

Blackpool go down

AFP, London

Blackpool and Birmingham were relegated from the Premier League on Sunday as Wigan and Wolves scrambled to safety in a thrilling finale to the English season.

Blackpool's fairytale debut season in the top-flight came to an end at Old Trafford where they were beaten 4-2 by champions Manchester United while Birmingham were sent down after losing 2-1 at Tottenham.

The epicentre of the drama came at Molineux, where Wolves looked to be heading for humiliation against Blackburn after Jason Roberts, Brett Emerton and Junior Hoilett put Rovers 3-0 up at half-time.

But Mick McCarthy's men were thrown a lifeline when Jamie O'Hara scored on 73 minutes to make it 3-1 before Stephen Hunt pulled another goal back for Wolves three minutes from time.

At that stage Hunt's goal would have been enough to send Birmingham down on goals scored as the Blues held Spurs 1-1 at White Hart Lane after Craig Gardner cancelled out Roman Pavlyuchenko's opener for Tottenham.

Pavlyuchenko's second goal of the afternoon in the 90th minute was the final nail in the coffin as the League Cup winners' two-year stay in the Premier League came to a heart-breaking end.

At Old Trafford, Blackpool had dared to dream of a stunning upset over United

TOP SCORERS

21: Berbatov (Manchester United), Tevez (Manchester City)
18: van Persie (Arsenal)
17: Bent (Aston Villa)
15: Odemwingie (West Bromwich)
13: Campbell (Blackpool), Carroll (Newcastle/Liverpool), Hernandez (Manchester United), Kuyt (Liverpool), Malouda (Chelsea), van der Vaart (Tottenham)
12: Adam (Blackpool), Dempsey (Fulham), Drogba (Chelsea), Nolan (Newcastle)
11: Rooney (Manchester United)
10: Elmander (Bolton), Fletcher (Wolverhampton), Gyan (Sunderland), Kalou (Chelsea), Lampard (Chelsea), Maxi Rodriguez (Liverpool), Nasri (Arsenal), Pavlyuchenko (Tottenham)

when goals from Charlie Adam and Gary Taylor-Fletcher fired the Seasiders into a 2-1 lead following Park Ji-Sung's early opener.

But an equaliser from Brazilian midfielder Anderson was followed by an Ian Evatt own goal before Michael Owen wrapped up a 4-2 victory that sent Ian Holloway's popular minnows back to the Championship next season.

Wigan, who had started the day second from bottom, meanwhile completed their Houdini act when a Hugo Rodallega goal on 78 minutes gave them a priceless 1-0 win over Stoke at the Britannia Stadium.

The victory gave Wigan back-to-back wins for the first time this season, and followed last weekend's remarkable escape act when they came from 2-0 down to beat West Ham 3-2.

In other results Sunday, Manchester City made sure of automatic qualification to the Champions League after goals from Joleon Lescott and Edin Dzeko handed them a 2-0 win at Bolton.

But a dismal season for Arsenal finished with a 2-2 draw at Fulham, where goals from Robin van Persie and Theo Walcott cancelled out strikes from Steve Sidwell and Bobby Zamora.

The result left Arsenal in fourth place and means Arsene Wenger's men must go through qualifying to reach next season's Champions League group stage.

Elsewhere, Chelsea finished runners-up to United despite suffering a 1-0 defeat at Everton who scored through Jermaine Beckford.

Liverpool's season ended with a 1-0 defeat at Aston Villa which saw them finish in sixth place and means the Merseysiders will miss out on European football next season for the first time in 11 years.

In other results, West Bromwich Albion fought back from 3-0 down to secure a 3-3 draw at Newcastle while already-relegated West Ham were routed 3-0 at home by Sunderland.

RESULTS

Aston Villa 1 (Downing 33) Liverpool 0
Bolton 0 **Man City 2** (Lescott 43, Dzeko 62)
Everton 1 (Beckford 74) Chelsea 0
Fulham 2 (Sidwell 26, Zamora 57)
Arsenal 2 (Van Persie 29, Walcott 89)
Man Utd 4 (Park 21, Anderson 63, Evatt 74-og, Owen 81) Blackpool 2 (Adam 40, Taylor-Fletcher 57)
Newcastle 3 (Taylor 16, Lovenkrands 39, Olsson 47-og) West Brom 3 (Tchoyi 62, 71, 90)
Stoke 0 **Wigan 1** (Rodallega 78)
Tottenham 2 (Pavlyuchenko 49, 90) Birmingham 1 (Gardner 79)
West Ham 0 **Sunderland 3** (Zenden 17, Sessegnon 51, Riveros 90)
Wolves 1 (O'Hara 73, Hunt 87)
Blackburn 3 (Roberts 22,



Tottenham Hotspur striker Roman Pavlyuchenko kisses his ring after scoring the opening goal against Birmingham City during their Premier League encounter at White Hart Lane on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

Teams	P	D	W	L	GS	GA	P
Man Utd	38	23	11	4	78	37	80 -- Champions
Chelsea	38	21	8	9	69	33	71 -- Champions League
Man City	38	21	8	9	60	33	71 -- Champions League
Arsenal	38	19	11	8	72	43	68 -- Champions League
Tottenham	38	16	14	8	55	46	62 -- Europa League
Liverpool	38	17	7	14	59	44	58
Everton	38	13	15	10	51	45	54
Fulham	38	11	16	11	49	43	49
Aston Villa	38	12	12	14	48	59	48
Sunderland	38	12	11	15	45	56	47
West Brom	38	12	11	15	56	71	47
Newcastle	38	11	13	14	56	57	46
Stoke	38	13	7	18	46	48	46
Bolton	38	12	10	16	52	56	46
Blackburn	38	11	10	17	46	59	43
Wigan	38	9	15	14	40	61	42
Wolves	38	11	7	20	46	66	40
Birmingham	38	8	15	15	37	58	39 -- Relegated
Blackpool	38	10	9	19	55	78	39 -- Relegated

Udinese in Champions League

AFP, Rome



Udinese qualified for the Champions League for only the second time in their history after a 0-0 draw at home to AC Milan ensured they took fourth place in Serie A.

Lazio missed out on Europe's premier club competition on goal difference despite their 4-2 win at Lecce.

And Roma qualified for the Europa League at Juventus's expense with a 3-1 win at home to Sampdoria.

But Udinese matched their achievement from 2005 when they also finished fourth and qualified for the Champions League. Milan didn't look likely to upset the party as coach Massimiliano Allegri left out a host of first team players such as goalkeeper Christian Abbiati, centre-back Alessandro Nesta and striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic.

Udinese started the game brightly without creating too many clear-cut chances before Milan gradually snared control.

Goalkeeper Samir Handanovic had to be alert to dash from his line and deny Clarence Seedorf, set up by Antonio Cassano.

Handanovic then saved well from Pato, again teed up by Cassano, who then also served Kevin-Prince Boateng, only for the Ghana midfielder to shoot high.

Pato had a shot blocked in the second half before Udinese, sensing the urgency of the situation, stepped up a gear.

Antonio Di Natale had a great chance on 64 minutes as he scampered onto a defence-splitting through ball and forced Marco Amelia into a smart save.

Seedorf then brought down Alexis Sanchez in the box only for Amelia to tip Di Natale's penalty onto

Teams	P	D	W	L	GS	GA	P
Milan	38	24	10	4	65	24	82 -- Champions
Inter	38	23	7	8	69	42	76 -- Champions League
Napoli	38	21	7	10	59	39	70 -- Champions League
Udinese	38	20	6	12	65	43	66 -- Champions League
Lazio	38	20	6	12	55	39	66 -- Europa League
Roma	38	18	9	11	59	52	63 -- Europa League
Juventus	38	15	13	10	57	47	58
Palermo	38	17	5	16	58	63	56 -- Europa League
Fiorentina	38	12	15	11	49	44	51
Genoa	38	14	9	15	45	47	51
Chievo	38	11	13	14	38	40	46
Parma	38	11	13	14	39	47	46
Catania	38	12	10	16	40	52	46
Cagliari	38	12	9	17	44	51	45
Cesena	38	11	10	17	38	50	43
Bologna	38	11	12	15	35	52	42
Lecce	38	11	8	19	46	66	41
Sampdoria	38	8	12	18	33	49	36 -- relegated
Brescia	38	7	11	20	34	52	32 -- relegated

the post. Udinese were pushing and Gokhan Inler went as close as is possible to scoring when his long range effort beat Amelia, only to hit the bar, then post and bounce to safety.

But when the final whistle went, the stadium in Udine erupted into scenes of jubilation. Needing to win, Lazio were made to work and toil by Lecce before fulfilling their part of the bargain.

Twice in the first half they took the lead only to be pegged back but when Lecce goalkeeper Massimiliano Benassi was, harshly, dismissed in giving away a penalty in the second period, the fight went out of the hosts.

Tommaso Rocchi had given Lazio the lead on a breakaway only for Manuel Coppola to equalise with a slightly fortuitous lob.

Mauro Zarate put Lazio almost immediately back in front only for Ignacio Piatti to restore parity a second time.

But when Benassi was shown a straight red card for bringing down Rocchi early in the second half, Lecce's hopes all but died.

Zarate converted the spot-kick and just past the hour mark Giuseppe Vives shanked a corner past his own goalkeeper.

Roma only needed a point to ensure they took sixth place and the last Europa League spot but they made sure with victory.

RESULTS

Bologna 0 **Bari 4** (Grandolfo 28, 46, 54, Huseklepp 78)
Brescia 2 (Eder 19, Accardi 88) Fiorentina 2 (Vargas 2, Cerci 75)
Cagliari 1 (Feltscher 55-og) Parma 1 (Bojinov 34)
Genoa 3 (Floro Flores 6, 17, Palacio 45)
Cesena 2 (Bogdani 49-pen, Jimenez 86)
Inter Milan 3 (Pazzini 15, 60, Nagatomo 63) Catania 1 (Ledesma 66)
Palermo 1 (Nocerino 14) **Chievo 3** (Pellissier 41, Constant 67, Pulzetti 80)
Juventus 2 (Chiellini 47, Matri 84) Napoli 2 (Maggio 22, Lucarelli 70)
Lecce 2 (Coppola 33, Piatti 41) **Lazio 4** (Rocchi 7, Zarate 35, 54-pen, Vives 62-og)
Roma 3 (Totti 30, Vucinic 70, Borriello 86) Sampdoria 1 (Mannini 26)

It was perhaps bitter-sweet as a 2-1 defeat on the same ground to the same opponents last season proved cost Roma the Serie A title.

Daniele Mannini sent panic into the home fans when he gave Samp the lead on 26 minutes, only for a crisp Francesco Totti finish to level matters four minutes later.

Mirko Vucinic turned inside his marker and shot home at the near post after the break and Marco Borriello mopped up the loose ball after Totti's free-kick proved too hot for goalkeeper Junior Costa to handle.

Juventus needed Roma to lose to have any hope of avoiding a second successive seventh-placed finish and third year in six out of Europe.

But they could not even manage to beat Napoli, who held on for a 2-2 draw in Turin.

Sahin voted Germany's best

AFP, Berlin

German-born Turkish international Nuri Sahin, who is leaving Borussia Dortmund for Real Madrid, has been voted Bundesliga player of the 2010-11 season by his peers, Kicker magazine said Monday.

The 22-year-old midfielder was voted best outfield player with 46.1 per cent of the vote, the magazine's survey of 298 players showed, followed in second place by his Dortmund teammate Mario Goetze with 18.7 per cent.

Chilean Arturo Vidal from Bayer Leverkusen was third, followed by Bayern Munich's Dutch international Arjen Robben and teammate Mario Gomez in fifth.

Chelsea sack Ancelotti

AFP, London



Chelsea fired manager Carlo Ancelotti on Sunday, after a 1-0 loss at Everton completed a season which had "fallen short of expectations", the club said in a statement.

"Chelsea Football Club can confirm that Carlo Ancelotti parted company with the club today," a statement on Chelsea's website read.

"The owner and board would like to thank Carlo for his contribution and achievements since taking over as manager in July 2009, which included winning the Double for the first time in the club's history.

"However, this season's performances have fallen short of expectations and the club feels the time is right to make this change ahead of next season's preparations.

"Chelsea's long-term football objectives and ambitions remain unchanged and we will now be concentrating all our efforts on identifying a new manager."

Former AC Milan manager Ancelotti had



been a popular figure at Stamford Bridge and guided the club to the double in his first season.

However, he paid the ultimate price for a mid-season slump which witnessed Chelsea's worst run of league form in nearly 15 years that ultimately wrecked their

chances of defending the title. Ancelotti was the sixth manager of Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich's eight-year reign.

The respected Italian had been hired with the brief of turning Chelsea into European champions but under Ancelotti the Blues exited against Inter Milan in the last 16 last year before being beaten by Manchester United in this year's quarterfinals.

Ancelotti's authority had been undermined by the abrupt dismissal of his assistant Ray Wilkins in November, a dismissal which was followed by a disastrous form slump.

British media reported that Ancelotti, who had a year left to run on his contract, was notified of his dismissal by chief executive Ron Gourlay at Goodison Park following Sunday's defeat.

In his post-match press conference, Ancelotti had said he expected to meet Chelsea bosses next week to discuss his future.

"I am now on holiday - but I am not sure how long my holiday will be!" he said. "We haven't arranged any meeting but I think in the next week, now the season is finished, the club can address my job and they will take a decision."

"I have to wait and see what happens. "I don't want to say anything to the club - they can judge me on my job for two years."

British bookmakers William Hill immediately installed Andre Villas Boas -- who on Sunday clinched a League, Cup, and Europa League treble with Porto -- as favourite to replace Ancelotti.

Former Chelsea managers Guus Hiddink and Jose Mourinho were quoted at 7/2 followed by Harry Redknapp, Pep Guardiola and Marco Van Basten.

Hiddink, who guided Chelsea to the FA Cup in 2009 during a short stint as caretaker following the dismissal of Brazilian Luiz Felipe Scolari, is currently coaching Turkey.

The 64-year-old Dutchman said in a newspaper column on Sunday he had continued to advise Chelsea since his departure.

"It works well with Chelsea," Hiddink wrote in De Telegraaf. "Since I left two years ago I've been advising the club on things concerning the squad."

"Sometimes I become a sounding board. It costs me very little time and I can combine it well with my position with Turkey."

"There is no conflict at all."

Becks given green light

AFP, Los Angeles

Los Angeles Galaxy on Sunday gave the green light for David Beckham to play in former Manchester United teammate Gary Neville's testimonial on Tuesday.

The Major League Soccer side's technical director Bruce Arena said he had personally made the decision to let former England star Beckham return to Old Trafford to play in the match between a United selection and Juventus, a repeat of the 1999 Champions League semifinal.

The Galaxy will allow Beckham to miss an MLS match against Houston Dynamo on Wednesday before returning in time for a May 28 match against New England Revolution.

Beckham and Neville were, along with current United veterans Paul Scholes and Ryan Giggs, members of United's celebrated 'Class of 92', a youth side that produced players who would later appear in the trophy-winning senior teams put together by manager Sir Alex Ferguson.

Former England skipper Beckham has not pulled on a United shirt since leaving the club for Real Madrid in 2003.

The 'Class of 92' swiftly matured to win six Premier League titles, two FA Cups and the 1999 Champions League, which capped a treble-winning season.

Neville's brother Phil, who joined Everton in 2005, will also be back at Old Trafford for the Juventus encounter, when Gary Neville, 36, will end his 18-year United career.

He played his final senior game at West Brom in January.

In total Neville, who made his United debut as a 17-year-old against Torpedo Moscow, made 602 appearances for the club he has supported all his life, won eight Premier League titles, three FA Cups, two League Cups and the 1999 Champions League.

In addition, the defender won 85 England caps.

SPORTS POLL
WEEKLY QUESTION
Do you think the BCB can hire the new head coach by June 15?
Visit the sports page of www.thedailystar.net to cast vote
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What to WATCH

SET Max
Indian Premier League
Bangalore v Chennai
First Play-Off Match
Live from 8:30pm
TEN Cricket
West Indies v Pakistan
Second Test, Day 5
Live from 8:00pm
ESPN
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm
STAR Sports
French Open

DAY'S EVENT

Bangladesh League
Mohammedan v Muktijoddha
Time: 4:15pm
Venue: Bangabandhu