



An airborne Napoli forward Edinson Cavani (C) heads in one of his three goals against Lazio during their Serie A encounter at the San Paolo Stadium on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

# Cavani slams hattrick

AFP, Milan



Uruguay striker Edinson Cavani scored a hattrick as Napoli came back from 2-0 and 3-2

down to beat Lazio 4-3 and cling on to their Serie A title hopes.

Napoli moved up to second and trail leaders AC Milan by just three points after their 3-0 derby victory over Inter Milan, third at five points, on Saturday.

Goals from Stefano Mauri and Andre Dias gave Lazio a two-goal lead before Andrea Dossena and Cavani, with his first, levelled matters.

A Salvatore Aronica own goal put the visitors back in front but Cavani, from the penalty spot, equalised and then hit a splendid winner for Walter Mazzarri's team.

The game wasn't without controversy, though, as Cristian Brocchi had a perfectly good goal for Lazio disallowed and the visitors also finished with 10-men as Giuseppe Biava was very harshly dismissed in giving away the penalty.

Despite the three points, title talk was still off the table for Napoli.

"Our behaviour is always the same, we try to win every game and to do our best and the points will be counted up at the end of the season,"

the hat-trick hero told Sky Sport.

"That's the right way to behave and we're happy because we deserved to win.

"Lazio are a great team, we know what our limits are but we tried to do our best and now we'll celebrate."

The defeat hit Lazio's own Champions League hopes as a win would have put them back into the top four.

Although Napoli dominated early doors, the visitors took a surprise lead on 29 minutes as Mauri luckily bundled past Michele Pazienza, beat Paolo Cannavaro and then with the outside of his left boot somehow slipped the ball past Morgan De Sanctis.

Moments later Brocchi played Mauri in behind the dithering Napoli defence but this time he hooked the ball past the far post with his right.

Lazio seemed to have the game in hand and Napoli's title hopes appeared to be going up in smoke on 57 minutes when the visitors went two ahead.

Javier Garrido swung over an inswinging free-kick and Dias got behind the ball-watching Napoli defence to poke home.

That, however, began a crazy 11-minute spell that saw the match swing back and forth.

On the hour an Ezequiel Lavezzi free-kick flicked off Giuseppe Sculli's head and Dossena arrived at the back post to head high into the roof of the net.

A minute later and another Lavezzi free-kick from the other side this time ballooned off Dias's head to the back post where Christian Maggio nodded it back into the six-yard box for Cavani to head home and complete a rapid turn-

around.

Just a couple of minutes after that Lazio had a goal controversially ruled out as Brocchi's pile-driver beat De Sanctis, bounced down over the line and came out, only for the referee to wave play-on.

Yet a minute after that Lazio were back in front as De Sanctis parried a

Mauro Zarate strike only for Aronica to inexplicably prod the rebound past his own goalkeeper.

Having already given one poor decision Napoli's way, the referee then handed the hosts an even bigger gift.

He awarded Napoli a penalty after Cavani tumbled theatrically in the box under contact from Biava just as the Uruguayan was about to pull the trigger with what was nonetheless a difficult chance.

If the penalty award was soft, the red card shown to Biava was nothing short of outrageous.

Cavani stroked home the penalty and Napoli had eight minutes to find a winner with a numerical advantage.

That came two minutes from time with a brilliant lobbed finished over Fernando Muslera after Giuseppe Mascara's header over the defence sent Cavani clear.

That was too much for Lazio's former Napoli coach Edy Reja who received his marching orders for, wrongly, protesting that Cavani was offside.

The Serie A title race is now down to three teams after outsiders Udinese were beaten 2-0 at relegation-threatened Lecce to leave them nine points behind Milan.

# City run riot

AFP, Manchester



Manchester City moved above Chelsea into third place in the Premier League after a crushing 5-0 victory over Sunderland at Eastlands on Sunday.

Adam Johnson marked his first league start for almost three months by opening the scoring in the ninth minute before Carlos Tevez doubled the lead six minutes later from the penalty spot.

It was the Argentina striker's 19th in the league this season and David Silva capped another highly impressive display by adding the third before substitute Patrick Vieira got the fourth.

Yaya Toure completed Sunderland's misery in the 73rd minute and ensured City moved to within three points of second-placed Arsenal with seven games remaining.

Johnson broke the deadlock in the ninth minute, the England international finishing off a quality move with an equally impressive finish.

It was started by Toure, who swapped passes with Johnson before his reverse pass found the winger bursting into the penalty area to shoot past Simon Mignolet with a low finish.

And six minutes later it was 2-0 after Tevez beat Sunderland's Belgium international keeper from the penalty spot after Phil Bardsley had clattered into the striker inside the area.

It was too easy for City, who were watched by Manchester United boss Sir Alex Ferguson ahead of his team's FA Cup semifinal with City.

Once again it was Silva who was pulling the strings for City, the Spaniard's clipped pass over the top of the Sunderland's over-worked defence shortly before half time only narrowly beating Tevez's outstretched foot.

# Spurs face Real test

AFP, Madrid



Real Madrid saw their flawless home record come to an end on the weekend and Tottenham Hotspur will hope they can become the latest side to win at the Santiago Bernabeu as they travel to Madrid on Tuesday for the first leg of their Champions League quarterfinal tie.

Jose Mourinho has guided Real to the last eight of the competition for the first time since 2004 but watched on as his 150 match unbeaten league home record was surprisingly ended by Gijon and Madrid, now eight points behind Barcelona in the league, must dust themselves off for the Tottenham clash.

Real have the better pedigree having won the European Cup a record nine times, while Tottenham have only reached the semifinal stage of this competition once, way back in 1962 when they lost to eventual winners Benfica.

Tottenham manager Harry Redknapp has also never come out on top against Mourinho when the two pitted their wits against each other in the Premier League, although Mourinho was at big-spending Chelsea, while Redknapp was in charge of Portsmouth and Southampton.

"He (Mourinho) has beaten me the five teams that I have faced him, but Chelsea beat everyone and don't forget I was with Portsmouth," said Redknapp.

Tottenham start as underdogs but can take heart from their 1-0 win at AC Milan in the last round and the fact that Madrid have lost their last two Champions League knockout matches against English opposition, crashing out at the last 16 stage to Arsenal in 2006 and then Liverpool in 2009.

Mourinho, bidding to become the first ever manager to win the Champions League with three different clubs, has injury prob-

lems for the home tie with Brazilian full back Marcelo, French forward Karim Benzema and star man Cristiano Ronaldo all doubtful.

The absence of top-scorer Ronaldo, struggling with a hamstring injury, is the biggest concern and Mourinho said the two would sit down and decide if they should gamble on his fitness against Tottenham.

"If he (Ronaldo) has a chance to play, it's because he and his coach are taking a risk," said Mourinho. "The information from the medical department is that he can't play and that he can only play in Athletic Bilbao. I will talk with the injured players and decided if we will risk them.

"Tottenham are an ambitious team with very good players and a good manager. You sense it is a happy team and happy teams are dangerous teams."

Redknapp, 64, has said he believes Ronaldo and company will play and Madrid also have Argentine striker Gonzalo Higuain back fit after he played his first game since late November as a second half substitute in the 1-0 loss against Sporting.

Redknapp has his own injury concerns with star Welsh winger Gareth Bale a doubt against a club that were strongly linked with his signature in the summer.

Defenders Alan Hutton, Ledley King and Real old boy Jonathan Woodgate are definitely out, while centre-back William Gallas is doubtful with a knee injury.

One Tottenham player with a point to prove is Dutch midfielder Rafael van der Vaart who joined Spurs from Real Madrid in the summer after finding himself surplus to requirements at the Bernabeu.

Madrid are targeting a fifth straight home win in this season's Champions League but have lost 1-0 at the Bernabeu to Arsenal and Liverpool in their last two Champions League knockout home matches against English opponents and Tottenham will be hoping for a similar result.

# Inter eye improvement

AFP, Milan



Inter Milan will be hoping to produce an improved defensive display when they host Schalke 04 in the Champions League quarterfinal, first leg at the San Siro on Tuesday.



Inter Milan striker Samuel Eto'o smiles during a training session at the Moratti Center in Appiano Gentile yesterday on the eve of their Champions League quarterfinal against Schalke.

PHOTO: AFP

Defensive solidity was one thing missing from their hugely disappointing 3-0 top-of-the-table derby defeat to AC Milan in Serie A on Saturday.

Quite apart from the three goals they conceded, Inter looked vulnerable at the back to Milan's swift counter attacks and were stretched on numerous occasions.

It's been a difficult season defen-

sively for Inter who lost centre-back Walter Samuel to a knee ligament injury at the beginning of the campaign.

Samuel and Brazilian Lucio were the foundation of Inter's treble success last season, forming a rugged and powerful central defence.

But Lucio was also missing against Milan due to suspension and his return to the starting line-up against the Germans will be a big boost for Inter.

What's more, coach Leonardo believes Andrea Ranocchia, who only joined from Genoa in January as cover for Samuel, has the potential to be a mainstay at both club and international level for many years to come.

"Ranocchia is doing great this year, he's taken a big step up since January," said the Brazilian.

"He has a huge future here at Inter and with the Italian national team. The game against Milan was a test of maturity for him and he did very well."

Ranocchia may have done well on occasions and he is maturing as a player, but he was still exposed several times by Milan's quick forwards, just as he was by those of Bayern Munich in the previous round.

And Inter have conceded the most goals of any team left in the competition from the group stages onwards -- Tottenham's three goals conceded in the last qualifying round would otherwise mean they have leaked one more than Inter.

They have also lost three times: at home to Bayern and away to Spurs and Werder Bremen, whereas Schalke's only loss came away to Lyon.

The Italians, the reigning champions, come into the game low on confidence following their crucial derby defeat that leaves their hopes of winning a sixth Serie A title in a row looking bleak.

# Duo to fight for FIFA presidency

AFP, Zurich

World football's governing body FIFA on Monday confirmed the candidacies of incumbent Sepp Blatter and Qatari Mohammed Bin Hammam for the FIFA presidency.

"The FIFA general secretariat received two candidatures for the FIFA Presidency by the statutory deadline... The names of the candidates are: Joseph S. Blatter (Switzerland); Mohamed Bin Hammam (Qatar)," FIFA said in a statement.

"The election for the FIFA presidency will be held in Zurich on 1 June 2011 within the framework of the 61st FIFA Congress."

Blatter, 75, has served as FIFA president since 1998, while Bin Hammam, 61, is currently president of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC).

Blatter's image has taken a knock recently after he refused to look into goal-line technology despite a series of refereeing errors at the World Cup.

He has now said he expects goal-line technology will be in place by the next World Cup to be held in Brazil in 2014.

SPORTS POLL

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Dhaka v Barisal at Sylhet  
Khulna v Sylhet at Rajshahi