

Gunners bury City

REUTERS, London



Manchester United and Arsenal enjoyed landmark victories over Stoke City and Manchester City respectively on Sunday to stay on the coat tails of champions Chelsea in the battle for the Premier League title.

Arsenal had not beaten any of their current big four rivals, Chelsea, United or Manchester City, for 18 months but helped by the fifth-minute sending off of Dedyck Boyata they triumphed 3-0 at Eastlands.

Earlier, United ended a run of four successive away draws with two goals for Wayne Rooney's stand-in Javier Hernandez in their dramatic late 2-1 win at Stoke City.

Chelsea, who beat Wolverhampton Wanderers 2-0 on Saturday, lead the standings on 22 points with the two Manchester clubs and Arsenal on 17.

Liverpool, normally challenging those sides for a Champions League slot, remain in the bottom three despite claiming their second win of the season when Fernando Torres's first goal since August secured a 2-1 Anfield win over Blackburn Rovers.

Arsenal had Cesc Fabregas back pulling the strings in a league game for the first time in five weeks and he made a huge difference with a

display full of promptings and probing.

One of his passes, into the path of Marouane Chamakh, produced Boyata's mad moment with a rash trip outside the box.

Arsenal soon made their numbers pay when Samir Nasri finished a neat move to open the scoring after 21 minutes and, although Joe Hart did well to save a Fabregas penalty, the Spaniard made amends by setting up Alex Song for the killer second after 66.

Nicklas Bendtner came off the bench for his second appearance of the season to complete the scoring.

"We played some outstanding football at times and it's very difficult to stop a team playing at that tempo," Fabregas told Sky Sports.

"Even if they had 15 (players) and we had 11 we would still go

and win."

Liverpool remain in the relegation zone on nine points but there was a real feeling of relief around Anfield as they not only chalked up a rare win but played some enterprising soccer.

Torres and Steven Gerrard, both rested from Thursday's Europa League trip to Naples, both looked sharp.

Sotirios Kyrgiakos put Liverpool ahead early in the second half with a header and after a Jamie Carragher own goal in the 52nd minute, Torres grabbed the winner a minute later with his second goal of the season.

RESULTS

Liverpool 2 (Kyrgiakos 48, Torres 53)
Blackburn 1 (Carragher 50-og)
Man City 0 Arsenal 3 (Nasri 20, Song 66, Bendtner 88)

Lazio atop, Inter held

AFP, Rome



Lazio went four points clear at the top of Serie A with a 2-1 home win against Cagliari as champions Inter Milan were held 1-1 at home to Sampdoria on Sunday.

Inter came close to losing their first home league match in three years as Stefano Guberti gave the visitors the lead but Samuel Eto'o's 15th goal in 13 games in all competitions earned a share of the spoils.

Brazilian centre-half Lucio had the first clear sight of the goal on 10 minutes but Gianluca Curci made a point blank save from his close range volley.

Sampdoria were next to threaten as Antonio Cassano chipped to the back post where Guberti headed the ball back into the danger area and Giampaolo Pazzini stretched out a leg ahead of Walter Samuel but could only prod into goalkeeper Julio Cesar's arms.

The livewire Brazilian teenager Coutinho then went on a jinking run down the left but Curci came out to smother at his feet with Eto'o firing the rebound into the side netting.

Inter were back on the attack after the break as more trickery from Coutinho created a chance for his compatriot Maicon but Luciano Zauri was ideally placed to clear his drive off the line.

Samp went ahead on 62 minutes as Cassano shrugged off Cristian Chivu and crossed for Guberti to send an acrobatic volley goalwards, and although Cesar got his hands on it, the ball spun up and over the line.

Inter came storming straight back and Curci

saved with his legs from Coutinho while Wesley Sneijder fired wildly over the bar.

Samp suffered a blow as Curci had to go off with a calf injury and his replacement Junior Da Costa's first task was to pick the ball out of his net 10 minutes from time.

Coutinho, who had caused havoc all night, crossed from the left and Eto'o stole in at the near post to poke home.

Inter could have had a winner too but Lucio's shot went over.

Lazio's dream start to the season continued as they downed their Sardinian visitors, now sitting worryingly second from bottom after a single victory in their eight games -- a 5-1 thrashing of Roma.

Sergio Floccari got Lazio off to a positive start, lashing home on 21 minutes after the ball fell to him when two Hernanes efforts were blocked.

Stefano Mauri doubled the lead on 53 minutes in fortunate fashion as he stumbled and fell over, only for a cross from the left to hit him in the stomach and go in.

Alessandro Matri's diving header from Andrea Cossu's cross six minutes later left Lazio hanging on at the end.

Lazio's city rivals Roma's turbulent start to the season continued as they were held to a 0-0 draw at rock-bottom Parma.

Juventus failed to move into the top three as they were held to a 0-0 draw at Bologna.

The visitors had a chance to go in front on 34 minutes after a questionable penalty decision when it appeared that Milos Krasic had dived in the box.

Justice was done, though, as Italy goalkeeper Emiliano Viviano saved Vincenzo Iaquinta's spot-kick.



PHOTO: AFP

Lazio forward Sergio Floccari (2nd from L) celebrates his goal with teammates during their Serie A tie against Cagliari in Rome's Olympic Stadium on Sunday.

Ivanchitz fires Mainz

AFP, Berlin



Mainz went top of the Bundesliga on Sunday as a second-half goal from Andreas Ivanchitz gave the German minnows a 1-0 win over Leverkusen, while Dortmund needed a dramatic late goal to draw with Hoffenheim.

Mainz took the lead when coach Thomas Tuchel brought rising stars Austria midfielder Ivanschitz and striker Andre Schuerle off the bench: teenager Schuerle supplied the final pass and Ivanschitz scored in the 70th minute.

The win gave Mainz their eighth win in nine games and put them two points clear of second-placed Dortmund while Leverkusen are now fifth.

Earlier Dortmund needed a dramatic last-minute free-kick to salvage a point from their 1-1 draw against ten-man Hoffenheim.

With time almost up, Brazil midfielder Antonio da Silva curled in his shot in the 93rd minute and amidst the tense scenes Hoffenheim midfielder Sejad Salihovic was sent off as he screamed his protests at the referee.

Hoffenheim recorded 30 fouls in 90 minutes and received five yellow cards.

In an action packed opening 15 minutes, Hoffenheim took the lead after nine minutes following a pass from Brazilian Luiz Gustavo which found Senegal striker Ba at the far post and he beat Dortmund goalkeeper Roman Weidenfeller.

Dortmund were then denied an equaliser in controversial fashion.

Referee Wolfgang Stark awarded Dortmund a penalty on 15 minutes when Hoffenheim's Ghana defender Isaac Vorsah handled in the area.

Dortmund's Turkey midfielder Nuri Sahin slammed home the penalty, but Stark demanded the penalty be taken again because a home player had strayed into the area and Hoffenheim goalkeeper Tom Starke saved the second attempt.

The home side laid siege to the Hoffenheim goal, but could not convert their chances until the last minute.

"The draw was earned, we threw everything into the attack to try and get the goal," said relieved Dortmund coach Jurgen Klopp.

Stuttgart are up to 14th and out of the relegation zone after they earned a 2-0 win over St Pauli as new coach Jens Keller picked up his first win since taking charge.

Defender Georg Niedermeier and Serbian midfielder Zdravko Kuzmanovic scored the goals for Stuttgart.

RESULTS

Borussia Dortmund 1 (da Silva 90+3)
Hoffenheim 1 (Ba 9)
Bayer Leverkusen 0 Mainz 05 1
(Ivanschitz 70)
VfB Stuttgart 2 (Niedermeier 19, Kuzmanovic 79) St. Pauli 0

10-star PSV

AFP, The Hague

PSV inflicted a 10-0 drubbing on Feyenoord in the Dutch league on Sunday, the worst defeat in the latter club's long history in the Eredivisie.

The 10 goals were scored between the 24 and 87th minutes by six different players, notably Jonathan Reis, who scored a hat-trick against a side reduced to 10 men when Kelvin Leerdam was sent off in the 34th minute.

Feyenoord's previous worst defeat was an 8-2 loss to Ajax in 1983, while PSV have twice before hit 10 goals in a match, against the Go Ahead Eagles and FC Volendam in 1973 and 1998 respectively.

The overwhelming victory sees PSV retain their place atop the Dutch premier division ahead of defending champions FC Twente.

Petrov out for several weeks

AFP, London

Aston Villa captain Stiliyan Petrov has been ruled out for at least two to three weeks with a knee injury.

Petrov suffered the problem during the first half of Saturday's 1-0 defeat against Sunderland at the Stadium of Light and Villa manager Gerard Houllier expects scans to show the Bulgarian midfielder has ligament damage.

If Houllier is right, Petrov will definitely miss the mid-week League Cup tie with Burnley and the derby clash with Birmingham at Villa Park next Sunday.

Houllier said: "He will have a scan. I think it could be a lateral ligament injury which may mean two or three weeks (out of action) if it is a grade one injury. If it's a grade two or three, maybe it could be longer."

FIFA asks for more evidence

AFP, Zurich

FIFA said on Monday that it had asked a British newspaper to provide more evidence for a probe into a World Cup scandal after it reported remarks by a former official about collusion between bidders.

"FIFA has immediately requested to receive all the documents and potential evidence that the newspaper has in relation to this matter, and will in any case analyse the material available," world football's governing body said in a statement.

The Sunday Times ran a report and video on Sunday by undercover journalists posing as lobbyists, which included reported remarks by ex-FIFA general secretary Michel Zen-Ruffinen about Spain-Portugal and Qatar's bids to host the World Cup in 2018 and 2022.

FIFA has vowed "zero tolerance" following earlier claims of vote selling in the race to host the events, provisionally suspending executive committee members Amos Adamu of Nigeria and Reynald Temari representing Oceania last week pending a deeper investigation.

V'real stretch unbeaten run

AFP, Madrid



Villarreal made it a perfect four league wins at El Madrigal defeating

visitors Atletico Madrid 2-0 on Sunday to move above Barcelona on goal difference into second a point behind league leaders Real Madrid.

Goals from Ruben Cani and Giuseppe Rossi helped Villarreal stretch their unbeaten league run to seven matches and Juan Carlos Garrido's team have a flawless four wins from four at home.

For Atletico this was a third successive loss against Villarreal having tasted defeat home and away in the league last season and the capital club stay down in eighth seven points behind pacesetters Real Madrid.

Uruguayan centre-back Diego Godin faced old club Villarreal for the first time since joining Atletico in an eight-million-euro summer move but was helpless as Brazilian Nilmar set up Cani for a ninth-minute opener.

Atletico went into the interval angry at an ignored penalty claim for an apparent foul on Sergio "Kun" Aguero.

Italian international Rossi grabbed his fifth goal of the season in the 52nd minute finishing off a fine Villarreal team move by slipping the ball under goalkeeper David de Gea.

Atletico responded by throwing on Villarreal old boy Diego Forlan five minutes later, however, the Europa League champions could not find a way back into the match.

At the summit unbeaten Real Madrid are a point ahead of Villarreal and Barcelona

with Cristiano Ronaldo scoring a first ever quadruple in Saturday's 4-1 thrashing of Racing Santander at the Santiago Bernabeu.

Barcelona won 2-0 at bottom side Real Zaragoza on Saturday thanks to a brace from Lionel Messi and lie second a point behind arch rivals Real.

Espanyol continued their promising start to the season maintaining their 100 per cent home record with a 2-1 home victory over 10-man promoted Levante at the Cornella

El-Prat stadium on Sunday.

Espanyol made it four wins from four at home with Argentine winger Jesus Datolo, on loan from Italian side Napoli, scoring a 12th minute opener before Jose Callejon added what proved a vital second goal ten minutes from time as they climbed up to fifth.

Levante had Xisco Nadal sent off on 55 minutes for a late tackle from behind to aid Espanyol's cause and the Barcelona-based club are now just a point behind fourth-

RESULTS

Espanyol 2 (Datolo 12, Callejon 80)
Levante 1 (Stuani 83)
Osasuna 3 (Nekounam 3-pen, Masoud 37, Aranda 55) Malaga 0
Almeria 1 (Ulloa 83) Hercules 1 (Valdez 37)
Getafe 3 (Boateng 8, Colunga 50-pen, Marcano 59) Sporting Gijon 0
Sevilla 4 (Fabiano 35, 62, Kanoute 45-pen, 80-pen) Athletic Bilbao 3 (Llorente 74, 77-pen, Gabilondo 90)
Villarreal 2 (Cani 9, Rossi 52)

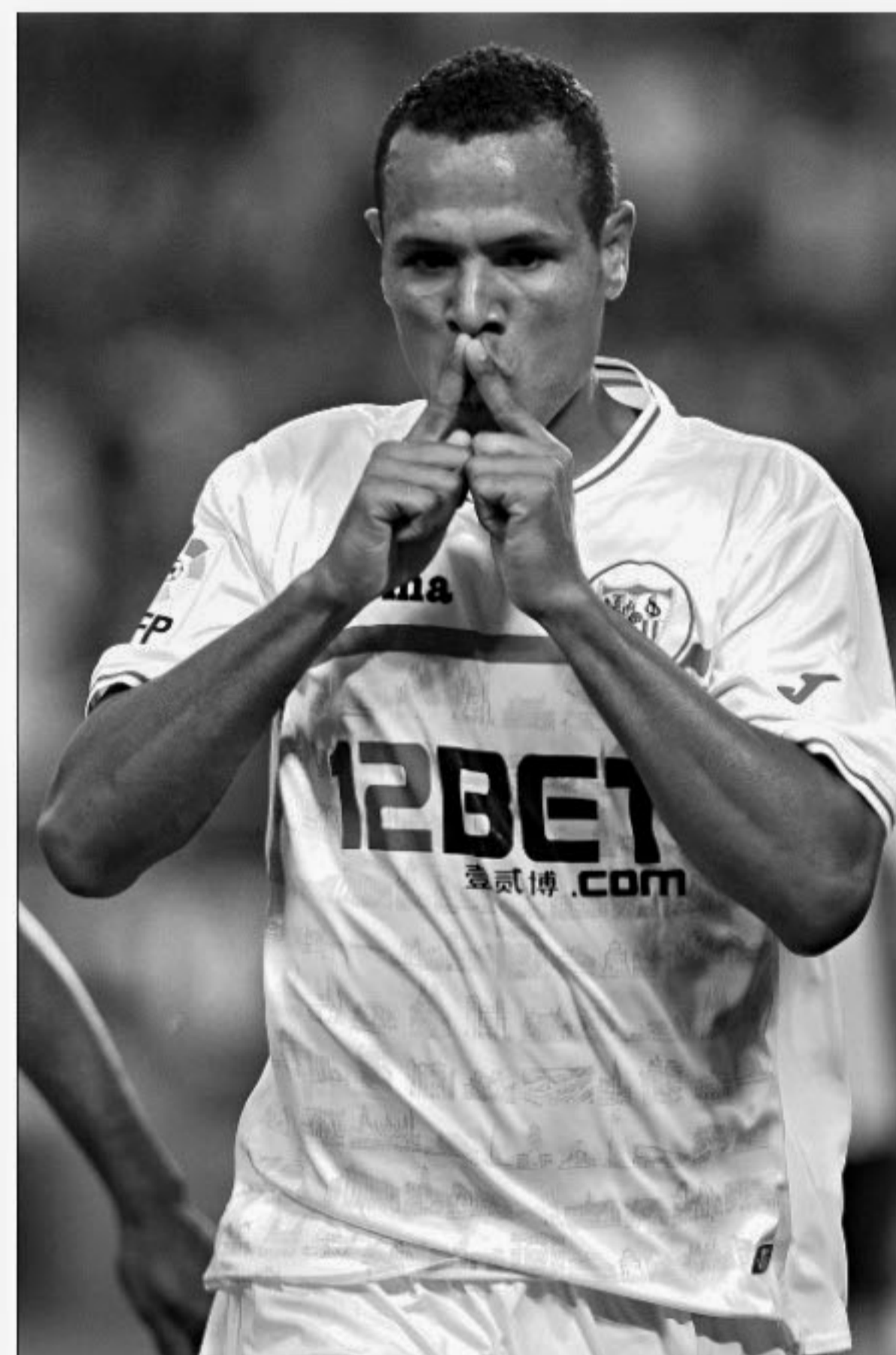


PHOTO: AFP

Sevilla star Luis Fabiano gestures after scoring against Athletic Bilbao during their Primera Liga clash at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan Stadium in Sevilla on Sunday.

placed Valencia.

"We are not going to get carried away by being in the top part of the table," said Espanyol coach Mauricio Pochettino. "We are a young team that is maturing and in every match we go for the win."

Sevilla moved a point behind Espanyol in sixth with a nervy 4-3 home win over Athletic Bilbao on Sunday.

Brazilian international forward Luis Fabiano scored a brace for his first goals of the season and Mali veteran Frederic Kanoute converted two spot-kicks in a thrilling game.

Fabiano had said he wanted out of the club in January but the forward has been given a new lease of life under new coach Gregorio Manzano and repaid the faith with a goal in each half.

Sevilla had defender Fernando Navarro sent off just after the hour mark for a second booking but held a comfortable 3-0 lead at the time.

However, two goals in three minutes from Spanish international Fernando Llorente (73 min, 77) gave Sevilla a fright before Kanoute scored his second penalty on 80 minutes to kill off the game.

"It was an exciting game right until the end. It turned into a crazy match after the sending-off," admitted Sevilla coach Gregorio Manzano.

Marseille go second

AFP, Paris



Reigning champions Marseille took advantage of Rennes' slip up at home to Montpellier with a come-from-behind 3-1 success at Lille on Sunday to move into second place in the French table.

Rennes stay one point clear but their momentum is fading after their first loss of the campaign Saturday, 1-0 at home to Montpellier.

Loic Remy was Marseille's inspiration as he netted twice against a Lille side who have now lost two on a roll to slide out of the top six.

A Yohan Cabaye half-volley put the hosts on 26 minutes but Marseille roared back and Remy, played in by Mathieu Valbuena, fired in the equaliser eight minutes after the break before Argentine Lucho put the visitors ahead with a deflected effort on 71 minutes.

Remy then wrapped up the points nine minutes from time with a majestic header.

"We could hardly have played worse than we did in the first half," said Marseille coach Didier Deschamps. "But with a bit more aggression and by keeping things simple we managed to dig ourselves out," he told Canal+.

Lyon and Paris Saint Germain earlier laid bare the deteriorating standard of the French top flight, drawing with bottom side Arles and losing at home to struggling Auxerre respectively.

they were abject in failing to conquer an Arles side who had previously shown themselves to be out of their depth at this level with just one point from their opening nine matches.

Coach Claude Puel rued "a missed opportunity" to move up the table after a 1-1 draw in rain-drenched conditions at Arles's modest Avignon home.

Home fans gave the apparent no-hopers a standing ovation after they had secured a deserved point but Puel was frustrated.

"We were very tired - it's annoying as we had the chance to get the three points," said Puel, lamenting an "apathetic first half".

It could have been more after Dja Djedje's 36th-minute chip put the hosts ahead but two minutes after the restart Jimmy Briand sent home a bullet header from a Miralem Pjanic corner to level.

Lyon fans were piqued - some holding up banners demanding Puel's resignation.

Their club, seven league titles in a row before Bordeaux broke their sequence in 2009, are now 14th in the table, seven points off the pace.

PSG, no league titles since 1994, are sixth and just three points off the top three. But they left their supporters unimpressed after squandering an early lead in a 3-2 loss at the Parc des Princes against Auxerre - despite Nene giving them the lead with the fastest goal of the French season after just 50 seconds.

The promising start evaporated as Jean-Pascal Mignot, Roy Contout and Julien Quercia netted for the visitors before Nene scored a consolation penalty midway through the second half.

RESULTS

Lille 1 (Cabaye 26) **Marseille 3** (L. Remy 53, 81, Lucho 71)
Paris SG 2 (Nene 1, 68-pen) **Auxerre 3** (Mignot 4, Contout 11, Quercia 24)
Arles-Avignon 1 (Dja Djedje 36) Lyon 1

Cologne sack coach Soldo

AFP, Cologne

Struggling Bundesliga side Cologne sacked Croatian coach Zvonimir Soldo on Sunday in the wake of their 2-1 defeat at Hanover.

The 42-year-old's dismissal comes as no surprise since his team has recorded just one victory this season after nine games and were second from bottom before Sunday's matches.

"The decision was not easy to take, but (Soldo) hadn't managed to stop this losing streak," said club president Wolfgang Overath.

"The team showed so little against Hanover that we thought it necessary to act."

Having taken charge in July 2009, Soldo, a former Stuttgart player, spent last season battling to keep his team in Germany's top flight.

His successor looks set to be former Hamburg and Dortmund coach Thomas Doll, who was sacked by Turkish club Genclerbirligi recently.

Soldo is already the second Bundesliga coach to lose his job this season after Swiss trainer Christian Gross was sacked by Stuttgart earlier this month.