



Everton deny Wigan

AFP, London



Wigan were denied a priceless victory against Everton, who came from behind to secure a 1-1 draw at the DW Stadium.

Charles N'Zogbia fired Wigan ahead on 21 minutes, curling his shot into the top corner from the right of the penalty area.

Everton squandered a chance to equalise towards the end of the half however, when Mikel Arteta's penalty -- conceded by N'Zogbia -- was brilliantly saved by Oman's Ali Al Habsi.

But Everton made no mistake when they earned a second penalty late on after Hugo Rodallega handled in the area. Leighton Baines stepped up to smash home the equaliser on 78 minutes.

Blackpool's hopes of Premier League survival remain on a knife-edge 0 draw with Bloomfield. The hard-left Ian Hollough hovering just relegation of 18th on goal difference. Fulham their recent form at Downing the Black Cats 3-0.

RESULTS	
Blackburn 1 (Olsson 20)	Bolton 0
Blackpool 0	Stoke 0
Sunderland 0	Fulham 3 (Kakuta 33, Davies 61, 73)
West Brom 2 (Odemwingie 60, Mulumbu 84)	Aston Villa 1 (Meite 4-og)
Wigan 1 (N'Zogbia 21)	Everton 1 (Baines 78-pen)

The Cottagers went ahead through loan signing Gael Kakuta, the Chelsea teenager latching on to a Bobby Zamora pass and finishing from eight yards.

Simon Davies doubled Fulham's lead midway through the second half, silencing the Stadium of Light with a neat finish from Steve Sidwell's cross before grabbing a second 12 minutes later to complete the scoring.

Ten-man West Brom came from behind to take the honours in their Midlands derby against Aston Villa, winning 2-1 at the Hawthorns.

Everton defender Leighton Baines (L) scores the equaliser from a penalty during their Premier League encounter against Wigan Athletic at the DW Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

It will go down to the wire

AFP, London



Sir Alex Ferguson believes the Premier League title race will go down to the wire after claiming there will be plenty more twists and turns yet as his Manchester United side head to Arsenal on Sunday.

United head to Arsenal on Sunday knowing they can take a giant step closer to landing their 19th domestic title at the Emirates Stadium.

A win for the Red Devils would put them on the brink of the championship, despite nearest rivals Chelsea -- who play fifth-placed Spurs on Saturday -- still to visit Manchester.

The match would have carried even greater significance had Arsenal not seen their own title hopes all but disappear with defeat at Bolton last weekend.

Instead, it is United's meeting with Chelsea on May 8th that is more likely to determine the outcome of the title race and Ferguson is anxious to avoid seeing his side's lead at the summit cut to three points in the capital.

"Chelsea are the dark horses in the sense that people seemed to think they were out of it," said Ferguson.

"But I looked at the programme and I thought they had the easier run in and

are now on our coat-tails. "Obviously two months ago everybody was looking at these two games coming up, Arsenal and Chelsea as league deciders, and they probably are now. We are going into the game in good form and hopefully we can keep that going.

"But I think there's still drama ahead. The teams at the top will drop points, including Chelsea.

"You will be hopeful if we get to the last game, the last home match, needing to win the league we will be happy with that.

"Even though Blackpool, who we play on the final day, will be fighting against relegation and will be difficult opponents.

"If you said at the start of the season knowing you had to win that match to win the league you would take that."

Manchester United midfielder Michael Carrick believes momentum is in his side's favour as the season reaches a climax.

"We are playing well. Individually, players are hitting good form and as a team things are looking good," he said.

"It's alright at this minute but we want to carry this through until the end of the season.

"It doesn't count for much at the minute.

"We are not getting ahead of ourselves and thinking about what might be."

Manchester United are boosted by the return of Dimitar Berbatov after a groin strain but Darren Fletcher, who made his comeback for the reserves side, is unlikely to be risked.

But Ferguson says having the pair back fit bodes well for the run-in with him now having a full-fit squad at his disposal.

"Dimitar is back and Darren is a great addition to the squad at this time of the year having missed him for a couple of months," he said.

"There is a great freshness at the club. Ji-Sung Park, Antonio Valencia, Anderson and Fabio have come in and it does give you an extra boost regarding intensity and all the games these days, it does put you in a good position."

The defeat at Bolton forced Arsene Wenger into a bout of soul searching and the manager conceded his team lacked defensive strength when it matters most.

The return of Thomas Vermaelen to reserve team action this week after a seven month absence with an Achilles problem could hardly have been better timed then, although this game will come too early for the Belgium international.

Jose vows to stay

REUTERS, Madrid



Jose Mourinho is more determined than ever to continue as Real Madrid coach despite Wednesday's 2-0 Champions League defeat by Barcelona and the disciplinary case he faces for his post-match comments.

"I have more desire to continue as coach of Real Madrid," Mourinho, whose side's next game is at home to Real Zaragoza on Saturday, told a news conference.

"The (Real) shirt is white and white has meaning," the 48-year-old former Porto, Chelsea and Inter Milan manager added. "I am in very good shape. My health is perfect and I am working as always."

Mourinho, who joined Real from Inter at the end of last season, reacted to the dismissal of midfielder Pepe on Wednesday by implying that UEFA and their referees favoured Barcelona.

As well as a probe by UEFA, the bad blood between the arch rivals around their semi-final first leg at the Bernabeu prompted each to file a complaint with European soccer's governing body about the other.

Barcelona were also furious with Mourinho for belittling coach Pep Guardiola's achievements, while Real accused the Catalan club's players of play-acting.

Mourinho said on Friday he did not want

to add to his comments at a post-match news conference, which prompted UEFA to open disciplinary proceedings against him.

"I don't want to speak about the issue for a simple reason: a picture is worth more than words," he said, referring to the thousands of published images of Pepe's challenge on Daniel Alves that resulted in his sending-off.

"I have nothing else to say. I have said what I wanted," added Mourinho, who has been widely criticised for using ultra-defensive tactics in a home tie and failing to field creative players such as Kaka and Gonzalo Higuain.

"Whoever criticises my words criticises the pictures and must think the photos are photoshopped and the videos are altered. I have absolutely nothing else left to say."

While Real issued a statement on Thursday backing Mourinho, who has been linked in various media with a move back to England or Italy at the end of this season, the reaction to his comments has been mixed.

Alejandro Blanco, the president of the Spanish Olympic Committee (COE), was quoted as saying in local media that the Portuguese had betrayed the values of his club.

"All I did was ask a question," Mourinho said on Friday. "Why? That was my question. Probably I would die if I tried to give the answer."



JOSE MOURINHO

Malouda eyes new deal

AFP, London



Chelsea midfielder Florent Malouda has urged the club to offer him an extension to his contract amid speculation the French international could be sold in the summer, it was reported Saturday.

Malouda's current deal at Stamford Bridge runs until 2013 but the 30-year-old is keen to add another year to the contract, saying he wants to emulate the longevity of Manchester United veteran Ryan Giggs.

"I just want to feel I am important at the club," he told the Daily Telegraph.

"Sometimes I don't feel so when I see in the media that the club are thinking of selling me, and I know I'm doing great.

"I want to be the Ryan Giggs of Chelsea! I want to extend my contract by one year until 2014. The club have been saying that because I am over 30, I have to wait until the last year of my contract to speak about an extension. Questions come into my mind. Do the club want me to stay?"

"I am waiting for a signal from the club. I am much appreciated by the coach. But I need support from the club as well."

Chelsea have only a faint hope of overhauling United in the title race and face a trophyless season, one year after winning a Premier League and FA Cup double.

Despite the disappointing campaign, Malouda has dismissed suggestions that manager Carlo Ancelotti should be fired.

"It's unfair," Malouda said of the speculation surrounding Ancelotti.

"He's one of the greatest managers. He's good tactically. He's brought stability to the club, won the double at the first attempt.

"Because we are now out of three competitions and six points behind United, people outside are saying Chelsea should change everything. But all the big clubs have stability.

"Everybody seems to want to put pressure on Ancelotti but he's really cool. He knows the squad support him. That's the most important thing for him."

Spain set Venezuela date

AFP, Madrid

World Cup champions Spain will face Venezuela in a friendly in the South American country on June 1, the Spanish football federation announced Friday.

It said the venue for the match has yet to be determined.

Spain has already agreed to play the United States in a friendly in Boston on June 4, the first encounter between the two sides since the USA defeated Spain 2-0 in the semifinal of the Confederations Cup in South Africa in 2009.



Monday, May 2
Bangladesh League
Ctg MSC v MSC
Time: 4:00pm
Venue: Cox's Bazar Stadium
Brothers Union v Muktijoddha
Time: 5:00pm
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium
GP-BCB Academy v SA Academy
Third one-day match
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Mirpur

What to WATCH

- Sunday, May 1**
- SET Max**
- Indian Premier League
- Rajasthan v Pune
- Live from 4:30pm
- Chennai v Deccan
- Live from 8:30pm
- ESPN**
- English Premiership
- Liverpool v Newcastle
- Live from 4:55pm
- Arsenal v Man United
- Live from 7:00pm
- Man City v West Ham
- Live from 9:00pm
- STAR Sports**
- English Premiership
- Birmingham v Wolves
- Live from 4:55pm
- MotoGP World Championship
- Portuguese Grand Prix
- Live from 7:30pm
- TEN Action**
- Primera Liga
- Villarreal v Getafe
- Live from 11:00pm
- Monday, May 2**
- TEN Action**
- Primera Liga
- Osasuna v Valencia
- Live from 1:00am
- SET Max**
- Indian Premier League
- Mumbai v Punjab
- Live from 4:30pm
- Delhi v Kochi
- Live from 8:30pm
- TEN Sports**
- West Indies v Pakistan
- Fourth ODI
- Live from 7:30pm

Montella not taking Bari lightly

AFP, Rome

Roma coach Vincenzo Montella insisted his team won't underestimate relegated Bari on Sunday as they go in search of a Champions League finish.

Roma sit sixth in Serie A with four games remaining, trailing bitter city rivals Lazio by four points in the race for fourth spot.

They must also overhaul fifth-placed Udinese, who head them by three points, if they are to qualify for next season's Champions League.

And first up they travel south to Puglia to tackle Bari, who were relegated last weekend following a 1-0 defeat at home to Sampdoria.

But Montella doesn't expect to encounter demotivated and uninterested opponents.

"It will be a tricky match against Bari, we have to keep concentrated and remain aware of the importance of the game because in the Italian league you can lose to anyone," he said.

"We must not have the wrong attitude.

"Bari have got over (their relegation), they're honouring the Italian championship and in the last period they're doing well.

"But we must be aware that this is a great opportunity to put pressure on those ahead of us."

SPORTS POLL WEEKLY QUESTION

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

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Wolves edge Bremen

AFP, Berlin



2009 champions VfL Wolfsburg boosted their chances of Bundesliga survival on Friday with a 1-0 win at Werder Bremen to move clear of the bottom three for the first time in nearly two months.

This is the first time since March 5 Wolves have moved out of the drop zone places after defender Sascha Riether netted a 22nd-minute winner and the three points boosted Wolfsburg

to 14th place -- a point clear of the relegation zone.

Felix Magath, who guided Wolfsburg to their league crown, took over after Wolves sacked former England manager Steve McClaren in February and has two games to save his side from relegation.

St Pauli are almost sure of being relegated after they were beaten 2-0 at Kaiserslautern.

The Hamburg-based side are bottom of the league, six points from safety, with two games left and an inferior goal difference compared to their relegation rivals.

Kaiserslautern are almost certain to stay up after the victory which lifts them up to 11th in the table.

League leaders Borussia Dortmund can win the Bundesliga title on Saturday if they beat Nuremberg at home and second-placed Bayer Leverkusen lose at relegation-threatened Cologne.

Despite having a 12-point lead at the start of March, Borussia have seen their lead cut to just five points and the title race could now go to the final day with the season set to finish on May 14.

After the Nuremberg game, Borussia face Bremen away and then Eintracht Frankfurt in Dortmund on the final day.