

PORTSMOUTH RELEGATED

# Hopes fade for MU

AGENCIES, London

Manchester United's hopes of retaining the Premier League title suffered a major blow as the champions were held to a 0-0 draw by Blackburn on Sunday.

Sir Alex Ferguson's side would have moved one point ahead of Chelsea with a win at Ewood Park but, with England forward Wayne Rooney sidelined through injury, they were unable to prise open Blackburn's stubborn defence.

The result left second placed United a point behind leaders Chelsea and the gap will increase to four points if the Blues win their game in hand at home to Bolton on Tuesday.

And Ferguson knows that the advantage is with the West London club.

"That's a fantastic result for them (Chelsea). They've got a home game against Bolton on Tuesday which they will be expected to win," he told Sky Sports.

After bowing out of the Champions League against Bayern Munich in midweek, this was another significant setback for United, whose best chances were wasted by Antonio Valencia and Dimitar Berbatov.

Elsewhere, Wolves edged closer to Premier League survival after grinding out a dour 0-0 draw against Stoke at Molineux.

Earlier on Saturday, Burnley claimed a crucial 4-1 win away at fellow strugglers Hull City to keep alive their slim hopes of survival this season in the English Premier League.

Two penalties from Graham Alexander and goals for Martin Paterson and Wade Elliot gave beleaguered manager Brian Laws a vital win.

Struggling West Ham United also improved their hopes of staving off relegation with a 1-0 win over Sunderland at Upton Park thanks to a goal from Ilan, a result which confirms Portsmouth's relegation to the Championship next season.

The win for Burnley was their first away from home all season and pulls them level with third-from-bottom Hull on 27 points, but both sides still remain four points from safety.

West Ham's victory moves them into 16th place on 31 points, ahead of Wigan Athletic on goal difference and with some vital breathing space ahead of the bottom three.

West Bromwich Albion joined Newcastle United in securing promotion from the Championship on Saturday.

# Madrid go Barca crazy

Football

INTERNET, Madrid

The Madrid media had little choice on Sunday but to recognize the superiority of champions-elect Barcelona, after the Catalans won 2-0 away to Real in Saturday's "Clasico".

It was the first time Barca had won in the Estadio Bernabeu in successive seasons, and leaves Lionel Messi and company three points ahead of Real with just seven matches left.

Barca's fourth defeat of Real in two seasons - which was front-page news in every Spanish newspaper on Sunday - brought thousands of fans out onto the streets of Barcelona at midnight, to celebrate a win that keeps Real firmly in the shadows.

The Catalan papers were full of praise for

goalscorers Messi and Pedro - and for playmaker Xavi.

La Vanguardia claimed Xavi "was cleverly the most important player on the field, setting up both goals with his majestic passes."

El Periodico praised Barca coach Josep Guardiola - who was won all four Clasicos since taking over from Frank Rijkaard in 2008 - for his "tactical maturity and flexibility... He has become a brilliant strategist."

Sport agreed with Guardiola that Barca "did not play brilliantly," but insisted they were "always in control, against opponents who were nervous and anxious."

Mundo Deportivo, meanwhile, called it a "triumph of the youth sections over the cheque-book", referring to the fact that most of Barca's team have been formed within the club whilst Real is "the most expensive team ever put together in history."



Chelsea striker Didier Drogba is ecstatic after giving his team the lead with an opportunist strike in their FA Cup semifinal match against Aston Villa at Wembley on Saturday.

## IN BRIEF

**Watching WC is lesson for the day**  
AFP, Buenos Aires

School and college students in Argentina could be allowed to watch World Cup matches live while in the classroom in a measure aimed at cutting out tedium.

"The World Cup is a very important cultural event, a party and has a great educational interest," said Alberto Sileoni, the country's minister of education.

"Watching a match at school takes up two hours of class time. But if students stay at home that's six hours at least."

Argentina start their World Cup group campaign against Nigeria on Saturday, June 12, a non-school day, but face South Korea on Thursday, June 17 and then Greece on Tuesday, June 22.

**O'Neill's ire at Terry**  
AP, Wembley

Aston Villa manager Martin O'Neill accused Chelsea's John Terry of making a "horrendous" tackle which could have ended the career of James Milner, his England teammate.

"John Terry's horrendous challenge on an England teammate James Milner is tremendously lucky that his career is intact," O'Neill said. "It's a straight red card, the referee's straight in front of him and he's given him a yellow card."

"It was a desperately poor challenge and he should have been given a red card. I have the utmost regard for (Webb). But it's maddening. These were game-changing decisions."

Milner stayed on the field after treatment.

"He's very sore but he's got away with it," O'Neill said. "I have just spoken to my (club) doctor and he's a very lucky boy."

**Deschamps reveals no approach from FFF**  
AFP, Paris

Marseille coach Didier Deschamps said Sunday that he had not been contacted by the French Football Federation about taking over from Raymond Domenech after the World Cup.

"No," was 1998 World Cup-winning captain's response when asked on Telefoot if he had been contacted.

The other hot favourite in the race to succeed Domenech, Bordeaux coach Laurent Blanc, has refused any comment on the subject until season's end.

FFF president Jean-Pierre Escalettes said in January that Domenech's successor would be known before the World Cup kicks off in South Africa on June 11.

# CHELSEA SAIL INTO FINAL Villains get the Blues

AFP, London



Didier Drogba sent holders Chelsea on their way to a 3-0 win over top flight rivals Aston Villa in the FA Cup semifinal at Wembley on Saturday.

The Ivory Coast striker broke the deadlock in the 68th minute before Florent Malouda and Frank Lampard completed the win with two late goals as Premier League leaders Chelsea remained on course for a domestic 'Double'.

This was no routine victory but once Drogba had turned home John Terry's shot on goal following a mistake by Villa defender Richard Dunne - the forward's fifth Wembley goal - the outcome was never in doubt.

Malouda added a second in the 89th minute, connecting with Michael Ballack's fabulous right wing cross and Lampard completed the scoring in added time by capping a fine run with a composed finish.

For Villa, defeat meant a second Wembley disappointment this season after their League Cup final defeat at the hands of Manchester United in February.

That match left Villa manager Martin O'Neill angry that United defender Nemanja Vidic had not been sent-off for a

foul on Gabriel Agbonlahor.

And after this match he was furious Villa had been refused a penalty, when the game was still scoreless, after Chelsea's John Obi Mikel appeared to bring down England striker Agbonlahor.

An irate O'Neill accused referee Howard Webb of "bottling" the decision, saying: "It is incontestable. Even the Chelsea players knew, you could tell by their reaction it was a penalty."

Chelsea manager Carlo Ancelotti had warned his side they would face a very

| RESULT  |
|---|
| Chelsea 3 (Drogba 68, Malouda 89, Lampard 90+3) Aston Villa 0 |

different Villa team to the one that capitulated 7-1 at Stamford Bridge two weeks ago.

The Italian reasoned O'Neill's side would be wounded by that defeat and anxious to make amends.

And so it proved with the Midlands side impressing during the opening exchanges when they were unfortunate not to claim an early breakthrough.

Ancelotti made just one change to the side that beat Villa first time around, recalling Drogba in place of Nicolas Anelka.

Initially, though, the Chelsea striker saw little of the ball as Villa's central midfield pairing of James Milner and Stilyan Petrov grabbed early control of the game.

But Villa were furious in the 16th minute they were denied a penalty.

Agbonlahor's pace had upset the Blues backline throughout the early stages, but on this occasion he caused problems with his back to goal and appeared to be tripped by Mikel as he attempted to turn inside the box.

The Villa man was convinced he had been unfairly grounded - and O'Neill reacted furiously when referee Howard Webb ignored the claims for a penalty.

Villa continued to enjoy the greater share of possession but they were almost caught out when Drogba was only just beaten to a loose ball in the area by a desperate lunge from defender James Collins.

And Drogba almost forced a costly error out of Warnock. The left back inexplicably headed the ball into Joe Cole's path under pressure from Drogba and it took a point blank save from keeper Brad Friedel to smother the danger.

But Chelsea finally made the breakthrough after half-time when Dunne failed to clear Malouda's corner, diverting his header to the feet of Terry who struck a left foot shot that was turned home by Drogba.

# 'We can write history'

AFP, Madrid



Lionel Messi said the current Barcelona team could write more chapters in the club's history following their 2-0 win over Real Madrid in Saturday's 'El Clasico' at the Santiago Bernabeu.

Barca became the first Spanish side to win a La Liga, Kings Cup and Champions League treble last season and are on for the double this time round having safely made the semifinals of the Champions League while Saturday's victory over Real puts them in the box seat in the league.

"The title is not won and there are some tough games left but this was an important step and we can continue making history," said Messi.

"The team showed that we are superior to any opponent if we want to be, however you have to do it on the pitch and we did tonight. It was a

really important win but now we have to carry on."

Messi followed up his four-goal blast in Tuesday's Champions League quarter-final win over Arsenal with a 32nd minute opener, for his 40th goal of the season in all competitions, before Pedro Rodriguez, in the 55th minute, added a second as Barca went three points clear of Real at the summit.

It was a fourth successive Clasico win for Barca and their coach Pep Guardiola while Messi continued his knack of scoring against Real having netted twice in the 6-2 drubbing at the Bernabeu last season.

Saturday's game was billed as the Messi versus Cristiano Ronaldo show but the Argentine played down the battle saying the match was about gaining the upper hand in the title race.

"It was not between him (Ronaldo) and me," said Messi. "It was simply that Barca were superior to Madrid. We are back at the top again and we have an advantage."

# Inter's frailties exposed

AFP, Rome



Inter Milan dropped two precious points after being held to a 2-2 draw at Fiorentina on Saturday and will lose top spot in Serie A should Roma win their home match against Atalanta on Sunday.

A goal eight minutes from time from Per Kroldrup earned the Viola a deserved point after Inter had come from behind to snatch the lead in the second half.

Prolific strike duo Diego Milito and Samuel Eto'o had each steered home right-wing centres to cancel out Keirison's early strike in an absorbing end-to-end contest.

The result means Inter go two points clear of Roma having played a game more, while Fiorentina move up a place to eighth.

With Fiorentina's Peruvian left winger Juan Vargas injured and top scorer Alberto Gilardino only fit enough for the bench, Inter began the match on the front foot with Wesley Sneijder having a 20-yard shot tipped around the post.

The Nerazzurri were soon made to pay as Fiorentina sliced through their defence in the 11th minute.

Riccardo Montolivo waited for the right moment to release the marauding Gianluca Comotto, whose squared centre was slammed high into the net from eight yards by Brazilian prospect Keirison.

Jose Mourinho's men responded by dominating possession but could find no way through the well-organised Viola backline.

a 25-yarder a foot wide, Maicon sliced a volley horribly off target and Esteban Cambiasso, Cristian Chivu and Eto'o all blasted well over from distance before the break.

The home side continued to be dangerous on the counter-attack though and two minutes after the restart Stevan Jovetic almost doubled the lead but, slipped in by Montolivo, the Montenegrin screwed his finish wide of the farpost.

Just as it seemed Inter had run out of steam, they turned the game on its head with two copycat goals in six minutes.

| RESULTS   |
|---|
| Napoli 2 (Quagliarella 3, Hamsik 78) Parma 3 (Antonelli 63, Lucarelli 68, Jimenez 87) |
| Fiorentina 2 (Keirison 11, Kroldrup 83) Inter Milan 2 (Milito 75, Eto'o 81)           |



Inter Milan forward Diego Milito is upset after missing a chance to score during their Serie A match against Fiorentina at the Artemio Franchi Stadium in Florence on Saturday.

# Table toppers battle to draw

AFP, Berlin



Bayern Munich's seven matches in 21 days, including their epic Champions League win over Manchester United, caught up with them on Saturday as they laboured to a 1-1 draw with Bayer Leverkusen.

The result allowed them to open up a two-point lead on Schalke, who slumped to a 4-2 defeat at relegation-haunted Hanover, in the race for the German league title with four games left.

Louis van Gaal's Munich side also have a six-point lead over third-placed Leverkusen and remain on course for a Champions League, Bundesliga and German Cup treble.

"It was a very even match with few goal-scoring chances," said van Gaal.

"Bayer created the better chances and they would have hoped to get more out of the game."

"We gave too many balls away, which allowed Leverkusen to put us in a few dangerous situations. But we are two points ahead of Schalke and six in front of Leverkusen. It's in our hands."

Bayern dominated large parts of possession on Saturday, but rarely

troubled Leverkusen goalkeeper Rene Adler.

Leverkusen came into the game on the back of three successive defeats and they had two good chances in the first half through Eren Derdiyok and Tranquillo

| RESULTS   |
|---|
| Mainz 1 (Szalai 30) Dortmund 0  |
| Hoffenheim 0 FC Cologne 2 (Matuschyk 46, 82)  |
| Hertha Berlin 0 Stuttgart 1 (Cacau 74)  |
| Hanover 4 (Westermann 17-og, Konan Ya 29, 90+2, Balitsch 80) Schalke 2 (Goncalves 46, Rakitic 52-pen) |
| Werder Bremen 4 (Pizarro 35, 56, Hunt 53, Ozil 66) SC Freiburg 0                                      |
| Bayer Leverkusen 1 (Vidal 59) Bayern Munich 1 (Robben 51-pen)   |

Barnetta.

But it was Bayern who took the lead in the 51st minute when Gonzalo Castro fouled Franck Ribery and Arjen Robben, who scored the crucial Champions League away goal at Old Trafford in mid-week, converted the penalty.



Bayer Leverkusen defender Manuel Friedrich (L) and Bayern Munich striker Mario Gomez clash for possession during their Bundesliga match at the BayArena in Leverkusen on Saturday.

Leverkusen's top scorer Stefan Kiessling then headed against the post in the 58th minute before they drew level a minute later.

A free-kick from Toni Kroos, on-loan from Bayern until the end of the season, came back off the crossbar and Arturo Vidal tucked away the rebound.

Schalke's title hopes suffered a second successive setback when they slumped to a shock 4-2 loss at struggling Hanover.

The result came on the back of last week's 2-1 loss to Bayern.

Hanover, coached by former Schalke boss Mirko Slomka, went into the game without a win in the last month, but they led 2-0 at the break after an own-goal from Heiko Westermann and the first of a brace from Ivory Coast star Didier Konan Ya on the half-hour mark.

Schalke, seeking a first German title since 1958, pulled back to 2-2 within seven minutes at the start of the second half through an Edu Goncalves strike and a penalty from Croatian international Ivan Rakitic.

Hanover, who are third from bottom of the table, restored their lead in the 80th minute through captain Hanno Balitsch before Konan Ya added a superb, solo goal in injury time.

Werder Bremen's bid for Champions League qualification received a big boost when they thrashed Freiburg 4-0 and fourth-placed Borussia Dortmund slumped to a 1-0 defeat at Mainz.

Stuttgart climbed to sixth place above Hamburg, who visit Bochum on Sunday, after winning 1-0 at bottom club Hertha Berlin.

Polish international midfielder Adam Matuszczyk was on target twice for Cologne in a 2-0 victory at Hoffenheim that moved them further clear of the relegation zone.

| TOP SCORERS  |
|--|
| 18: Kevin Kuranyi (Schalke), Stefan Kiessling (Leverkusen), Edin Dzeko (Wolfsburg) |
| 15: Lucas Barrios (Borussia Dortmund)  |
| 14: Claudio Pizarro (Werder Bremen)  |