



Manchester United star Wayne Rooney (foreground) celebrates his goal against Aston Villa with teammate Patrice Evra during their Carling Cup final at Wembley on Sunday. PHOTO: AFP

# Rooney delivers for MU

**Football**

AFP, London

Wayne Rooney came off the bench to ensure Manchester United retained the League Cup by beating Aston Villa 2-1 on a painfully bitter-sweet afternoon for his team-mate Michael Owen.

With England coach Fabio Capello watching from the stands, Owen had evoked memories of his glory days with a wonderful, instinctive finish to cancel out James Milner's early penalty for Villa.

But just as he might have been starting to entertain hopes of an international recall, a hamstring injury ended both his afternoon and any lingering hopes he may have had of making Capello's squad for the World Cup.

Gabriel Agbonlahor had scored the winner when Villa won 1-0 at Old Trafford earlier in the season and it was immediately apparent that his pace, unleashed from the left-side of his team's attacking trident, would again trouble a United defence missing Rio Ferdinand.

Within four minutes, Ashley Young's first-time pass had sent him clear of Nemanja Vidic, who resorted first to shirt-pulling and then to a desperate lunge to prevent his opponent from getting a shot away.

Vidic, remarkably, escaped sanction

but Milner ensured Villa took the lead by sending Thomas Kuszczak the wrong way from the resulting penalty.

With both sides displaying a refreshing commitment to attack, the tone had been set for an entertaining, open encounter and United were quickly back on level terms courtesy of a vintage piece of finishing from Owen.

The striker had already served notice that he was in the mood to catch Capello's eye when, having robbed Carlos Cuellar, he went past James Collins only to have his progression towards goal arrested by the Villa centreback's crude lunge.

There was however nothing anyone could do about his equaliser, which came after Berbatov dispossessed Richard Dunne 30 yards out.

The Villa defender recovered the uncharacteristic lapse with a superb tackle on the edge of the area but succeeded only in diverting the ball from Berbatov's toes into the path of Owen, who didn't break his stride as he steered a controlled low shot beyond Brad Friedel's right hand.

Milner tested Kuszczak with a drive three minutes later, but as the opening period wore on it was United who looked the more likely to add to their score, with much of their drive coming from the energetic forward thrusts of Park Ji-Sung.

The South Korean midfielder sliced one good chance wide after being teed up by

Berbatov's back heel and, having broken from deep inside his own half and combined deftly with Antonio Valencia, saw another effort blocked by Stiliyan Petrov before being denied by the woodwork in first-half stoppage time.

Valencia was again involved, skipping past Villa's would-be England left-back Stephen Warnock with an ease that will have been noted by Capello before delivering a cross that was deflected to Park 12 yards out.

His first-time shot struck the inside of the post and then Cuellar before finally being scrambled to safety.

By that stage Rooney had replaced the desperately unlucky Owen but it was Berbatov who continued to look the most likely to open up Villa, and another deft backheel from the Bulgarian gave Michael Carrick the chance to force Friedel into a fine save four minutes into the second period.

Villa's best chance of the second half fell to Young, who was unmarked as Berbatov's clearing header fell to him just inside the box but shanked his volley into the turf and wide of the target.

Three minutes later, Rooney applied the decisive blow with his 28th goal of the season, beating Friedel with a looping header from Valencia's cross after the Ecuador winger had combined neatly with Berbatov.

# Ribery fires Bayern

AFP, Berlin



France international Franck Ribery fired German giants Bayern Munich to the top of the Bundesliga on Sunday for the first time since winning the title in 2008, beating fourth-placed Hamburg 1-0.

Following a return to form under Dutch coach Louis van Gaal, Bayern caught up Bayer Leverkusen at the top of the table a month ago but since then, the two rivals have been neck-and-neck, with Bayern second on goal difference.

But Leverkusen blinked first this weekend, with their record-setting 24th game unbeaten counting for little as an heroic Cologne side kept them to a goalless draw at home on Saturday.

"This has been a great weekend for us," Bayern chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge said. "We expected Leverkusen to slip up, of course, and on Saturday they did us the favour."

On Sunday, Bayern had more chances than Hamburg in

their home stadium as former Chelsea winger Arjen Robben and midfielders Thomas Mueller and Bastian Schweinsteiger piled on the pressure.

It took until the 78th minute for Bayern to find the back of the net, however, with Ribery, in bright yellow boots, firing a bullet of a shot past Ivorian defender Guy Demel to beat keeper Wolfgang Hessel.

Hamburg sorely missed their new signing, former Manchester United striker Ruud van Nistelrooy, absent through injury, although Hamburg had a handful of good chances themselves.

The result put Bayern two points clear of Leverkusen at the top, but snapping at their heels, four points off the lead, are Schalke, who saw off Dortmund 2-1 on Friday.

Stuttgart maintained their fine recent run under coach Christian Gross by coming from behind to beat Eintracht Frankfurt 2-1 at home on Saturday, lifting them up to eighth in the table.

Stuttgart's Brazilian-born striker Cacau continued the form that saw him picked for the squad for Germany's World Cup warm-up friendly against

Argentina on Wednesday, scoring twice in four minutes just before the break.

In Sunday's other game, Hanover suffered their ninth straight defeat as defending champions Wolfsburg, fresh from their passage into the last 16 of the Europa League last week, won 1-0 through Bosnian midfielder Zvezdan Misimovic.

Hanover have now gone 13 games without a win, and now find themselves last but one in the table with only the hapless Hertha Berlin, one of the stars of last season, below them. Hertha went down 2-0 to Hoffenheim on Saturday.

Werder Bremen meanwhile capped a fine week by winning 2-1 at 10-man Mainz on Saturday to move to within a point of the European qualifying positions, with Germany midfielder Tim Borowski and substitute Sebastian Broedl the scorers.

Bremen booked their place in the last 16 of the Europa League with a 4-1 win at home to Dutch side FC Twente on Thursday.

Borussia Moenchengladbach drew 1-1 at home to Freiburg, while Nuremberg climbed one place to third-bottom after securing a goalless draw at Bochum.

# Zidane prefers death to apology

AFP, Madrid

France legend Zinedine Zidane says he would "rather die" than apologise to Marco Materazzi for his infamous headbut of the Italian defender in the 2006 World Cup final.

"I will ask forgiveness from football, from supporters, from the team..." he told Spain's El Pais newspaper published Monday.

"After the match, I entered the dressing room and I told them 'I'm sorry. It won't change anything, but I'm asking for your forgiveness.'"

"But as for him (Materazzi) I cannot. Never, never... It would be dishonourable... I would rather die."

After a verbal altercation, Zidane was sent off for headbutting Materazzi during the World Cup final in Berlin, which France eventually lost

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# Italy pick uncapped trio

AFP, Rome

Italy coach Marcello Lippi picked three new players for his squad to face Cameroon in a friendly in Monaco on Wednesday.

Palermo goalkeeper Salvatore Sirigu, Bari defender Leonardo Bonucci and Cagliari midfielder Andrea Cossu are the new faces.

**SQUAD**  
**Goalkeepers:** Morgan De Sanctis (Napoli), Federico Marchetti (Cagliari), Salvatore Sirigu (Palermo)

**Defenders:** Daniele Bonera (AC Milan), Leonardo Bonucci (Bari), Fabio Cannavaro, Giorgio Chiellini and Nicola Legrottaglie (Juventus), Mattia Cassani (Palermo), Domenico Criscito (Genoa), Christian Maggio (Napoli)

**Midfielders:** Andrea Cossu (Cagliari), Daniele De Rossi (AS Roma), Andrea Pirlo and Gennaro Gattuso (AC Milan), Claudio Marchisio (Juventus), Riccardo Montolivo (Fiorentina), Angelo Palombo (Sampdoria), Simone Pepe (Udinese)

**Forwards:** Antonio Di Natale (Udinese), Fabio Quagliarella (Napoli), Giampaolo Pazzini (Sampdoria), Marco Borriello (AC Milan)

# Marseille keep on track

AFP, Paris



Marseille kept alive their hopes of winning the French title on Sunday with an impressive 3-0 victory over

bitter but ailing rivals Paris Saint Germain which saw visiting fans boycott it because of what they saw as over the top security measures.

Goals by Hatem Ben Arfa, record-signing Lucho Gonzalez and Benoit Cheyrou handed Marseille an easy win which sees them in fourth place in the league, three points adrift of leaders Bordeaux, though they have played a game more than the champions.

Aside from Marseille coach Didier Deschamps,

another man who would have been delighted would have been France handler Raymond Domenech as he included both Ben Arfa and Cheyrou in his squad for the friendly against Spain on Wednesday.

Montpellier are on the same number of points, after beating Rennes 3-1 on Saturday, as Bordeaux but trail on goal difference and have played two more matches as the leaders game with relegation-threatened Le Mans was called off due to severe weather conditions.

Earlier Lille had missed a chance to keep the pressure on Bordeaux and Montpellier when they slipped to a 2-1 home defeat by Auxerre.

The Lille management probably would have preferred that the referee had his way and called the match off at its original kick-off time because

of a water-logged pitch.

However, it was judged to be fit for play at the delayed kick-off time and the hosts bore the look of a team that was still weary from its impressive 1-1 away draw with Turkish giants Fenerbahce on Thursday which saw them progress to the last 16 of the Europa League.

Auxerre's Roy Contout was the standout of the match as the 25-year-old French Guyana-born striker grabbed a double to give the visitors the three points and move them into sixth in the table, six points off Bordeaux, though having played a game more.

Lille's highly-rated teenage Belgian international midfielder Eden Hazard had pulled them level but the hosts were unable to repeat the trick once Contout had restored Auxerre's lead in the 72nd minute.

# Torres scores on return

AFP, Liverpool

Fernando Torres marked his first English Premier League start of 2010 by hitting the winner as Liverpool triumphed 2-1 in a bruising encounter with Blackburn at Anfield on Sunday.

Torres has endured an injury-interrupted season but the Spain striker made a telling contribution as Rafa Benitez's side maintained their push to qualify for next season's Champions League.

Keith Andrews scored a shock equaliser for Rovers from the penalty spot to cancel out Steven Gerrard's 10th goal of the season before Torres struck in the 44th minute - his 13th Premier League goal of the season - to leave Liverpool fifth in the table, one point behind fourth-placed Tottenham.

# Atletico crush Valencia

AFP, Madrid



Nine-man Valencia crashed to their fourth defeat of the season falling to a 4-1 loss at Atletico Madrid on Sunday with

the dismissal of Spanish international defender Carlos Marchena turning the game on its head.

Sevilla's scoreless draw with Athletic Bilbao meant Valencia could open up a six-point gap over their rivals and it looked promising when David Silva stroked in the opener on 20 minutes.

However, the turning point came on 29 minutes when Marchena was sent off for handling in the penalty area and Diego Forlan converted the penalty kick.

Valencia could not cope with playing two thirds of the match with one man less and Argentine Sergio "Kun" Aguero headed a second for Atletico on 77 minutes before Forlan

grabbed his second five minutes from time.

Valencia had also had Portuguese full-back Luis Miguel sent off in the 81st minute and Atletico made it three goals in 13 minutes as Jose Jurado scored in stoppage time.

Atletico climb to 11th with the win but are still eight points off the top six and 13 points off the top four.

Ten-man Sevilla moved to within three points of Valencia but that could not overshadow a disappointing 0-0 home draw against Athletic Bilbao on Sunday.

Sevilla were handicapped by the dismissal of Ivory Coast international midfielder Koffi Romaric on 51 minutes for hauling down his man after losing possession.

It was the first time since October that Sevilla had failed to score at home in the league and it was more points dropped at home but the only consolation they can take is that Valencia came home empty-handed from Madrid.

Earlier Villarreal bounced back from heavy defeats to Real Madrid and Wolfsburg with a 1-

0 home victory over Deportivo La Coruna on Sunday to move six points off the European places.

Villarreal had been thrashed 6-2 by Real in the league and then 4-1 by German champions Wolfsburg in the Europa League so needed a shot in the arm and got it with a clean sheet and three points thanks to Joseba Llorente's 35th minute goal.

A quickly-taken free-kick caught Depor off-guard as Ariel Ibagaza released Nilmar whose shot across goal was finished off by Llorente as Villarreal climbed to eighth.

Depor fall to sixth following their eighth defeat of the campaign with Real Mallorca climbing above them into fifth thanks to a late 2-1 comeback win at Valladolid.

An 83rd minute winner from Julio Alvarez clinched only Mallorca's second away win of the season to keep up their European push.

At the other end of the table bottom side Xerez drew 1-1 with Espanyol although the point does little for their survival hopes with the club 12 points from safety.

# Dunga sticks to his guns

**Football**

AFP, London

Brazil coach Dunga hopes Tuesday's friendly against the Republic of Ireland in London will underline his conviction that his side can be successful at the World Cup without Ronaldinho.

Dunga has gradually nudged Ronaldinho into international exile since taking charge of the Selecao in 2006 after opting to construct a team in his own non-sense image.

Instead of indulging the whims of supremely gifted but undisciplined stars like Ronaldinho, Dunga has put his faith in the more prosaic midfield talents of Felipe Melo, Gilberto Silva and Elano.

His decision has frustrated fans and pundits used to Brazil's more flamboyant

incarnations, especially since Ronaldinho, 29, has finally recaptured some of his old verve in recent months.

An influential display in AC Milan's Champions League defeat against Manchester United showed he can still torment the world's best defenders.

But Dunga has shown no signs of changing his philosophy and delivered one final snub to Ronaldinho when he left the playmaker out of the squad for this week's clash with Ireland at Arsenal's Emirates Stadium.

"I guess it's normal (for Ronaldinho's exit to cause controversy) because the players who are absent are always the best and everyone wants to talk about who is not part of the national team," Dunga said.

"None of this is new on the eve of a World Cup. The questions and answers continue to be the same. The pressure on

the coach of the Selecao is always very strong.

"Every region and newspaper would like to impose their own players, but I will go forward in my own way."

While Ronaldinho remained in exile for much of Brazil's successful campaign to reach the finals in South Africa, Dunga knows World Cups are not won on perspiration alone.

The man who captained Brazil to victory at the 1994 World Cup is fundamentally a pragmatist, but he will allow the likes of Real Madrid attacker Kaka and Robinho, the Manchester City forward on loan at Santos, to add some glitter to his team in Brazil's last match before the World Cup.

Another bumper crowd of close to 60,000 is expected in north London to see if Dunga's controversial snub of

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Milan striker Alexandre Pato (R) fights for the ball with Atalanta defender Thomas Manfredini (L) during their Serie A encounter at San Siro on Sunday. PHOTO: AFP