talk about Chelsea but I decided that I would only talk in press conferences."

"So dishonest newspapers invent stuff. The other thing that isn't accepted is that I don't have and I don't want a social life, I don't like it and on this I must insist on being respected."

Mourinho was in his usual



JOSE MOURINHO

rambunctious mood ahead of Saturday's visit of Sampdoria, continuing a succession of feuds that have developed between him and the hierarchy at other clubs.

Responding to reports that Napoli president Aurelio De Laurentiis said he would not want to hire the Inter coach, Mourinho said: "He couldn't afford me anyway."

And then turning on Juventus director Roberto Bettiga, who had told Mourinho to mind his own business when the Portuguese commented on a penalty Juve were awarded last week against Genoa for an incident that clearly happened outside the 18-yard box, Mourinho

added: "Only in Italy do you have a 25-metre area."

But looking ahead to the title race, in which AS Roma are seven points behind the champions while AC Milan are a further two back but with a game in hand, Mourinho insisted he was not interested in how those rivals fare in European competition.

"Roma are rivals in the league, not in Europe so I don't care how they played yesterday (a 3-2 defeat away to Panathinaikos in the Europa League) and I didn't see the game," he said.

"What interests me is that in the league Roma are doing well and are an opponent that I respect."

"Even when they were struggling (at the beginning of the season) I always said they were capable of winning the title, there's some very good players there."

"And then it seems to me that they are also a cunning club because when the transfer window is open they know how to cry and also how to say no."

"They cry and say they don't have any money when they want to buy a player and then when someone wants to buy one of their players they know to cry, they're a cunning club."

"Milan could still become one of our rivals in the Champions League. A quarterfinal between Inter and Milan would be wonderful because that would mean that we were both through."

"But Milan lost to a great team (Manchester United), not against a team of waiters."

"In the league they could go second and I have as much respect for Milan as I have for Roma."

"There's still everything to play for in the league and that's why tomorrow we'll be playing our best team and not thinking about Chelsea."

Inter, who have not lost at home since Mourinho joined the club, face a Sampdoria team on a four-match winning streak before hosting Chelsea in the Champions League on Wednesday.