



Blackburn Rovers forward Yakubu (2nd from L) celebrates one of his two goals with teammates during their Premier League clash against Arsenal at Ewood Park yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Arsenal Blackburn-ed

AFP, Blackburn

Ayegbeni Yakubu scored twice to turn up the heat on Arsene Wenger as Blackburn twice came from behind to defeat Arsenal 4-3 at Ewood Park on Saturday.

Blackburn fans marched before kick-off demanding the removal of manager Steve Kean after a poor run of form.

But they were celebrating by the end as Blackburn leapfrogged Arsenal in the table after a Yakubu-inspired victory, the Nigerian striker unwanted by Everton but eager to prove he can still cut it at this level.

It leaves Arsenal with just four points from their opening five games and means Wenger's side have now conceded 12 goals in the last two away games in the Premier League.

The defeat also exposed the frailty in Arsenal's defence, which conceded two own goals during a pulsating contest.

The Gunners had taken the lead on 10 minutes, Alex Song splitting the defence with a weighted pass to find Gervinho who rifled a low angled shot

shot beyond Paul Robinson.

But despite dominating play Arsenal were unable to add to their lead and were rocked on 25 minutes when Yakubu conjured a goal out of nothing, picking up David Hoilett's pass to finish beyond the advancing Wojciech Szczesny.

However Arsenal were back in front within nine minutes, when new signing Mikel Arteta opened his account for the club, sweeping in Aaron Ramsey's cross with aplomb to put Arsenal 2-1 up.

Yet with the game under control, the defensive brittleness which has become Arsenal's hallmark in recent seasons reared its head early in the second half.

There appeared to be little danger Ruben Rochina chipped in an innocuous free-kick from near the right-hand side of the penalty box, but Arsenal's failure to clear cost them dear as Song diverted the ball into his own net.

Sensing Arsenal's unease, Blackburn ramped up the pressure and on 59 minutes they took the lead after another setpiece.

A Hoilett corner found Steven

Nzonzi at the far side of the area, and the Frenchman lashed a shot towards the six-yard box which was turned in by Yakubu for the Nigerian striker's second of the match.

A wretched afternoon for Arsenal got even worse on 69 minutes when a swift counter-attack down the right saw Martin Olsson burst clear.

The Swedish international accelerated past Johan Djourou before beating Alex Song and cutting back into the six-yard area where Laurent Koscielny steered into his own net for the second own goal of the match.

Substitute Marouane Chamakh raised Arsenal's hopes of a comeback when he headed in on 85 minutes as the Londoners laid siege to the Blackburn goal.

Robin Van Persie had a close-range effort well saved by Robinson while both Chamakh and Per Mertesacker should have hit the target with headed chances.

Theo Walcott might have had legitimate claims for a penalty when he was bundled over by Robinson, but Rovers were not to be denied their first win of the season.

## Scholes rules out Euro win

AFP, London

England players are pampered and after the "complete disaster" of their 2010 World Cup campaign have no chance of winning Euro 2012, former England midfielder Paul Scholes claimed on Saturday.

The ex-Manchester United star also hit out at managers who he believes take on the national team job for the money.

Scholes made his comments in an outspoken interview with United fanzine Red News.

"The England team these days are treated like world superstars from what they do at club level," he said.

"I don't think that helps when they go to England (duty) because they're all mollycoddled and pampered."

"They're treated like they're world champions before actually being a successful team to do that."

## Fergie stays cautious

AFP, Manchester



Sir Alex Ferguson believes Chelsea still represent one of Manchester United's sternest challengers for the Premier League despite manager Andre Villas-Boas's relative lack of experience.

The spotlight has been off Chelsea, who have been challengers for the last seven years, and switched closer to home with Manchester City joining near-neighbours United at the top of the Premier League.

But Ferguson says the focus and publicity being away from the Londoners will suit Villas-Boas down to the ground.

The top-flight's youngest coach would have been boosted by the settling in period as he finds his feet in his new home.

And although the 33-year-old former Porto manager faces his biggest challenge yet when he faces Ferguson on Sunday, the Manchester United manager anticipates his side will still be taking on one of their biggest rivals to their crown.

"They will be there at the end of the season, there is no doubt about that," Ferguson said.

"At the moment, of course, the two Manchester teams are enjoying the publicity that

comes from the predictions that they are going to be involved in the winning of the league.

"In the background lurks Chelsea. They don't need the publicity. They will be enjoying being out of the profile at the moment."

Ferguson has praised Villas-Boas for adapting to his new surroundings at one of the biggest clubs in Europe.

Having replaced Carlo Ancelotti after arriving from Porto in the summer, Ferguson believes he has already left his mark on his new team.

"The new coach has started very well. For a young man who has come to Chelsea, it is a great challenge," he said.

"It is a hard challenge at his age but when you go to a new club, you hope you get an immediate response. He has got that."

"They are a team with great experience and they will always be a challenge to us."

"But it will be a fantastic game. The games between both sides over the last seven years have been very close affairs. There is usually just one goal in it and it will be very tight again."

Ferguson has reported no fresh injury concerns from their Champions League game in Benfica, with captain Nemanja Vidic (calf), Tom Cleverley (foot) and Rafael (shoulder) still out, while Danny Welbeck is not yet ready to return.

### SPORTS POLL

#### WEEKLY QUESTION

Who should be the Bangladesh cricket captain?

Visit the sports page of [www.thedailystar.net](http://www.thedailystar.net) to cast vote

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### What to WATCH

#### TEN Cricket

Sri Lanka v Australia

Third Test, Day 3

Live from 10:30am

Zimbabwe v Pakistan

Second T20I

Live from 6:00pm

#### ESPN

English Premiership

Tottenham v Liverpool

Live from 6:25pm

Man United v Chelsea

Live from 8:55pm

#### STAR Sports

MotoGP World Championship

Aragon Grand Prix

Live from 2:57pm

English Premiership

Fulham v Manchester City

Live from 7:55pm

#### TEN Sports

Serie A

Siena v Juventus

Live from 6:55pm

#### TEN Action+

Primera Liga

Levante v Real Madrid

Live from 12:00am (Monday)



Brazil President Dilma Rousseff (L) and football legend Pele hold a national team jersey (reading 1,000 days) during a visit to the Mineiro Stadium in Belo Horizonte on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

## 1,000 days to go

AFP, Rio de Janeiro



Brazil launched its countdown to the 2014 World Cup on Friday, ticking off 1,000 days before it hosts the top international football tournament, as FIFA reiterated concerns over delays.

Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff kicked off the event in the city of Belo Horizonte by announcing new infrastructure investments and renewing her pledge that her country would be ready, despite facing a formidable list of problems and being behind schedule.

"Investing in infrastructure is a way of saying no to the international crisis affecting countries in the Euro zone and the United States," said Rousseff, who was accompanied by retired football great Pele, named as Brazil's World Cup ambassador.

Brazil's O Globo newspaper noted that, within the next 1,000 days, the country has to complete 52 major works, 12 stadiums, change several laws and decide its team's selection.

FIFA, the international football federation that runs the World Cup, expressed renewed concerns over the state of Brazil's preparations.

"To be honest, there is still a lot of work to be done, which is normal with 1,000 days ahead of the kick-off on 12 June 2014," said FIFA secretary general Jerome Valcke.

"It is essential that we must move quickly now and work closely with the authorities and host cities to make it all happen. And we are not talking about stadiums only, but also about all the infrastructure around such as airport capacities, public transport, level of accommodation to make this FIFA World Cup a memorable experience for teams and fans."

To push things along, a Brazilian judge ordered workers who have been striking at the worksite renovating Rio's famed Maracana Stadium -- the likely venue for the World Cup final -- to get back on the job.

The government offered guarantees this week that all stadiums would be ready in time. Nine of 12 stadiums being renovated or built will be complete in December 2012, it said.

But it also admitted that work had not yet started on five of 13 airports that need expanding to welcome millions of tourists.

## Diego took bribes too?

AFP, Buenos Aires

Diego Maradona, who this week accused his successor as Argentina coach Sergio Batista of accepting bribes, is also tainted by corruption, according to a claim made here Saturday.

Gabriel Buono, Maradona's former private secretary, made the accusation, saying of his ex boss: "He talks about bribes but if you are looking for someone who is corrupt the first person is Maradona - I've got all the evidence."

Maradona caused a stir on Thursday when alleging that Batista had taken bribes to include certain players in the national team.

Batista responded by threatening legal action against Maradona, now coach of UAE club Al Wasl, for telling TyC Sports broadcaster that "after we (Maradona and his entourage) took over the team there was an end to bribes".



BCB Cup  
Bangladesh v GP-BCB NCA  
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium