

Chelsea rout B'pool

AFP, London

Florent Malouda struck twice as Chelsea completed a routine 4-0 victory over Blackpool that extended the champions' 100 per cent record after the opening five games of the Premier League campaign.

Salomon Kalou and Didier Drogba completed the scoring as Carlo Ancelotti's free-scoring side raced into a four-goal half time lead and took their season tally to 25 goals in six domestic and Champions League games.

Malouda's double means the France midfielder has now scored six goals in five league games and the 30-year-old's display confirmed his growing status as one of the key members of Ancelotti's line-up.

Surprisingly, Chelsea eased off after the interval, apparently content to collect the three points that means they sit four points clear above Arsenal and Manchester United in the emerging Premier League table.

The fixture list handed Ancelotti's side a generous start and the match against Manchester City next weekend marks their first meeting with one of their main rivals.

But the Italian will be satisfied his side could not have done any more in the opening weeks.

Blackpool, meanwhile, will draw positives from their second half display when they carved out a number of decent chances, albeit against a side that was seeing out the game in second gear.

The visitors' resistance was expected to be flimsy but manager Ian Holloway might have reasonably expected his side would put up more of a fight before falling behind to Kalou's opening goal inside two minutes.

From Blackpool's first touch they conceded a corner inside the first minute and from the set-piece the Ivorian -- one of two Chelsea players unmarked at the far post -- swept the

ball past Matthew Gilks from six yards.

That set the standard for the opening exchanges and Michael Essien came close to doubling Chelsea's lead in the seventh minute when he fired a rising drive narrowly over.

It was clear, though, the second goal was imminent and it came five minutes later after Kalou had picked out Didier Drogba's run across the back-four and the striker then showed superb awareness to pull the ball across the face of goal where Malouda completed a routine tap-in.

Blackpool's worst fears were being realised but to their credit they responded positively, taking the game to Chelsea whenever they could and they even came close to clawing one back when midfielder Alex Baptiste produced a superb save from Petr Cech.

That was the start of the visitors best spell of the game and for ten minutes they pressed the home side back and forced several corners.

The continuing ambition of Holloway's side was commendable but their willingness to press forward inevitably left them vulnerable, particularly to Ashley Cole's forays down the left flank.

Blackpool right back Neil Eardley was given a torrid time by Cole and when Essien picked out the fullback, Cole released Drogba, whose shot took a deflection to make it 3-0.

The striker turned sharply and enjoyed a stroke of luck when his shot brushed off defender Ian Evatt and wrong-footed Gilks for the 30th minute third.

Blackpool could have been forgiven for shifting into damage limitation mode, particularly when Malouda stroked home a fourth four minutes from half-time after once again being set up by Kalou.

But there was no sign Holloway's side's primary concern was to protect Gilks's goal and they maintained their positive approach after the break, being denied a goal by a Branislav Ivanovic clearance.



Chelsea forward Salomon Kalou (R) fights for the ball with Blackpool defender Dekel Keinan during their Premier League encounter at Stamford Bridge on Sunday.

Messi injury revives debate

REUTERS, Madrid

An injury to Lionel Messi on Sunday has revived debate about whether outstanding players such as the Barcelona forward and Real Madrid's Cristiano Ronaldo need special protection from referees.

Messi was felled by a badly timed challenge from Atletico Madrid defender Tomas Ujfalusi that damaged ligaments in his right ankle. He will miss Barca's La Liga match at home to Sporting Gijon on Wednesday (1800GMT) and Saturday's trip to Athletic Bilbao (2000) and may be out for longer.

Real coach Jose Mourinho suggested recently that players are targeting Ronaldo's troublesome ankle, while Messi's Barca team mate Gerard Pique accused opponents of "hunting" the World Player of the Year.

"Right now it seems that anything goes in the world of football and that saddens me," Pique said on Spanish radio.

The challenge by Ujfalusi in added time at the Calderon, which led to the Czech being shown a straight red card, had been "very ugly" and could have put Messi out of action for a long time, Barca captain Carles Puyol told reporters.

Barca break Atletico jinx

AFP, Madrid

Champions Barcelona got their title bid back on track with a 2-1 win over bogey side Atletico Madrid at the Vicente Calderon on Sunday to stay within three points of league leaders Valencia.

Barcelona, humiliated 2-0 by Hercules in their last league outing, had lost their last two trips to the Calderon but first-half goals from Argentine Lionel Messi and Spain World Cup star Gerard Pique inflicted a first defeat of the season on Atletico.

It was Barca coach Pep Guardiola's first win at Atletico, who had a maximum six points before kick-off and his side climbed to fifth a point behind Real Madrid and three points off Valencia.

His joy, however, was tempered by seeing Messi stretched off in the final minute after having his ankle kicked by Czech defender Tomas Ujfalusi, who was sent off for the tackle.

Messi is expected to be out for a fortnight after doctors confirmed ligament damage to his right ankle.

Earlier Valencia replaced Real Madrid at the top of La Liga winning 2-1 at promoted Hercules to make it a perfect nine-point start to the season.

Valencia lie two points ahead of Real and Sevilla who came from behind to win 2-1 at Malaga on Sunday thanks to goals from Alejandro Alfaro

and Martin Caceres.

It was Atletico's second defeat in a week following their 1-0 Europa League loss to Aris Salonica, however they stay third in the league above Barcelona on goal difference.

Barca took the lead on 13 minutes when Messi flicked the ball into the corner of the net with the outside of his boot after being fed by Pedro Rodriguez.

Atletico responded quickly and were level in the 25th

BUNDESLIGA Dortmund go third

AFP, Berlin

Japan midfielder Shinji Kagawa scored twice in Dortmund's 3-1 win over arch-rivals Schalke on Sunday in the Ruhr valley derby to inflict a fourth-straight defeat on the Royal Blues.

Despite signing Spain striker Raul and Dutchman Klaas Jan Huntelaar, Schalke have big problems in defence and are bottom of the league after four games.

Schalke lost French defender Nicolas Plestan for a second yellow card and a subsequent red on 60 minutes, but Kagawa had already scored his third goal in four games by then to claim the bragging rights for Dortmund.

Both his strikes on 19 and 58 minutes were top class and his 350,000 euros transfer from Japanese side Cerezo Osaka before the start of the season looks like a bargain.

Dortmund's Poland striker Robert Lewandowski headed a late goal to seal the win, before Huntelaar netted a late consolation for Schalke.

The result puts Dortmund third behind new leaders Mainz 05 while Schalke are rock bottom.

Leverkusen were held to a goalless draw by Nuremberg and remain in mid-table but lost Germany striker Stefan Kiessling to an ankle injury just 13 minutes into the game.

Earlier, Hamburg striker Mladen Petric's long-range strike earned his side a 1-1 with St Pauli in the Hanseatic derby.

Hamburg's Petric came off the bench in the 62nd-minute and went on to score a super equaliser in the 88th minute after St Pauli midfielder Fabian Boll, a part-time policeman, had fired the hosts ahead on 77 minutes.

The result leaves Hamburg in fourth and St Pauli tenth.

Eto'o on the double

REUTERS, Milan

Samuel Eto'o shone once again with both goals in Inter Milan's 2-1 comeback win at Palermo to send the champions joint top of Serie A on Sunday.

Inter have seven points from three games, level with promoted Cesena, who beat Lecce 1-0 despite the referee saying he had wrongly sent off Giuseppe Colucci in the first half after a case of mistaken identity.

Cameronian Eto'o was often overshadowed by strike partner Diego Milito in Inter's stunning treble triumph last term but their roles have been reversed so far this season.

While Milito has struggled, Eto'o has started his second campaign at Inter in supreme form and again dug Rafael Benitez's inconsistent side out of a hole.

Slovenian Josip Ilicic put struggling Palermo ahead in the first half before Eto'o produced a piece of magic to equalise on 62 minutes following Milito's pass and soon finished off a fine move involving Dejan Stankovic and Maicon to seal victory.

"The team played a spectacular first half, we controlled everything apart from their goal," Inter coach Rafael Benitez told Sky TV after playing without the injured Wesley Sneijder.

"We found it a bit harder in the second half but we got two goals. We have to find a bit more balance, but we're improving."

Eto'o scored the winner in last weekend's 2-1 win over Udinese and salvaged a 2-2 draw at

Twente Enschede in the Champions League in midweek.

Sampdoria could have topped the standings with victory but lost 2-1 at home to Napoli in a game that burst into life late on.

Antonio Cassano's debatable penalty put the hosts ahead on 78 minutes but Napoli, managed by former Samp boss Walter Mazzarri, quickly turned the tables when Marek Hamsik converted a clever free kick and Edinson Cavani poked in at the near post.

Juventus, whose poor form last term continued into the new season, bounced back with a 4-0 win at pointless Udinese, striker Fabio Quagliarella scoring against his former club.

Leonardo Bonucci grabbed the opener before Quagliarella's crafty backheel, a thundebolt from Claudio Marchisio and a fourth from Vincenzo Iaquinta, whose aggressive goal celebration was not appreciated by his former Udinese employers.

Striker Marco Borriello netted his first league goal for AS Roma as they raced into a 2-0 lead against Bologna but Claudio Ranieri's faltering side allowed Marco Di Vaio to score two second-half goals and secure a 2-2 draw for the visitors.

Former Roma forward Luca Toni scored his first league goal for Genoa from the penalty spot in a 1-1 draw at Parma.

Chievo had been the only side with a 100 per cent record after two matches but their bubble burst with a 1-0 home defeat by promoted Brescia and Bari drew 0-0 with Cagliari.



Barcelona star Lionel Messi grimaces in pain during their Primera Liga clash against Atletico Madrid at the Vicente Calderon Stadium on Sunday.

RESULTS
Hercules 1 (Trezeguet 43-pen)
Valencia 2 (Mata 2, Hernandez 23)
Levante 1 (Caicedo 90) Villarreal 2 (Nilmar 16, 42)
Racing Santander 2 (Henrique 76, Ariel 90) Real Zaragoza 0
Atletico Madrid 1 (Garcia 25)
Barcelona 2 (Messi 13, Pique 32)
Malaga 1 (Rondon 14) Sevilla 2

'Bayern better than last year'

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich coach Louis van Gaal on Monday claimed that his team is playing "much better than last year", despite having made their worst start to a league season for 33 years.

"I'm not going to reproach anyone," said van Gaal, as reported by the SID sport news agency.

"I've analysed the season and I can't say we're playing badly. We're playing much better than last year."

After four matches of the Bundesliga season, Bayern are in ninth place with five points -- seven points behind leaders Mainz -- and have a goal difference of -1.

At the same stage last season, Bayern were in eighth place, with five points, but a positive +2 goal difference.

They went on to win the Bundesliga and the German Cup before losing 2-0 to Inter Milan in the final of the Champions League.

Van Gaal, however, says he will not put extra pressure on his players and believes it is down to them to correct the Bavarian giants' stuttering form.

"It's all in the head," he said.

"The players know what happens when we win so few points. The pressure comes from the outside, from the media, the directors."

Tevez inspires City

AFP, Wigan

Argentinian international Carlos Tevez scored one and created another as Manchester City moved into the top four with a 2-0 victory at Wigan here Sunday.

Roberto Mancini's expensively assembled side were desperate for three points after just one win in their first four Premier League matches.

They were stifled for much of the opening period before Tevez scored just before half time with his sixth goal in seven appearances against Wigan.

The dynamic striker then crossed for summer signing Yaya Toure to score his first goal in English football as City recorded their first ever win at the DW Stadium in six attempts.

Wigan have now lost three of their first four home games, conceding 13 goals and scoring just once.

Manchester City began the game with Tevez on his own in attack and Gareth Barry, Yaya Toure and Nigel De Jong in midfield.

David Silva started a fine move with a fine pass to Micah Richards, whose cross was headed back across his own area by Emmerson Boyce, only for Silva's shot to be deflected wide.

And Tevez also went close when he held off three Wigan defenders and hit a low drive that flew just wide of Ali Al Habsi's post.

Wigan were organised and pressing their visitors hard when City had possession.

And their first real attack came when Pablo Zabaleta's pass was easily intercepted by Boyce but the Wigan full back's cross for Charles N'Zogbia was blocked by Vincent Kompany.

As City looked for more penetration, Gareth Barry lifted a ball wide for James Milner, whose dangerous cross was held at the near post by Al Habsi.

Wigan striker Franco Di Santo had enjoyed an impressive start and forced a tricky low save after cutting inside Kolo Toure and trying to find the near corner.

City continued to probe and when Barry picked out Zabaleta's forward run, the full back drilled a shot over from just outside the area.

But City took the lead just before the break through Tevez's fine chip.

Hart's goal kick was flicked back towards his own goal by Mohamed Diame and Tevez broke away from Steve Gohouri before lifting his finish over Al Habsi.

Tevez picked out Silva shortly after the restart but the Spaniard was crowded out. At the other end, Diame shot well over from 30 yards as Wigan tried to find a way back into the contest.

City doubled their lead with 20 minutes remaining thanks to another Wigan defensive lapse.

Maynor Figueroa headed Zabaleta's cross back into trouble and Gohouri could only head as far as Tevez, who clipped to the far post for Toure to touch in.

Tevez almost added a third with a drive that deflected wide and Diame hit another wild effort from distance.

Hugo Rodallega had a free kick deflected wide and Gohouri glanced wide from Figueroa's cross.

Substitute Adam Johnson's deflected cross glanced off Ronnie Stam and was turned onto the bar by Al Habsi in added time.

Leverkusen duo injured

AFP, Leverkusen

Leverkusen's Germany striker Stefan Kiessling could miss next month's Euro 2012 qualifiers against Turkey and Kazakhstan after being stretched off in Sunday's Bundesliga match.

Kiessling was carried off with an ankle injury just 13 minutes into his side's goalless draw with Nuremberg on Sunday and was taken to hospital for treatment.

"He could be out for a long time," admitted Bayer president Wolfgang Holzhauser.

There was more bad news for Leverkusen as Germany forward Patrick Helmes, who is only just returning to form after tearing his cruciate knee ligament last year, also picked up a hamstring injury.

Leverkusen's Germany captain Michael Ballack is already out of next month's Euro 2012 matches with a fractured knee.

Germany face Turkey on October 8 in Berlin and Kazakhstan four days later in Astana in Euro 2012 qualifiers.



Inter Milan striker Samuel Eto'o points to the heavens at the end of their Serie A tie against Palermo at the Barbera Stadium on Sunday.

Lyon woe continues

REUTERS, Paris

Olympique Lyon's miserable start to the Ligue 1 season continued with a 2-0 defeat at Girondins Bordeaux on Sunday.

Lyon, who have picked only five points from six games, lost striker Lisandro Lopez with an achilles injury before succumbing to second-half goals by Alou Diarra and Jussie.

Playmaker Yoann Gourcuff, who joined Lyon from Bordeaux during the close season, was booed throughout the match and produced yet another below-par performance.

Claude Puel's side were hoping to get into their stride following a 1-0 home win in their Champions League opener against Schalke 04 on Tuesday, but Bordeaux, who have also made a poor start this season, had other ideas.

In a packed Chaban Delmas stadium, the visitors

had the first clear chance but Argentine Lisandro failed to find the target after being nicely set up by Jimmy Briand.

Bordeaux piled on the pressure after the break and they were rewarded on the hour when Diarra headed home from a Jaroslav Plasil free kick, forcing Puel to make changes.

Striker Bafetimbi Gomis replaced winger Michel Bastos coolly slotted home two minutes into stoppage time to wrap a deserved victory.

Lyon now lie 17th in the standings, just above the relegation zone and trail leaders and arch-rivals St Etienne, whom they host next weekend, by eight points.

Earlier, Stade Rennes kept their unbeaten record but squandered the chance to go top of the table with a goalless draw at Paris St Germain.

The Brittany side, third in the standings with 12 points, one adrift of leaders St Etienne, dominated at the Parc des Princes but were wasteful in front of goal.

Rennes striker Victor Hugo Montano had a clear chance on the stroke of half-time but his fierce shot shaved the bar.

PSG, who beat Sevilla 1-0 away in the Europa League on Thursday, looked jaded and happy to settle for a dull draw.

A last-gasp Moussa Sow goal gave Lille a 1-0 home win over AJ Auxerre as the unbeaten northerners climbed to sixth.

RESULTS
Paris Saint-Germain 0 Rennes 0
Lille 1 (Sow 90) Auxerre 0
Bordeaux 2 (Diarra 60, Jussie 90+2)
Lyon 0