

Pazzini stars in triumph

AFP, Rome



Giampaolo Pazzini scored a brace on his debut as Inter Milan fought back from a two-goal half-time deficit to beat

Palermo 3-2 on Sunday.

The win kept the champions in the title race following leaders AC Milan's 2-0 win at Catania on Saturday, leaving them nine points behind but with a game in hand.

Fabrizio Miccoli and Antonio Nocerino had given the visitors a 2-0 lead at the break.

But Pazzini's double got Inter back on level terms before Samuel Eto'o smacked home the winner from the spot.

Palermo made a blistering start, going in front on five minutes as Mattia Cassani skipped around Davide Santon and crossed for Miccoli to tap home from close range.

Palermo went two up on 36 minutes as Inter again failed to deal with a Cassani cross from the right,

Nocerino arriving at the back post to turn inside Maicon and beat Julio Cesar at his near post.

Debutant pair Houssine Kharja and Pazzini, both on as second half substitutes, combined to haul Inter back into the game, the Moroccan midfielder chipping into the box and the Italy forward holding off his marker before turning and shooting low past Sirigu.

Pazzini grabbed his second 17 minutes from time as he headed home Maicon's free-kick at the near post.

Moments later Ezequiel Munoz was adjudged to have brought down the striker in the box and Eto'o stepped up to sweep home the penalty.

Napoli remained four points behind table-topping Milan in second as Serie A top scorer Edinson Cavani smashed a hat-trick in their 4-0 thrashing of Sampdoria.

Udinese increased the pressure on Juventus coach Luigi Delneri as they escaped from Turin with a 2-1 victory.

RESULTS

Brescia 0 Chievo 3 (Pellissier 45, 90, Mandelli 47)
Bologna v Roma - abandoned after 16 minutes due to snow
Cagliari 2 (Matri 8, 12)
Bari 1 (Okaka 14)
Genoa 3 (Palacio 16-pen, Paletta 44-og, Kaladze 45) Parma 1 (Crespo 32)
Inter Milan 3 (Pazzini 57, 73, Eto'o 76)
Palermo 2 (Miccoli 5, Nocerino 36)
Lecce 1 (Corvia 11) Cesena 1 (Bogdani 90)
Napoli 4 (Cavani 16, 45-pen, 57, Hamsik 48) Sampdoria 0
Juventus 1 (Marchisio 60) Udinese 2



Inter Milan striker Giampaolo Pazzini (L) celebrates his second goal with teammate Houssine Kharja during their Serie A encounter against Palermo at the Meazza Stadium on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

IN brief

Torres not for sale

AFP, London

Liverpool are determined to hold on to want-away striker Fernando Torres according to manager Kenny Dalglish.

Newspaper reports over the weekend said that the Reds were willing to accept what would be a British record transfer fee of a 50million pounds for the Spaniard, but Dalglish insisted that there had been no change in the Anfield boardroom's position.

Liverpool rejected a transfer request from Torres on Friday night, reminding the player of his commitment to a long-term contract, having turned down a 35million pounds bid from Chelsea the previous day.

Da Silva joins Zaragoza

AFP, London

Defender Paulo Da Silva has completed his transfer from Sunderland to Spanish outfit Real Zaragoza, the English Premier League side announced on its website on Monday.

The Paraguay World Cup player moved to the Stadium of Light from Mexican club Toluca in the summer of 2009 and made 20 appearances during his first season on Wearside.

But the 30-year-old has found opportunities harder to come by this season, enjoying just three first-team outings, and has opted to continue his career with Zaragoza, who are currently 15th in the Primera Division.

A statement on the Sunderland website said: "Paraguayan defender Paulo Da Silva has joined Spanish side Real Zaragoza.

"Real have paid an undisclosed fee for the 30-year-old, who impressed for his country at the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa."

Schalke snap up Charisteas

AFP, Berlin

Bundesliga side Schalke 04 on Sunday signed Greece striker Angelos Charisteas until the end of the season.

The 30-year-old has trained with Schalke since Wednesday and has been without a club since French side Arles-Avignon cancelled his contract in November.

Despite having qualified for the last 16 of the Champions League, Schalke are 11th in the league and lost 1-0 at home to Hoffenheim on Saturday.

"The defeat showed we still need a head-strong forward," said Schalke boss Felix Magath, with reference to Charisteas.

Charisteas was part of the Greece squad which won Euro 2004 and has won 85 caps for his country.

Kagawa op successful

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's international midfielder Shinji Kagawa said Monday that an operation on the injured right foot which ruled him out of the Asian Cup final was successful.

"I tell you the truth. I was very disappointed that I couldn't play in the Asian Cup final because of the injury," Kagawa, who plays for German side Borussia Dortmund, wrote on his website.

"I felt downhearted," he said, adding that Sunday's operation was successful.

"I received many messages from my supporters after I got the injury. I want to thank them. I'm going to take a rest and concentrate on rehabilitation. I want to go back to the pitch as soon as possible," he added.

Kagawa suffered the toe injury during a game against South Korea in the semifinals and returned to

Real's hopes in tatters

AFP, Madrid



Real Madrid's title hopes were left hanging by a thread after Jose Mourinho's side suffered a shock 1-0 defeat at relegation-threatened Osasuna on Sunday to fall seven points behind leaders Barcelona.

It was Mourinho's second league defeat in charge as Madrid-born striker Javier Camunas scored the decisive goal on 62 minutes to seal an historic win for Osasuna and deal Real's title

aspirations a hammer blow.

Even Emmanuel Adebayor, on loan from Manchester City, could not inspire Real who have now dropped 12 points on the road and have an uphill task if they are to dethrone double champions Barcelona.

Barcelona made it a record-equalling 15th consecutive league win with a 3-0 victory at Hercules on Saturday to match the long-standing record of Alfredo di Stefano's great 1960-1961 Real Madrid side.

Real were under pressure to respond and had a star-studded substitutes' bench with Xabi Alonso, Kaka and new signing Adebayor ready

RESULTS

Atletico Madrid 0 Athletic Bilbao 2 (Toquero 45, 64)
Osasuna 1 (Camunas 62)
Real Madrid 0

to be called into action.

Adebayor had to wait for his debut with French forward Karim Benzema retaining his place after scoring the winning goal in his last two matches.

Osasuna drew 0-0 with Real in the corresponding fixture last season and squandered the best chance of the first half on 32 minutes.

A ball from the left picked out Walter Pandiani but the Uruguayan glanced his

header over.

Two minutes later Real had their first real sight on goal with Benzema fizzing in a low shot that goalkeeper Ricardo Lopez did well to save at his near post.

Lopez then denied Cristiano Ronaldo with his legs in the 43rd minute as the two sides went into the interval at 0-0.

Ronaldo was Madrid's most dangerous player in the second half, firing one shot just wide and then seeing another drive blocked at the last minute.

However, Osasuna were ambitious going forward and took the lead on 62 minutes after a mix-up between Real defenders Raul Albiol and Ricardo Carvalho.

Camunas broke the off-side trap and thumped his shot past Iker Casillas to delight the home fans.

Mourinho, who was quoted as saying that he wanted to return to manage in England on Sunday, responded with a triple substitution with Adebayor, Kaka and Alonso all coming on.

Adebayor had a half chance with a header, but it was Osasuna who should have made it 2-0 with Alvaro Arbeloa saving the visitors with an 84th minute block to prevent a certain goal.

Madrid lacked the imagination to open up a well-organised Osasuna side managed by former Real Madrid legend Jose Antonio Camacho.



Osasuna midfielder Javier Camunas (L) fights for the ball with Real Madrid superstar Cristiano Ronaldo during their Primera Liga clash at the Reyno de Navarra Stadium on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

Suarez passes Reds medical

AFP, Liverpool

Uruguayan World Cup striker Luis Suarez passed his medical at Liverpool and also agreed terms on Sunday, paving the way for him to complete his 22.8-million-pound (26.5m euros) move from Ajax.

"Luis Suarez has successfully passed his medical and personal terms with the player have been agreed. We expect to complete the remainder of the paperwork tomorrow (Monday)," said a Liverpool statement.

The 24-year-old has scored 111 goals in 159 games for Ajax.

However, whether he will replace Fernando Torres or be a teammate of the Spaniard at Anfield remains to be seen.

Chelsea had a bid for the 26-year-old Torres turned down last week, before the striker then had a transfer request rejected.

Fergie issues Bent alert

AFP, London



Alex Ferguson will turn to his strongest possible defence as Manchester United aim to shackle Aston Villa striker Darren Bent and maintain their lead at the top of the Premier League on Tuesday.

United's second-string defence was given a torrid time by League One side Southampton in the FA Cup fourth round on Saturday, conceding a goal before Ferguson's men fought back to win 2-1.

Having survived that scare, Ferguson is taking no chances when the league battle resumes against Villa at Old Trafford on Tuesday.

Edwin Van der Sar, Rio Ferdinand, Patrice Evra, Nemanja Vidic and Rafael Da Silva are all expected to return to the starting line-up after missing out on the trip to St Mary's.

"We should have our back four back against Villa," Ferguson said.

"Vidic should be alright. Rio started running on Thursday and hopefully will be okay by Tuesday.

While United face Villa, second placed Arsenal will attempt to maintain their title push against Everton at the Emirates.

Arsenal will be without Samir Nasri, who injured a hamstring in the 2-1 win over Huddersfield in the FA Cup on Sunday.

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger admitted losing Nasri at a stage of the season when the Gunners are fighting on four fronts was a blow.

"At this important stage of the season to lose bodies is disappointing for us," he said.

"I have regrets at playing him as the plan was to first to play (Tomas) Rosicky, but he was still too weak and was sick. I took a gamble and it backfired."

Chelsea meanwhile face a potentially awkward trip to sixth placed Sunderland where they may or not be unveiling Fernando Torres.

Chelsea have bid 35 million pounds for the Liverpool striker, who has requested a transfer from Anfield. A deal must be completed by 11:00pm Monday (2300 GMT) if Chelsea are to be able to have Torres available.

Other matches in a full midweek programme see Manchester City travel to Birmingham on Wednesday while Tottenham will attempt to bounce back from their 4-0 FA Cup mauling at Fulham in their match against Blackburn.

SPORTS POLL
WEEKLY QUESTION
Do you think Mashrafe Bin Mortaza will play the World Cup?
Visit the sports page of www.thedailystar.net to cast vote
Follow The Daily Star Sport on twitter
www.twitter.com/dspsport

What to WATCH

NEO Cricket
New Zealand v Pakistan
Fourth ODI
Live from 7:00am

ESPN
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm

English Premiership
Man United v Aston Villa
Live from 2:00am (Wednesday)

STAR Sports
English Premiership
Sunderland v Chelsea

FIXTURES	
Tuesday	Arsenal v Everton (1945), Sunderland v Chelsea (1945), Man Utd v Aston Villa (2000), West Brom v Wigan (2000)
Wednesday	Birmingham v Man City (1945), Blackburn v Tottenham (2000), Blackpool v West Ham (2000), Bolton v Wolverhampton (2000), Fulham v Newcastle (2000), Liverpool