



Arsenal winger Theo Walcott (C) is tackled by Newcastle United midfielder Jonas Gutierrez during their Carling Cup encounter at St James' Park on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Inter look to keep pace

AFP, Rome



Third-placed Inter Milan are under pressure to react to rivals AC Milan and Lazio's early season surges as they travel to Genoa on Friday. The reigning champions sit four points off leaders Lazio and two behind their city rivals following last weekend's disappointing 1-1 home draw with Sampdoria.

And now they face the potentially tricky trip to the oldest club in the country knowing that anything other than a victory could see them lose more ground in the title race.

Milan's impressive, if somewhat fortuitous 2-1 victory at Napoli on Monday night has given them an unexpected advantage over their fiercest rivals.

And with Lazio's stunning start to the campaign showing no signs of abating, Inter are under pressure to keep pace, particularly given that their forthcoming participation in

the Club World Cup in December will see them potentially lose more ground as their league fixtures at that time will be postponed.

There is some good news for Rafael Benitez's side as hot-shot Diego Milito, Nelson Rivas and Mancini all returned to training this week following injuries.

There's no guarantee any of them will be available against Genoa and only Milito is likely to be in the match-day squad let alone the first XI.

But the Argentine's return could also pose Benitez with a problem.

In Milito's absence, Cameroon captain Samuel Eto'o has been on fire in a central striking role and has smashed home 15 goals in 13 games in all competitions.

In Benitez's 4-2-3-1 formation, Milito is only really suited to the central striking role but to remove a player as on fire as Eto'o from that position could be counter-productive.

Eto'o can also play in one of the wide striking roles but was far less productive in front of goal from there last season.

However, there is no denying that Inter as a team have been less effective this season given that they have managed a paltry 10 goals in eight league games -- seven from Eto'o.

At the same stage last season they had already notched 19 goals.

That's something president Massimo Moratti blames on injuries.

"I think it's due to some players missing even though those who have filled in have started to play really well," he said.

"But it's clear that you feel the absence of (Dejan) Stankovic, (Thiago) Motta, Milito and (Goran) Pandev,

players who bring strength and experience."

Friday's should be a tough game against Milito's ex teammates but that was expected to be the case a year ago as well before Inter ran away easy 5-0 victors.

That was one of the nerazzurri's finest performances in the last campaign and one which also demonstrated the weakness in Genoa's 3-4-3 system that at times left them exposed at the back.

Interestingly enough, neither Milito nor Eto'o played in that game last season, at almost exactly the same stage of the campaign, as Esteban Cambiasso, Stankovic, Maicon and the now departed Mario Balotelli and Patrick Vieira all found the net.

Since losing their opening home game of the season 3-1 against Chievo, Genoa have improved markedly with back-to-back wins against Bari and Catania at the Mazzaristadium.

But marquee signing Luca Toni's return of two goals in seven Serie A games has been a disappointment.

### FIXTURES

**Friday**  
Genoa v Inter Milan  
**Saturday**  
Roma v Lecce, AC Milan v Juventus  
**Sunday**  
Palermo v Lazio, Bari v Udinese, Brescia v Napoli, Cagliari v Bologna, Cesena v Sampdoria, Parma v Chievo.

Germany defender Philipp Lahm said Thursday he is waiting for a signal from Bayern Munich's bosses to extend his contract past 2012 and wants to commit his long-term future to the German giants.

Lahm, 26, who has been nominated for FIFA's Ballon d'Or award, is under contract at Bayern until June 2012 and wants to sign an extension.

"Things are going well at the moment and I am waiting for a signal from the board," he told Munich newspaper TZ.

Lahm and fellow Ballon d'Or nominee Bastian Schweinsteiger, also 26, are in a special category, according to Bayern's sporting director Christian Nerlinger.

"We will do everything we can to keep them - preferably for their entire careers," said Nerlinger.

Bayern traditionally use January's winter break to discuss contracts with players.

Lahm has said he wants to win titles at Bayern and says he is happy with the way the team are playing under coach Louis van Gaal.

He has won 75 caps for his country and with regular captain Michael Ballack injured, Lahm led Germany to third place at the World Cup in South Africa.

Bayern are currently 11th in the Bundesliga and 12 points behind leaders Mainz after a poor start to the season, but are top of their Champions League group with three wins.

## Police arrest Klasic

AFP, London

Bolton striker Ivan Klasic has been arrested on suspicion of rape, it was confirmed on Thursday.

Croatian international Klasic was held for questioning by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) earlier this week before being bailed pending further inquiries.

Police were called to an apartment in Manchester city centre in the early hours of Monday when the allegation was made.

Klasic, 30, was not at the address when the complaint was made and was arrested some time later.

A spokesman for GMP said: "Police are currently investigating a report of rape in Manchester city centre."

"Shortly before 5am on Monday 25 October 2010, police were called following a report that a 17-year-old had been raped."

"A 30-year-old man has been arrested on suspicion of rape and released on bail pending further inquiries until 1 November 2010."

The former Nantes and Werder Bremen player has scored twice in four appearances for Bolton this season, but was sent off in his last match - against Stoke on October 16 - just minutes after hitting the winning goal.



MICHAEL OWEN

## Mainz, Dortmund crash out

AFP, Berlin

Bundesliga leaders Mainz crashed out of the German Cup on Tuesday night when they suffered a shock 2-1 defeat at second division Alemannia Aachen, while Dortmund also exited in the second-round.

Thomas Tuchel-coached Mainz have been a surprise package in the Bundesliga this season and enjoy a two-point lead after nine league games, but they suffered only their second defeat of the season at the hands of Aachen.

Goals either side of half-time by Aachen's Benjamin Auer and Marco Hoeger put the hosts 2-0 up before Hungary striker

Adam Szalai pulled one back for Mainz on 68 minutes, but the visitors left themselves with too much to do.

"We will learn the lessons from this defeat and make things better at Dortmund on Sunday," vowed Mainz manager Christian Heidel with his side set to face second-placed Dortmund in the Bundesliga's key clash on Sunday.

There was also a shock for highly-flying Dortmund as they were beaten 4-2 on penalties by third-division Kickers Offenbach after the match finished goalless following extra-time.

Elsewhere, Hamburg striker Mladen Petric claimed an unusual hat-trick as his side crashed out 5-2 at the hands of fellow Bundesliga side Eintracht Frankfurt after he scored for both sides.

Petric netted for Hamburg in the first-half to pull the scores back to 2-1 to Frankfurt after 23 minutes as the hosts took an early lead.

But in a bizarre spell, he headed into his own net on 65 minutes and then scored his third goal of the game just a minute later with another header, but this time for Hamburg.

Frankfurt's Turkey striker Halil Altintop booked his side a place in the third round, to be played just before Christmas, when he converted a penalty in the 87th minute.

Fourth-division Chemnitz took Bundesliga side Stuttgart to extra time before losing 3-1, while Leverkusen were beaten 5-4 on penalties by fellow Bundesliga side Moenchengladbach.

## Owen contemplates retirement

AFP, London



Michael Owen has hinted he will consider retiring if Manchester United don't offer him a new contract at the end of this season.

Owen's current deal expires at the end of the season and the former Liverpool and Real Madrid striker has yet to be offered a new contract.

The 30-year-old has endured an injury-ravaged time with United and is sidelined again at present due to a hamstring problem.

He has started just six league games since arriving at Old Trafford last year and with the emergence of young Mexico striker Javier Hernandez this season, Owen knows there is decent chance boss Sir Alex Ferguson will deem him surplus to requirements.

"I would honestly love to stay but you will have to ask the manager about the long term. I could score at this level for many years and would love it to be at a top club like United," Owen told The Sun.

"Whether I would want to be dropping down to a poorer Premier League team, I don't know. Yes I could score goals but I would probably get less opportunities and less enjoyment."

"I just don't feel my game is suited to a team that is really struggling. I won't drop down leagues."

"I have played in big teams before and played every game and I have played in a struggling team. I know which I prefer. When you play here, you play with quality."

"I was fit for most of last season but got the injury in the League Cup final."

"I'd like to play as much this season but this injury has been a kick in the teeth."

Owen, 30, is already looking towards his post-playing career and, although he is becoming more involved in horse racing as an owner, he revealed a move into management is a distinct possibility.

"I'm on my second stage of coaching badges and management is a real possibility," he said.

"Horse racing will always be a big part of my life but, if there's a job going forward, it will be in football."

## Arsenal slay Magpies

Football

AFP, London

England winger Theo Walcott scored twice as Arsenal cruised into the quarterfinals of the League Cup on Wednesday with a 4-0 rout of Newcastle at St James Park.

Walcott's brace, an own goal from Newcastle reserve keeper Tim Krul and a Nicklas Bendtner strike settled the tie for Arsene Wenger's men, riding high after last weekend's victory over Manchester City.

Wenger was left purring over the contribution of Walcott, scoring his first goals since returning from injury sustained on England duty last month.

"Walcott is more composed in front of goal this season. His first touch is better. He is an intelligent boy and because of that he will always improve," Wenger told Sky Sports 2.

"He was flying at the start of the season and now he is just coming back from injury. You can see today that he is ready to go to another level."

Both Arsenal and Newcastle made nine changes from the teams which scored impressive away victories in the Premier League last weekend.

Yet Wenger was still able to field a starting XI featuring no fewer than seven internationals -- reflecting the Arsenal manager's stated determination to end the Gunners' five-year trophy drought this year.

Arsenal's hunger was apparent from the outset, the visitors sweeping forward relentlessly in search of an early goal in the opening 10 minutes, with Walcott, Bendtner and Carlos Vela all threatening.

But Newcastle also could have taken the lead in the opening period, Nile Ranger missing a gilt-edged chance before Alan Smith saw a shot tipped onto the bar by Arsenal's under-

study keeper Wojciech Szczesny. Arsenal went 1-0 up with a farcical own goal on the stroke of half-time, Krul inadvertently heading a clearance from Ryan Taylor into his own net.

Walcott made the game safe eight minutes into the second half, bursting clear to double Arsenal's lead with a goal that drew protests from Newcastle, who complained that defender Mike Williamson had been fouled by Bendtner.

The goal knocked the stuffing out of Newcastle and Arsenal gradually took control of the second half, Walcott and Bendtner scoring in the final 10 minutes to give the scoreline a lop-sided look.

At Upton Park, West Ham came from behind to defeat Stoke 3-1 in extra time after trailing for most of the match.

### RESULTS

Aston Villa 2 (Heskey 86, Downing 96)  
Burnley 1 (Carlisle 89) after extra-time  
Newcastle 0 Arsenal 4 (Krul 45-og, Walcott 53, 88, Bendtner 83)  
West Ham 3 (Parker 84, Da Costa 96,

Trinidad and Tobago international Kenwyne Jones looked to have headed Stoke into the last eight after only six minutes, giving his team a 1-0 lead.

But Hammers skipper Scott Parker forced extra-time with an 84th-minute equaliser before Manuel da Costa put the home side ahead on 96 minutes. Substitute Victor Obinna completed the scoring two minutes from time.

There was more extra-time drama at Villa Park, where Aston Villa overcame spirited resistance from Championship side Burnley to win 2-1.

Emile Heskey looked to have settled the contest when he put Villa 1-0 up in the 86th minute only for Clarke Carlisle to level three minutes later.

Yet winger Stewart Downing rifled in a 20-yard effort to restore Villa's lead on 96 minutes to break the deadlock.

Villa were forced to endure a nervous finale after Marc Albrighton was sent off for a professional foul but Gerard Houllier's men hung on for victory.

The quarterfinal draw takes place on Saturday.



Paris Saint Germain forward Ludovic Giuly is elated after scoring the winning goal against Lyon during their League Cup clash at the Gerland Stadium on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

## PSG dump Lyon

Football

AFP, Paris

Goals by former Lyon stars Mathieu Bodmer and Ludovic Giuly saw Paris Saint Germain come from behind and defeat Lyon 2-1 after extra-time handing them a place in the League Cup quarterfinals on Wednesday.

Defeat comes at the end of a period when Lyon under coach Claude Puel had reacted well to an ultimatum by president Jean-Michel Aulas after a poor start to the league campaign - they have strung together four wins and a draw in the league and are well placed to reach the knockout stages of the Champions League.

Aulas later said that despite going out of the League Cup Puel would be remaining in the hotseat.

Antoine Kombouare, the PSG coach, said he had been delighted with the manner in which his side had pulled themselves together after a poor first-half showing.

"My team showed two faces this evening," said Kombouare, who will face his former club Valenciennes in the quarter-finals.

"We were non-existent in the first-half but in the second we were really impressive."

"To come and win at Lyon is a huge performance."

Lyon looked set to reach the last eight here when Jimmy Briand fired them into the lead in the 39th minute.

But PSG came alive in the second-half when

the visitors were unfortunate not to be awarded a penalty for handball by Dejan Lovren.

A minute later French international striker Guillaume Hoarau fierce effort from inside the box was brilliantly tipped onto the post by Remy Vercoutre.

There then followed a mass face-off between players from both sides leading to bookings for Lyon's Brazilian international Michel Bastos and Christophe Jallet of PSG.

Lyon, though, went close to extending their lead first through Jeremy Pied's long range shot which beat former Lyon guardian Gregory Coupet but came back off the bar and then Bosnian playmaker Miralem Pjanic's freekick also beat Coupet only to cannon off the post.

PSG levelled as Bodmer took the ball down and volleyed past Vercoutre to level matters four minutes from time.

Vercoutre saved Lyon in the last minute of normal time as he reacted superbly to Giuly's header, turning it round the post for a corner sending the sides into extra-time.

However, the Lyon second choice keeper was powerless to save his side in the first-half of extra-time as having brilliantly blocked a close range effort by Pegguy Luyindula, Giuly made no mistake in volleying home from five metres out.

Wednesday's other matches saw champions and League Cup holders Marseille edge Guingamp 1-0 with Ghanaian star Andre Ayew getting the only goal while both Lille and Auxerre were easy winners.

Lille thrashed Caen 4-1 while Auxerre walloped Bastia 4-0.

## Reina not for sale

Football

AFP, London

Liverpool manager Roy Hodgson has warned Sir Alex Ferguson to forget about luring Spanish goalkeeper Jose Reina to Manchester United.

Ferguson was linked with a surprise move for Reds star Reina as the United boss looks for a long-term replacement for his veteran keeper Edwin Van der Sar.

It has been reported that Reina and other Liverpool stars like Fernando Torres may consider leaving Anfield due to the club's recent financial problems and current poor form under Hodgson.

Liverpool are currently languishing in the Premier League relegation zone, but Reina only signed a six-year contract in April and Hodgson has no intention of letting the 28-year-old leave.

Hodgson told the Liverpool Echo: "It was just one of those stories that seems to occur - it's just disappointing and annoying."

"Pepe is fantastic here, he is a lifeblood of this team. Everything he does around the club is excellent - he is always lively in the dressing room, he is always first class in training and he always wants to do more to improve."

"He demands better from those around him, he is always pushing people on. He is a player who we hold in the highest esteem."

"We have heard nothing from Manchester United and, more to the point, we don't want to hear anything from Manchester United."

"If (Sir Alex) Ferguson is looking around at the end of the season and he has got lots of money to replace (Edwin) van der Sar, he might very well want Pepe Reina because he is the best around."

"But we do not want to sell him. I would like to think that we are going to become a successful club once again and Pepe is crucial to that."