

Madrid derby Real's

AFP, Madrid



Real Madrid came from behind to defeat neighbours Atletico 3-2 in an enthralling derby at the Santiago Bernabeu on Sunday and nudge Barcelona off the top of the La Liga table.

Jose Antonio Reyes fired Atletico into a 10th minute lead but turned the game on its head with summer signings Xabi

and lie five points off the top six.

Real fell behind on 10 minutes as Atletico worked the ball cleverly from left to right and Reyes curled a first time shot into the corner.

Reyes used to play for Real and scored two goals on the final day of the 2007 season to help them win the league title with a 3-1 win over Real Mallorca.

Atletico looked increasingly dangerous before Real began to pose a threat themselves through Ronaldo and Higuain. Higuain looked destined to

second half with two goals in six minutes.

On 49 minutes Raul Albiol headed back and Alonso fired in an equaliser before the Spain star turned the architect for the second goal in the 55th minute. Liverpool team-mate Arbeloa who controlled well on his chest and slotted past de Gea.

Higuain hit the crossbar but a mistake from Tiago let him in on 62 minutes and the Argentine made no mistake.

A handball in the penalty area from Alonso allowed Atletico a route back into the game five minutes later with Forlan converting and the Uruguayan had an opportunity late on but fluffed his chance as the game finished 3-2 - the same scoreline as the first derby at the Vicente Calderon. Elsewhere new Sevilla coach Antonio Alvarez had a debut to forget as his side crashed to a 3-0 defeat at Villarreal, missing the opportunity to move above Real Mallorca into fourth.

Alvarez took over from Manolo Jimenez, sacked on Tuesday, but got off to a horrible start as the visitors fell two goals behind after just 17 minutes and, despite an improved second half, could not find a way back into the match.

Brazilian Nilmar created early goals for Giuseppe Rossi in the fourth minute and Joseba Llorente as Villarreal seized control before Robert Pires added an injury-time third.

Victory moves Villarreal to within two points of the top six.

score on 38 minutes after circling goalkeeper David de Gea close to the goal-line but Tiago made a fantastic last-ditch block.

Forlan then missed a chance for Atletico before Ronaldo wasted a golden opportunity shooting wide on the stroke of half-time.

Kings Cup finalists Atletico knew of the goal potential of the league's top-scorers Real and sure enough Real were ahead 10 minutes into the

RESULTS
Osasuna 1 (Pandiani 20) Almeria 0
Xerez 3 (Sanchez 1, Michel 35, Bermejo 71-pen) Valladolid 0
Espanyol 0 Sporting Gijon 0
Deportivo La Coruna 1 (Riki 71) Getafe 3 (Miku 21, 57, Ze Castro 32-og)
Villarreal 3 (Rossi 4, Llorente 17, Pires 90) Sevilla 0
Real Madrid 3 (Alonso 49, Arbeloa 55, Higuain 62)

Alonso and Alvaro Arbeloa proving two unlikely scorers before Gonzalo Higuain bagged his 23rd of the season.

Diego Forlan scored a penalty to give the visitors hope five minutes later but Real held on for a 15th consecutive league home win to move back above Barcelona on goal difference.

For Atletico their derby jinx continues and they have not beaten Real since a 3-1 win way back in October 1999 when Claudio Ranieri was in charge



Real Madrid striker Gonzalo Higuain (L) slots home the third goal during their Primera Liga encounter against Atletico Madrid at the Santiago Bernabeu on Sunday.

BORDEAUX V LYON

Blanc looks to rebound

AFP, Paris



Bordeaux coach Laurent Blanc has told his players to shrug off the disappointment of their League Cup final defeat and focus on Tuesday's Champions League quarterfinal first leg at Lyon.

Holders Bordeaux were defeated 3-1 by Marseille in Saturday's final in Paris and have also seen a nine-point lead in the French first division whittled down to goal difference by Montpellier.

Defeat in a physical match to Marseille was far from ideal preparation for their trip to domestic rivals Lyon and Blanc says the reigning French champions must get the loss out of their system as quickly as possible.

"We're lucky in a way because we have an important match on Tuesday in the quarter-finals of the Champions League," said Blanc, whose side have not reached this stage of Europe's top club tournament since 1988.

"We'll have to bounce back quickly, get over this disappointment and throw ourselves into this important match."

"If we had a week to prepare, we'd be able to assess everything. Even though it's always better to win before a match like

this, we haven't got the time. We have to get our heads in the right place."

Blanc made his priorities clear during Saturday's final by withdrawing playmaker Yoann Gourcuff and striker Marouane Chamakh with 20 minutes still to play and the score 2-0.

"We had planned certain things, but not necessarily in that way," admitted Blanc, who guided Les Girondins to the league title last season.

"I'd said it was the paradox of the final. We had to prepare for it while preparing for the next match at the same time."

"I had several options open to me. I chose one. We'll find out on Tuesday if I was right or not."

Bordeaux skipper Alou Diarra misses Tuesday's match at the Stade Gerland through suspension, while centre-back Marc Planus remains sidelined with a knee ligation injury.

Lyon, who eliminated Real Madrid in the previous round, geared up for the visit of Bordeaux with a 2-0 win over bottom club Grenoble on Saturday.

It was a welcome fillip for Claude Puel's side, after a damaging 2-1 defeat to Marseille in the league the previous weekend and an unedifying spat with Bordeaux over the scheduling of the match with Grenoble, which was originally due to take place on Friday.

"It's always better to win the match

before the Champions League," said Puel. "Even though we want to prepare ourselves well psychologically, your head can always be turned towards Tuesday's match."

"It's for that reason that we had to deal with Saturday's match well."

Lyon, seven-time French champions from 2002 to 2008, will be competing in their fourth Champions League quarterfinal but have never progressed to the last four.

They are unbeaten at home in the competition this season, though, and Bosnian midfielder Miralem Pjanic anticipates a tight first leg.

"It's particularly important not to concede any goals," said the 19-year-old. "We know what happens to us when we don't concede. It gives us confidence."

A late Chamakh header gave Bordeaux a 1-0 victory when the sides last met in the league in December and Pjanic concedes that his side are gunning for revenge.

"The game was very competitive and very even," he recalled.

"We would have deserved a draw. We want to get a kind of revenge against them but we have to remember that they are two very different matches."

The second leg in Bordeaux takes place on April 7, with the winners of the quarterfinal between Bayern Munich and Manchester United awaiting the victors in the last four.

IN BRIEF

Sven named new Ivory Coast boss

AFP, Abidjan

Former England manager Sven-Goran Eriksson was on Sunday named as the new coach of the Ivory Coast for the 2010 World Cup finals in South Africa.

"Sven-Goran Eriksson is the new coach of Ivory Coast. He will lead the team at the World Cup where his objective is to ensure an honourable participation," said a statement released by the country's football federation (FIF).

The Swede, who guided England to the quarterfinals of the 2002 and 2006 World Cup, takes over from Vahid Halilhodzic who was sacked after Ivory Coast were knocked out in the quarterfinals of the African Cup of Nations in January.

The African team are in Group G at the June 11-July 11 World Cup finals in South Africa along with Brazil, Portugal and North Korea.

Eriksson's last job in football was as director of football of English League Two side Notts County.

But he quit in January this year when the ownership of the club changed hands.

Kuranyi might be recalled

AFP, Berlin

Schalke manager Felix Magath revealed Sunday Germany boss Joachim Loew is back in contact with rebel striker Kevin Kuranyi, sparking speculation the hot-shot forward could earn a World Cup reprieve.

Kuranyi scored both goals in the 2-0 win over Bayer Leverkusen on Saturday which put them top of the Bundesliga ahead of Bayern Munich and made the ex-Germany striker the league's joint top-scorer.

The 28-year-old has been exiled from the Germany squad since walking out in frustration 18 months ago, but Magath says Loew and Kuranyi are now back on speaking terms.

"They spoke last week after, I believe, meeting each other by chance," Magath told German television channel DSF.

"As a trainer, one must constantly reconsider your decisions and sometimes change them. You have to do what is best for your team and Kevin is currently the best forward in Germany."

It remains to be seen whether Kuranyi earns himself a recall since walking out at half-time of Germany's World Cup qualifier win over Russia in October 2008 after having been left out of the matchdaysquad.

Loew later accepted Kuranyi's apology, but insisted he would never again pick the striker, who has 52 caps and 19 goals, for the national side.

Torres fires Liverpool

AFP, Liverpool



Fernando Torres was at his lethal best as he scored a sublime double to help Liverpool overwhelm Sunderland 3-0 on Sunday and keep alive their challenge for a Champions League place.

Rafael Benitez's side cut the gap between themselves and fourth-placed Tottenham to four points after totally dominating woeful Sunderland at Anfield.

Torres opened the scoring early on with a superb strike and, after Glen Johnson's goal had put the Reds in total control, the Spain forward notched his second with a cleverly taken effort on the hour.

Although Liverpool moved

above Manchester City into fifth place, they will drop back to sixth if City beat Wigan on Monday, while Tottenham also have a game in hand on Benitez's team.

Starts do not come much better than the one Liverpool had here as Daniel Agger forced Craig Gordon into a good block after just 90 seconds before Torres did what he does best after three minutes.

He picked the ball up on the left wing, cut inside and then tried his luck from the edge of the box, curling a wonderful shot right into the top corner for his sixth goal in just four games.

Benitez's men seem to have finally realised that being bold is their best policy at present and that was reflected in the ultra-aggressive early play as they completely dominated the visitors.

RESULTS
Burnley 0 Blackburn 1 (Dunn 20-pen)
Liverpool 3 (Torres 3, 60, Johnson 32) Sunderland 0



Liverpool striker Fernando Torres (R) celebrates one of his two goals against Sunderland during their Premier League clash at Anfield on Sunday.

In fact, this encounter could have been over before the 20 minute mark.

Torres missed one golden opportunity from less than six yards after great build up play by Steven Gerrard and Maxi Rodriguez.

Then Gerrard and Agger failed to hit the target when well positioned as Sunderland simply failed to cope with the home side's class.

Sunderland's top scorer Darren Bent, whose shot that deflected off a beach ball defeated Liverpool at the Stadium of Light earlier this season, could do little but watch as all the action unfolded at the other end of the field.

Liverpool thought they had doubled their lead after 25 minutes and were only prevented from doing so when Gordon pulled off arguably the save of the season.

Maxi brilliantly flicked a powerful header goalward and a goal looked a certainty until Gordon somehow got an arm to the effort and deflected over his crossbar.

However, Gordon could not do much soon after when Johnson's effort was deflected in off the thigh of Michael Turner for a finish that effectively sealed the points.

As half-time approached, Torres hit the post from 12 yards as Liverpool continued to overwhelm the visitors as they poured forward at will.

Immediately after the restart, Torres was denied by Gordon with his legs while Ryan Babel also blazed over the bar when well placed as Liverpool looked to build on their first-half dominance.

And that is exactly what they did after 60 minutes as Johnson opted to pass to Torres rather than shoot while well placed and his decision was more than justified when Torres calmly clipped the ball past Gordon to add more gloss to the scoreline.

Liverpool refused to sit back despite their impressive lead and they could have scored even more as Babel and Kuyt both shot over the crossbar when they should have done better.

Milan miss opportunity

AFP, Rome



AC Milan missed out on the chance to close the gap on leaders Inter Milan to a single point when they were held to a 1-1 home draw by Lazio at the San Siro on Sunday.

Earlier in the day Juventus brushed off an attack on their team bus by their own fans to beat Atalanta 2-1 at Turin's Stadio Olimpico and keep alive their hopes of a top-four finish.

Following AS Roma's 2-1 win over Inter on Saturday, Milan knew they could join the capital based team as they behind their city rivals if they won but the draw leaves them third and three points off top.

It was also their third straight league game without a win and was met with boos at the final whistle while, for Lazio, the point was a great boost in their fight against relegation.

Milan coach Leonardo insisted, though, that the title race is still wide open.

"It's a strange championship with many surprises in terms of form and results and it's very difficult to predict results," he said.

"In the seven matches remaining incredible things could still happen."

Despite missing the likes of Ronaldinho, Pato, David Beckham, Andrea Pirlo and Alessandro Nesta, Milan took the lead on 18 minutes.

French midfielder Mathieu Flamini broke into the Lazio area and collided with Aleksandar Kolarov.

The referee pointed to the spot with Marco Borriello converting high to Fernando Muslera's left.

Until that point Milan had been the better side with veteran Dutch midfielder Clarence Seedorf stinging Muslera's hands with a

Antonini almost made amends in the second half but his rasping shot came crashing back off the bar.

Borriello then missed a great chance to hand Milan the lead again halfway through the second period as he volleyed Filippo Inzaghi's cross over.

But Andre Dias missed an even better chance for Lazio, volleying over from inside the sixyard box.

Ignazio Abate had a great

bus at their hotel when they were attacked with bottles and eggs.

Fans, disgruntled at the team's dire form this season, also tried to prevent the bus from leaving and the police had to intervene.

Supporters also hurled abuse at the team, singling out in particular three players: Italy captain Fabio Cannavaro, French full-back Jonathan Zebina and Melo.

Sky TV images showed Zebina was slapped on the neck by a man as he went to board the bus.

But the day ended well as Juve closed to within three points of fourth-placed Palermo with a crucial victory, a fact not lost on coach Alberto Zaccheroni, particularly after two defeats in a row.

"I expected a reaction and I got one. We really wanted this win and now we have a week off to recharge our batteries ahead of our game against Udinese," he said.

"We gave everything we had, maybe even more, and we've earned three vital points."

Evergreen forward Alessandro Del Piero opened the scoring on the half hour with a brilliant trademark 25-yard free-kick into the top corner but former Juve forward Nicola Amoroso equalised on the stroke of half-time when the hosts were caught napping at the back by a ball over the top.

Felipe Melo scored the winner eight minutes from time with a looping back post header.

RESULTS
Chievo 0 Parma 0
Fiorentina 4 (Vargas 36, Gilardino 55, Santana 68, Jovetic 84) Udinese 1 (Pepe 41)
Juventus 2 (Del Piero 30, Felipe Melo 82) Atalanta 1 (Amoruso 45)
Livorno 1 (Tavano 85) Bari 1 (Allegretti 24)
Napoli 1 (Cannavaro 51) Catania 0
Sampdoria 1 (Guberti 48) Cagliari 1 (Nene 81)
Siena 0 Genoa 0
AC Milan 1 (Borriello 18-pen) Lazio 1 (Lichtsteiner)

chance for the hosts eight minutes from time when Kolarov's back header fell short of Muslera but having toepoked the ball off the goalkeeper's fingertips, Abate fired over as he fell backwards.

Juve's win was a rare bright moment for the players in a trying season and on a troubling day that began with them coming under attack from their own frustrated fans.

The team were boarding the

Henry loves Arsenal

AFP, Madrid



Barcelona's Thierry Henry admitted on Sunday that he'll always be an Arsenal fan despite hoping to deliver a knockout blow to his former club's Champions League hopes this week.

Barcelona travel to the Emirates Stadium on Wednesday for the first leg of their quarterfinal tie, with the 32-year-old French striker insisting it will be an emotional evening.

Henry has not had to face Arsenal since he joined the Spanish giants in June 2007 in a four-year deal worth 24 million euros.

"I will always be one. When Arsenal play and I can see the game you can be sure to find me in front of a television."

Henry was the English league's leading scorer on four occasions during his eight years in London. He was voted the best player in the Gunners' history in a recent online poll carried out on Arsenal's official club website.

"When you play in a team your aim is to give everything and after the people can look back and judge," he said when asked about the poll's results.

"I have a special relationship with Arsenal fans. It is like a trophy. A trophy of affection."

Henry added that it will feel strange facing his old teammates although he is likely to start the game from the bench.

"I am very emotional, but also keeping calm. It will be a strange game for me," he told Barcelona's TV station.