



Manchester United striker Javier Hernandez celebrates his late winner against Everton during their Premier League encounter at Old Trafford yesterday.

PHOTO: AP

# United ride on Hernandez

AFP, Manchester



Manchester United moved nine points clear at the top of the Premier League as Javier Hernandez's late goal clinched a crucial 1-0 win over Everton on Saturday.

Sir Alex Ferguson's side found it tough to break down a resolute Everton defence and looked in danger of dropping two points at Old Trafford, but Mexican striker Hernandez ended the stalemate with a close-range header seven minutes from full-time.

Hernandez's winner piles the pressure back onto title rivals Chelsea and Arsenal, who both trail United by nine points.

Second placed Chelsea host West Ham later on Saturday, while third placed Arsenal travel to Bolton on Sunday.

Whatever happens in those games, Ferguson is confident his side can end the title race by beating Arsenal and Chelsea in their next two matches.

"The thing that puzzles me is people keep saying Arsenal and Chelsea have got to play us still, like we're going to lose to them...why shouldn't we win those games?" he said.

"There are only four games left and the way the players are going about their business gives them an outstanding chance of success."

Everton felt aggrieved that referee Peter Walton didn't give a penalty early in the second half when Rio Ferdinand tugged back Victor Anichebe.

But United finally made the breakthrough in the 83rd minute when Anto-

nio Valencia's cross to the far post was headed in by Hernandez from virtually on the goal-line.

Tottenham wasted a chance to leapfrog fourth-placed Manchester City as West Bromwich Albion secured a 2-2 draw at White Hart Lane.

Albion took the lead in the fifth minute through Nigerian striker Peter Odemwingie.

Roman Pavlyuchenko equalised in the 27th minute and Jermain Defoe hit his 100th Premier League goal in the 66th minute to put Spurs ahead.

## RESULTS

Aston Villa 1 (Bent 43) Stoke 1 (Jones 20)  
Blackpool 1 (Campbell 32)  
Newcastle 1 (Lovenkrands 17)  
Liverpool 5 (Rodriguez 7, 66, 73, Kuyt 23, Cole 86) Birmingham 0  
Manchester Utd 1 (Hernandez 83) Everton 0  
Sunderland 4 (Gyan 55, Henderson 66, 77, Sessegnon 73-pen) Wigan 2 (Diame 52, Di Santo 90)  
Tottenham 2 (Pavlyuchenko 27, Defoe 66) West Bromwich 2 (Odemwingie 5, Cox 81)  
Wolverhampton 1 (Fletcher 22)  
Fulham 1 (Johnson 80)

But Simon Cox equalised for Albion in the 81st minute and Spurs are now one point behind City, who travel to Blackburn on Monday.

Liverpool's resurgence under Kenny Dalglish continued as Maxi Rodriguez's hat-trick inspired a 5-0 win against Birmingham at Anfield.

Dalglish's sixth-placed team took just seven minutes to open the scoring through Rodriguez and Dirk Kuyt increased Liverpool's advantage in the 23rd minute.

Rodriguez got his second goal in the

66th minute and the Argentina midfielder completed his treble in the 73rd minute before Joe Cole struck it the 86th minute.

Blackpool climbed out of the bottom three with a 1-1 draw against Newcastle at Bloomfield Road.

Peter Lovenkrands fired Newcastle into a 17th minute lead but DJ Campbell headed the 32nd minute equaliser and Blackpool are now ahead of third bottom Wigan on goal difference.

Sunderland eased their relegation fears with a 4-2 victory over Wigan at the Stadium of Light.

Steve Bruce's side had lost eight of their last nine games and they were heading for another defeat when Mohamed Diame put Wigan ahead in the 52nd minute.

But Ghana striker Asamoah Gyan equalised three minutes later and Jordan Henderson netted in the 66th minute.

Stephane Sessegnon scored a 73rd minute penalty and Henderson struck again four minutes later before Franco Di Santo got one back for Wigan.

Second bottom Wolves' hopes of avoiding relegation were dented as Fulham drew 1-1 at Molineux.

Steven Fletcher scored with a tremendous header from Karl Henry's cross in the 22nd minute to put Wolves in front.

But Andrew Johnson levelled in the 80th minute after Fulham boss Mark Hughes was sent to the stands for protesting against a booking for Brede Hangeland.

Aston Villa couldn't give ill boss Gerard Houllier, who has been hospitalised with chest pains, a much-needed tonic as they were held to a 1-1 draw by Stoke.

## Barca won't change style

Football

AFP, Madrid

Barcelona coach Josep Guardiola said Friday he saw no reason to change his side's attacking style of play in the wake of their loss to arch-rivals Real Madrid in the King's Cup final.

"It seems like we cling to the style as an excuse whenever we lose. The style has much to do with the idea of the club and the coach. It is something that should not be raised, it is what it is," he told a news conference.

"This is the way I understand football and as long as I am here, this is the way it is going to be.

"The King's Cup defeat would worry me if we were doing badly, but I don't see it that way. My feeling is that we are very close to winning the league and we are going to take part in another Champions League semifinal," he added.

Barcelona's possession-based game of quick touches and slick passing has been honed and refined from Johan Cruyff's days as coach in the early 1990s up to Guardiola's current side.

Guardiola was a midfielder in Cruyff's so-called "Dream Team" that won four straight league titles from 1991 to 1994.

Real Madrid's Portuguese winger Cristiano Ronaldo dashed Barcelona's hopes of winning their second treble in three years with an extra-time header in the King's Cup final on Wednesday in Valencia.

Guardiola urged his side to bounce back from the defeat and focus on winning La Liga and the Champions League.

Barcelona host Osasuna on Saturday in the league, where they are eight points ahead of second-place Real.

Barcelona will then travel to Madrid to face Real again on Wednesday in the first leg of the Champions League semifinal.

## Raul turned down MU No big-money signings

AFP, London



Schalke forward Raul has revealed he could have been lining up for Manchester United in next week's Champions League semifinal against his current club.

Raul was offered the chance to join United last year when it became clear that his long spell at Real Madrid was over.

The 33-year-old's representatives were in contact with United as he considered his future, but the Spanish forward opted to move to Schalke instead and has played a key role in their surprise run to the last four of Europe's elite club competition.

Instead of wearing United's famous red shirt, Raul will run out in Schalke blue for the first leg of the semifinal in Germany on Tuesday.

"There were a couple of possibilities and United was one but the only person who knows just how close, is (Sir) Alex Ferguson," Raul told the Daily Mail.

"I never spoke to him personally but there were contacts with United.

"Before deciding to come to Schalke I thought about England, where I had a couple of offers.

"I love the footballing culture there, the respect for the game, the atmosphere, the intensity.

"I've been at Old Trafford, Arsenal, at Liverpool watching Fernando Morientes and it's special.

"I fancied the idea. I wanted to try some-

thing different. But I've been able to experience that here."

Raul is the leading goalscorer in Champions League history and one of the icons of his generation, but he is a fan at heart and admits he would love to swap shirts with United winger Ryan Giggs after the first leg.

"He's a great professional who looks after himself. Giggs and (Paul) Scholes are players for whom I have an enormous admiration," Raul said.

"I would love to swap shirts with Ryan Giggs after the game. It would be a great honour."

Schalke will go into the first leg at the Veltins-Arena as underdogs but if they pull off a shock win, Raul could face Real in the final at Wembley if Jose Mourinho's team can get past Barcelona.

Raul said: "We dream of beating United. Let's see if we're the better team. Logic says United will be - but we'll try.

The prospect of facing Real in such a big match is too much for Raul to contemplate now and he added: "I don't know, right now, I can't find the words. If it happens, it would be more than special.

"We didn't expect to get here so we're satisfied. Now we want a little more: we don't know when the chance will present itself again.

"A final would be even more incredible. I hope it's Madrid....well, I don't know actually. It would be strange. Very strange.

"If you can guarantee that we'll win the final, maybe it would even be better to play Barcelona. If not, Madrid. Let's see what destiny has in store."

AFP, London



Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger insists he has no intention of splashing out on a host of big-money signings during the close-season.

The limitations of Wenger's current squad have been brutally exposed over the last two months as the Gunners crumbled under the strain of challenging for a potential quadruple.

Arsenal still retain an outside chance of winning

the English title, but, after squandering leads against Liverpool and Tottenham in the last week, the club's morale is at rock bottom.

As a result, Wenger has again been forced to defend the make-up of his young team, with fans and pundits adamant he must bring in several experienced stars to bolster the squad for next season.

However, Wenger is determined to stick to his policy of bringing through homegrown youngsters and adding only one or two new faces from outside the club.

"I feel there is always a need to improve the team, but if you look at our season you cannot come to the conclusion we need a massive change. That would be completely stupid," Wenger said.

"We live in a world where when you are the second best by a little everybody says you are rubbish. It is not true. That is the modern world, but it is not the reality."

### SPORTS POLL

#### WEEKLY QUESTION

Who do you think will be cricket's next chief selector?

Visit the sports page of www.thedailystar.net to cast vote

Follow The Daily Star Sport on

twitter

www.twitter.com/dssport

## Owomoyela out for season

AFP, Dortmund

Borussia Dortmund's ex-Germany defender Patrick Owomoyela has been ruled out for the rest of the season after injuring his hip in training and is expected to be out for up to four months.

The 31-year-old, who won the last of his 11 caps against the USA in 2006, has only made six league appearances for Bundesliga leaders Dortmund having returned earlier this month after surgery on his Achilles tendons.

Despite barely playing this season, Dortmund has extended his contract until 2012.

The German league season finishes on May 14.



### BTV

Independence Cup Final  
Farashganj v SK Russel  
Live from 5:00pm

### SET Max

Indian Premier League  
Deccan v Mumbai  
Live from 4:30pm  
Rajasthan v Kochi  
Live from 8:30pm

### ESPN

English Premiership  
Bolton v Arsenal  
Live from 8:55pm

### TEN Action

Primera Liga  
Sevilla v Villarreal  
Live from 1:00am (Monday)

## Perrotta fires Roma

AFP, Rome



Roma beat Chievo 1-0 at home on Saturday to keep their faint hopes of a top four finish alive with four games remaining.

Simone Perrotta scored the only goal of the game after just four minutes following a neat team move.

The victory keeps Roma in sixth-place and closed them to just four points behind city rivals Lazio in the final Champions League qualifying place, although the Sky Blues have a game in hand later on Saturday.

The goal came just four minutes in after captain Francesco Totti played Daniele De Rossi in behind a backline that was slow to move up and play offside, with the midfielder then pulling the ball back for Perrotta to fire home.

However, there was far from a celebratory atmosphere inside the Stadio Olimpico as home goalkeeper Doni, forward Mirko Vucinic and winger Jeremy Menez were initially jeered.

"These three points will help us kick on, now we'll see how the other teams challenging for the Champions League do," said De Rossi.

"Vucinic and Menez reacted well to the jeers but it's ridiculous having a go only at them and Doni because of how badly the season is going."

Vucinic didn't help his cause by missing two gilt edged chances although but all three eventually won over the booing fans.

Frenchman Menez started for Roma despite a reported bust-up with coach Vincenzo Montella on Thursday and came closest to doubling the advantage by hitting the post in the second half.

Roma hit the woodwork a second time before goalkeeper Stefano Sorrentino followed up with a point blank stop to deny Perrotta, but otherwise there was little to report from a low-key game.

Afterwards De Rossi gave his backing to Montella who is widely believed to be in place only until the end of the season.

"I read many names linked with the Roma job next season and they're all interesting but Montella definitely deserves to keep working with us, he's started well," said the Italy midfielder.

"I hear talk of some big names and it would be interesting to see how they would do in Rome but Montella also deserves the job."



AS Roma midfielder Simone Perrotta pumps his fist after scoring the all-important goal against Chievo during their Serie A encounter at the Olympic Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP



Independence Cup  
Football Tournament  
Farashganj v SK Russel  
Time: 5:00pm

Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

### National Cricket League

(4-Day Match, Day 3)  
Dhaka v Rajshahi at Bogra  
Sylhet v Barisal at Rajshahi

### BCB Academy v SA Academy

(2nd 4-Day Match, Day 3)  
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Mirpur