

Merciless Barcelona

REUTERS, Madrid



A hat-trick by Lionel Messi inspired Barcelona to an 8-0 rout of Osasuna in La Liga on Saturday as the champions responded with a devastating performance after a poor week by their high standards.

The Champions League holders were accused of complacency after blowing leads against Real Sociedad and AC Milan to twice draw 2-2 but they stormed into a 5-0 halftime lead against Osasuna at the Nou Camp.

David Villa scored twice, Cesc Fabregas, Xavi and visiting defender Roversio (own goal) joined Messi on the scoresheet as Barca climbed

to second in the table with seven points from three matches. "It was the same last year, people question you when you don't win but this is normal," Barca defender Sergio Busquets told Spanish television. "We played very well, we had a lot of chances, it was a very good performance."

Barca are two points behind leaders Valencia who were 1-0 winners at Sporting Gijon earlier in the day after striker Roberto Soldado scored his fifth league goal of the season.

Sevilla, in third spot, joined Barca on seven points after Frederic Kanoute scored the only goal in a 1-0 home win over Real Sociedad.

Soldado, in the running for a place in Spain's Euro 2012 squad, tapped in at the back post for Valencia after Gijon keeper Juan Pablo could only parry a shot in the 29th minute.

Valencia, held to a disappointing 0-0 draw at Racing Genk in the Champions League in midweek, maintained their 100 percent La Liga record.

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Bremen edge to top

AFP, Berlin



Ten-man Werder Bremen went top of the German league on Saturday thanks to a 1-1 draw at Nuremberg despite having Germany goalkeeper Tim Wiese sent off.

With Bayern Munich playing at Schalke on Sunday, Bremen took the opportunity to go top as they picked up a point, despite losing Wiese after just 17 minutes.

The 29-year-old was shown a straight red after a desperate, rugby-style tackle on Nuremberg striker Christian Eigler, who was through on goal, which forced Bremen to bring on reserve goalkeeper Sebastian Mieltz.

Werder then took the lead when Turkey midfielder Mehmet Ekici scored against his former club just seven minutes later.

Torrential rain threatened to flood the Nuremberg pitch in the first half and delayed the start of the second, but the hosts levelled on 62 minutes with a late header from defender Philipp Wollscheid.

"It certainly wasn't boring," said coach Thomas Schaaf. "We weakened our position with the sending off, but in spite of that we managed to score a goal."

"The team struggled afterwards, but they kept their discipline and under these conditions we deserved the point."

Anelka to leave Chelsea?

AFP, London

Chelsea manager Andre Villas-Boas has revealed France striker Nicolas Anelka is set to leave Stamford Bridge at the end of the season.

Anelka's contract expires at the conclusion of the current campaign and Villas-Boas claims the former Arsenal and Real Madrid star has indicated he is prepared to run down his current deal.

The 32-year-old is believed to be happy to see what options are available to him as a free agent even though he has been a regular member of Chelsea's attack since Villas-Boas took charge in the close-season.

Asked if Anelka had shown signs of wanting to leave, Villas-Boas replied: "Yes. It might not be the player's expectancy to renew (his contract)."

"We will make our efforts for him to renew but Nico has his own decision to make and I am not sure he will be willing."

"Nico as a person is very, very happy and he still belongs to Chelsea in the last year of his contract."

Didier Drogba's future at Chelsea is also in doubt as the Ivory Coast striker is yet to agree an extension to his contract, which runs out next year.



Barcelona sensation Lionel Messi (R) celebrates one of his three goals with teammate Cesc Fabregas during their La Liga clash against Osasuna at the Camp Nou on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

Reds routed

AFP, London



Tottenham swept to their biggest win over Liverpool for 48 years as Luka Modric inspired a 4-0 victory over the nine-man visitors at White Hart Lane on Sunday.

Modric opened the scoring with a stunning strike early in the first half and the Croatian midfielder pulled the strings for the rest of the game as shambolic Liverpool imploded in spectacular fashion.

Charlie Adam and Martin Skrtel were sent off for second bookings either side of half-time and Spurs took full advantage as Jermain Defoe increased their lead before Togo striker Emmanuel Adebayor netted twice on his home debut.

Liverpool boss Kenny Dalglish, who has been upset with refereeing decisions this season and met referees' chief Mike Riley last week, was furious with Mike Jones as the pair walked down the tunnel at the interval, but his complaints can't hide a dismal display that condemned his team to their second successive defeat.

Spurs were looking for their fifth straight home win over Liverpool and dominated from kick-off.

A long passing move resulted in Gareth Bale crossing for Defoe and the striker getting tackled on the edge of the area by Jose Enrique.

The ball fell to Modric 25 yards from goal and he did not break stride as he powered his finish into the top corner, with his effort still rising as it hit the roof of the net.

It got worse for Liverpool when Adam received two bookings in the space of 16 minutes.

Skrtel saw red when he went through the back of Bale and Defoe piled on the misery for Liverpool a clinical strike in the 66th minute.

The third goal came when Defoe's shot was spilled by Reina and Adebayor chipped over the goalkeeper before stroking the ball into an empty net.

There was still time for Togo star Adebayor to add his second in the dying moments with a half-volley from close range.

RESULTS

Aston Villa 1 (Agbonlahor 13)
Newcastle 1 (Best 57)
Blackburn 4 (Yakubu 25, 59, Song 50-og, Koscielny 69-og) Arsenal 3 (Gervinho 10, Arteta 34, Chamakh 85)
Bolton 1 (Petrov 64-pen) **Norwich 2** (Pilkington 37, Johnson 42)
Everton 3 (Jagielka 33, Vellios 84, Drenthe 90) Wigan 1 (Di Santo 31)
Swansea 3 (Sinclair 14-pen, Lita 24, Dyer 49) West Brom 0
Wolves 0 **QPR 3** (Barton 8, Faurlin 10, Campbell 87)
Tottenham 4 (Modric 7, Defoe 66, Adebayor 68, 90) Liverpool 0

The point leaves Bremen top on goal difference, and level on 13 points with Moenchengladbach, to leave Bayern just a point behind before Sunday's game in Gelsenkirchen.

'Gladbach kept up their impressive start to the season with a 1-0 win at bottom side Hamburg.

Brazil-born Belgium striker Igor de Camargo got the crucial goal with a header on 66 minutes to knock Bayern down to third.

Hamburg remain rooted to the bottom of the table with one point from six games as pressure grows on coach Michael Oenning.

Having lost 2-0 at Chelsea in their opening Champions League game on Tuesday, Bayer Leverkusen were dismantled by Cologne as Germany striker Lukas Podolski and Slovakian forward partner Milivoje Novakovic ran riot in a 4-1 victory.

While Novakovic scored the opening goal after being set up by Podolski, the Slovakian then turned provider to set up both of his teammate's goals as Cologne took a 3-0 lead after 54 minutes.

Leverkusen captain Simon Rolfes pulled a goal back, but things got worse for coach Robin Dutt when he saw Germany winger Andre Schuerrle sent off for a heavy tackle on defender Christian Eichner just before Novakovic and Podolski combined to set up midfielder Mato Jajalo for the fourth goal on 90 minutes.

RESULTS

Bayer Leverkusen 1 (Rolfes 70)
Cologne 4 (Novakovic 44, Podolski 47, 54, Jajalo 90)
Hamburg 0 **Borussia M'gladbach 1** (de Camargo 66)
Nuremberg 1 (Wollscheid 62) Werder Bremen 1 (Ekici 24)
Hertha Berlin 2 (Lell 46, Torun 57)
Augsburg 2 (Hosogai 20, Callsen-Bracker 64)
Hoffenheim 3 (Babel 20, Roberto Firmino 23, 85) VfL Wolfsburg 1 (Dejagah 67)

Crisis clubs fight to a draw

REUTERS, Rome



Inter Milan and AS Roma picked up their first points of the Serie A season on Saturday after sharing an entertaining 0-0 draw at the San Siro.

Cagliari went top when they picked up their second win by defeating promoted Novara 2-1 in Sardinia.

Brazilian striker Thiago Ribeiro headed the dominant home side ahead on 38 minutes and Joaquin Larrivey doubled the lead with four minutes to go.

Japanese forward Takayuki Morimoto pulled a late goal back but it was not enough to prevent Novara slipping to defeat.

Roma, still coming to terms with coach Luis Enrique's new system, dominated possession but Inter, who lost at home to Trabzonspor in the Champions League on Wednesday, had the better chances in a surprisingly open game.

Pablo Osvaldo, Roma's Argentine recruit, had efforts saved at the beginning of each half while Diego Milito, Mauro Zarate, Diego Forlan and Wesley Sneijder all went close as Inter dominated after the break.

"They played the ball around a lot which made it difficult for us," Inter coach Gian Piero Gasperini told Sky TV.

"It was a shame we didn't make more of the spaces they left behind when going forward. We also need to be more clinical with the final ball but sometimes it just doesn't want to go in."

Roma controlled the early exchanges and

RESULTS

Cagliari 2 (Ribeiro 38, Larrivey 86)
Novara 1 (Morimoto 89)
Inter Milan 0 Roma 0

had the first chance when Osvaldo tested Julio Cesar's reflexes with a powerful shot.

Looking to avoid a fourth straight defeat as Inter coach, Gasperini ignored president Massimo Moratti's advice to play four at the back.

His defence was almost breached on 19 minutes when Fabio Borini's 20-metre shot forced Julio Cesar into a good save.

Roma, who lost at home to Cagliari in their season opener, again looked far from comfortable at the back and the home side went close to scoring three times in the first period.

Bogdan Lobont, who replaced Maarten Stekelenburg in goal when the Dutchman was carried off on a stretcher after receiving a kick on the head in the 18th minute, had to be alert to hold a 30-metre drive from Inter new boy Forlan.

Two minutes later the Romanian keeper stood tall to block a Milito shot at the

near post.

The Roma defence was carved open again on 36 minutes as Sneijder, a growing influence in the middle of the park, set up Yuto Nagatomo and his fierce strike from the edge of the box flashed millimetres over the bar.

Julio Cesar then had to spread himself to thwart Osvaldo, Rodrigo Taddei fired over from distance and Borini's goalbound shot was blocked as Roma started the second half in determined mood.

It was Inter though who had the best chance early in the second half when Milito, unmarked five metres out, somehow headed Sneijder's bending free kick narrowly wide.

Menezes in race against time

AFP, Rio De Janeiro

Brazil coach Mano Menezes has admitted that he faces a race against time to turn his side into genuine contenders to win the 2014 World Cup on home soil.

"We have to acknowledge that Brazil are not playing the best football in the world just now and that is the way it has been for some time now," Menezes said in an interview with the magazine Veja, in which he also admitted that Germany have set the example to follow.

"The Germans started a gradual process of renovation that has seen them improve over a number of years, and it is about time Brazil did the same thing," he continued.

"I am running against the clock, but there is still time to create a winning team."

Quarter-finalists at the recent Copa America, Brazil will not be involved in the long South American qualifying campaign for the 2014 World Cup finals because they qualify directly as hosts.

SPORTS POLL

WEEKLY QUESTION

Who should be the Bangladesh cricket captain?

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TEN Cricket

Sri Lanka v Australia
Third Test, Day 4
Live from 10:30am

ESPN

Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm



BCB Cup

Bangladesh v Bangladesh A
One-Day Match
Time: 9:00am
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Mirpur