

Champions insipid

AFP, Berlin



games remaining.

"We had to wait a long time for the equaliser, but we deserved the 1-1 draw," said Dortmund coach Jurgen Klopp after Dortmund midfielder Kuba scored in the 92nd minute.

"We didn't really play enough football in the first half, but after that we played with much more purpose. I can live with the result."

Dortmund fell behind when Hamburg striker Mladen Petric was fouled from behind by Germany defender Mats Hummels in the penalty area and ex-Real Madrid star Ruud van Nistelrooy fired home from the spot on 39 minutes.

Borussia's rising star Mario Goetze had a chance cleared with the ball almost over the line just before the half-time whistle and the 18-year-old wunderkind then headed over the bar after the break.

Hamburg were reduced to ten men when 22-year-old midfielder Aenis Ben-Hatira was sent

off for a second yellow card late in the game.

With time almost up, Poland midfielder Jakub Blaszczykowski -- known as Kuba for short -- latched onto the end of a towering pass from ex-Germany defender Patrick Owomoyela to fire home and give his side a valuable point.

Hanover went third at the expense of defending champions Bayern Munich with a 2-0 win at home to Mainz.

Bayern are fourth after they drew 1-1 at Nuremberg in the Bavarian derby, while Dutch winger Arjen Robben earned a red card in the 93rd minute for insulting the referee.

Germany midfielder Thomas Mueller put the guests ahead after just five minutes, but Nuremberg striker Christian Eigler equalised on the hour mark to share the points.

The draw means Bayern are still six points short of second place and a guaranteed Champions League place next season.

Fresh from their 5-2 win at holder Inter Milan in the Champions League in midweek, Schalke 04 earned a 1-0 home over VfL Wolfsburg, whose ex-coach Felix Magath returned to Gelsenkirchen just three weeks after being sacked by the Royal Blues.

The defeat leaves 2009 German champions Wolfsburg third from bottom and two points from safety while Schalke are up to ninth.

RESULTS

Schalke 04 1 (Jurado 76) VfL Wolfsburg 0
Hamburg 1 (van Nistelrooy 39-pen) Borussia Dortmund 1 (Blaszczykowski 90+2)
Freiburg 3 (Schuster 23, Cisse 60-pen, Butscher 78) Hoffenheim 2 (Ibisevic 34-pen, Babel 42)
Hanover 96 2 (Ya Konan 45+1-pen, Pinto 59) Mainz 05 0
Nuremberg 1 (Eigler 60) Bayern Munich 1 (Mueller 5)
VfB Stuttgart 2 (Kuzmanovic 26-pen, Pogrebnyak 39) **Kaiserslautern 4** (Lakic 17, 79, Hoffer 68, Rivic 86)

Bayern sack van Gaal

Football

AFP, Berlin

German champions Bayern Munich on Sunday sacked coach Louis van Gaal with the Bavarian giants fourth in the Bundesliga and outside the Champions League places for next season.

Munich bosses are desperate to prevent Bayern missing out on a place in European football's top domestic competition having lost last season's Champions League final.

"It is true we have taken a short-term decision but there has been dissatisfaction -- I have to make this clear -- for weeks," said Rummenigge.

"We were weak at Freiburg (on March 19), but luckily we won 2-1 with a late goal.

"We played poorly against Borussia Monchengladbach

(on April 2 in a 1-0 victory) and yesterday (at Nuremberg) we did not have a good game.

"This is an expression of our dissatisfaction and concern.

"At the end of the day, it is the responsibility of the club to do everything we can to get third place.

"In terms of the decision, we simply didn't have an alternative."

The 59-year-old Van Gaal

was informed of the decision after his side returned to Munich following Saturday's 1-1 draw at Nuremberg which saw Bayern drop to fourth in the Bundesliga.

Bayern are 14 points behind Bundesliga leaders Borussia Dortmund.

Van Gaal's assistant Andries Jonker will take over as caretaker head coach with Hermann Gerland as his assistant.



Real Madrid midfielder Kaka celebrates after scoring his second goal from the penalty spot during their Primera Liga match against Athletic Bilbao at the San Mames Stadium on Saturday.

PHOTO:
AFP

I have more to give: Totti

AFP, Rome

Francesco Totti scored his third brace in four games as Roma beat Udinese 2-1 to fire their Champions League hopes and the veteran striker then turned on his detractors.

The 34-year-old scored a cheeky penalty, dinking the ball straight down the middle -- known in Italy as the spoon -- as goalkeeper Samir Handanovic dived out the way on 57 minutes.

After the game Totti said he had showed his critics that his career is far from over.

"In the vital moments that's when you see the true make of a player," he said.

"Even at 20 I didn't feel as good as I do now. This is the reaction to the critics who've sincerely hurt me.

"That's how great players react and I'm delighted."

Robben sorry

AFP, Munich

Bayern Munich's Dutch star Arjen Robben has apologised to his team-mates and fans for receiving a red card after the final whistle following his side's 1-1 draw with Nuremberg.

"I don't know what I said any more," admitted the 27-year-old after the second red card of his career.

"I was very angry, very disappointed, but I should be sorting that out with my team-mates and not with the referee.

"I want to apologise to the fans and the team. I shouldn't have done that."

Robben is reported to have apologised to Kircher at the Nuremberg stadium.

Gunners back on track Barca ever closer

AFP, London



Arsenal got their challenge for the Premier League title back on track with a 3-1 win against Blackpool at Bloomfield Road on Sunday.

Arsene Wenger's side closed within seven points of leaders Manchester United as first half goals from Abou Diaby and Emmanuel Eboue and a late strike from Robin van Persie clinched their first win in four league games.

The Gunners will still believe they can catch United as they have a game in hand on Sir Alex Ferguson's side, who also have to travel to the Emirates Stadium for a potentially decisive clash on May 1.

Blackpool's fourth defeat in five games left Ian Holloway's men just one place and one point above the relegation zone.

Wenger said: "We are on a long

unbeaten run and I knew we'd still have a chance if we won this game.

"We must win the game in hand. But let's first win our next game against Liverpool on Sunday."

Wenger was forced to give 41-year-old goalkeeper Jens Lehmann his second Arsenal debut following his return from retirement after Manuel Almunia was ruled out during the warm-up.

The German gave a solid performance despite a few nervous moments and Wenger added: "Jens can be very proud. The way he practises every day is outstanding.

"He has helped the club win a big game and it will have an impact at the end of the season. He's intelligent and committed."

Arsenal survived a promising opening from Blackpool, which included a rejected penalty appeal for Laurent Koscielny's challenge on Gary Taylor-Fletcher, and took the lead in the 18th minute.

With Blackpool's defence backing off, Van Persie's cross allowed French midfielder Diaby to slot past Richard Kingson.

Wenger's side increased their lead three minutes later as Ivory Coast defender Eboue ran onto Andrei Arshavin's pass and lashed in his first league goal of the season.

Taylor-Fletcher gave Blackpool a lifeline in the 52nd minute when he scored after referee Lee Mason waved played on when Lehmann rushed off his line to foul DJ Campbell.

But Mason turned down another Blackpool penalty appeal after Koscielny appeared to trip Taylor-Fletcher and Dutch forward van Persie made the points safe when he converted Theo Walcott's cross in the 76th minute.

In Sunday's late game, Aston Villa will look to climb away from the relegation zone when they host Newcastle.

AFP, Madrid



LFP

Barcelona took another step towards the title after coming from behind to beat Almeria 3-1 and keep their eight point lead at the top of the table on Saturday.

Earlier Real Madrid beat Athletic Bilbao 3-0 and with the top two sides due to meet next week at the Bernabeu a defeat could have added spice to the clasico.

Barca coach Pep Guardiola warned of the importance of winning this game with some difficult clashes ahead but decided to rest several players after their mid-week Champions League victory over Shakhtar Donetsk.

In midfield youngster Thiago Alcantara was given a rare start while Bojan Krkic played in attack and the changes appeared to affect the rhythm of the side.

Javier Mascherano picked up a yellow card and will miss the game against Real

Madrid through suspension.

In the second half Pablo Piatti broke for Almeria and played in Miguel Corona who gave the visitors the lead but the goal eventually brought Barca to life.

David Villa having come on for Bojan was brought down in the box and Messi converted the penalty.

Then Thiago headed home a corner and in stoppage time Messi struck again to give a convincing win in the end.

Real Madrid kept on Barcelona's trail with a Kaka brace from the penalty spot helping them to a 3-0 win over Athletic Bilbao.

With Barcelona's substantial lead, Real's main objective is now the Champions League and coach

Jose Mourinho also chose to rest players with Cristiano Ronaldo, Xabi Alonso and Mesut Ozil all missing from the starting lineup.

Athletic chasing a Europa League place started the stronger with plenty of possession but they always looked exposed at the back.

RESULTS

Athletic Bilbao 0 **Real Madrid 3** (Kaka 13-pen, 54-pen, Ronaldo 70)
Barcelona 3 (Messi 52-pen, 91, Thiago 63) Almeria 1 (Corona 49)
Real Mallorca 2 (Aki 16, De Guzman 43)



Lega Calcio

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Lega Calcio

RESULTS

Inter Milan 2 (Cambiasso 66, Maicon 84) Chievo 0
Udinese 1 (Di Natale 88) **Roma 2** (Totti 57-pen, 90)

5-2 humiliation to Schalke 04 seven days seemingly season in

Cambiasso

was quick to remind everyone that Inter have earned more points than anyone else since the turn of the year, when they trailed Milan by 13 points.

"It was inconceivable in December to expect us to be where we are now and that's why we can't lose our heads after two defeats," he told SkySport.

In the late game Roma reignited their Champions League hopes with a crucial 2-1 victory at fourth-placed Udinese.

Francesco Totti scored both Roma goals, the third time in four games he's managed a brace, in a match that finished controversially.



Manchester United striker Dimitar Berbatov (C) scores the opening goal in their Premier League clash against Fulham at Old Trafford on Saturday.

PHOTO:
AFP

SPORTS POLL
WEEKLY QUESTION
Do you agree with ICC's decision to restrict the next two World Cups?
Visit the sports page of www.thedailystar.net to cast vote
Follow The Daily Star Sport on **twitter**
www.twitter.com/dssport

What to WATCH

BTV/Neo Cricket
Bangladesh v Australia
Second ODI
Live from 9:30am
ESPN
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm
English Premiership
Liverpool v Man City
Live from 1:00am (Tuesday)
SET Max
Indian Premier League
Kolkata Knight Riders v Deccan Chargers
Live from 8:30pm

DAY'S EVENT

Bangladesh v Australia
Second ODI
Time: 9:30am
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium

National Cricket League
SECOND PHASE
(Four-Day Match, Day-2)
Dhaka v Sylhet at Chittagong
Rajshahi v Barisal at Fatullah

Independence Cup Football
Sheikh Russel v Ctg Abahani
Time: 4:30pm
Muktijoddha v Soccer Club, Feni
Time: 6:30pm
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium