



Manchester United striker Michael Owen (L) scores the opening goal against Leeds United during their League Cup encounter at Elland Road on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Spain back on top

AFP, Paris

England have dropped four places to eighth in the latest FIFA rankings released on Wednesday with Uruguay, Portugal, Italy and Brazil overhauling Fabio Capello's side in standings based on results over a four-year timeframe.

World and European champions Spain have meanwhile leapfrogged Holland to take back top spot following a friendly win over Chile and a Euro 2012 drubbing of Liechtenstein.

### TOP TEN

1. Spain (+1)
2. Netherlands (-1)
3. Germany
4. Uruguay (+1)
5. Portugal (+3)
6. Italy (+1)
7. Brazil (-1)
8. England (-4)
9. Croatia (+1)

Germany remain in third place with July's Copa America champions Uruguay fourth.

The Dutch had taken top spot last month after Spain had held the position for over a year prior to a friendly loss to Italy which allowed Holland to become, albeit briefly, the seventh team to occupy the top spot since rankings were created after Argentina, Brazil, France, Germany, Italy and Spain.

Brazil slipped one place to seventh despite a recent friendly win over Ghana and a goalless draw with neighbours Argentina.

France, not seeded for the World Cup qualifiers after a recent slump but now unbeaten in 13 matches, are up to 12th.

### SPORTS POLL

#### WEEKLY QUESTION

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# Arsenal turn it around Inter sack Gasperini

## Football

AFP, London

Arsenal avoided a humiliating League Cup third round exit against Shrewsbury as the troubled Gunners came from behind to win 3-1, while Manchester United cruised to a 3-0 victory over old rivals Leeds on Tuesday.

Arsenal were in chaos early on as Mark Wright fired against a post and Shrewsbury went ahead when Collins powered home a header from Marvin Morgan's cross in the 16th minute.

The turning point came when Reuben Hazel missed a golden opportunity to increase Shrewsbury's advantage.

Arsenal equalised moments later through Gibbs' header and young winger Oxlade-Chamberlain put the hosts ahead with a long-range shot that trickled past Shrewsbury goalkeeper Ben Smith.

That settled Arsenal's nerves and a first goal for on-loan Chelsea midfielder Benayoun killed the tie.

At Elland Road, Michael Owen bagged a brace as Manchester United gained a measure of revenge for their shock FA Cup defeat against Leeds with a routine win.

Sir Alex Ferguson's team were left with red faces after Leeds, then languishing in League One, won 1-0 in the FA Cup third round at Old Trafford in January 2010.

But there was no repeat of that shock scoreline this time as Owen's double and a Ryan Giggs goal secured an

emphatic success on United's first visit to Elland Road for eight years.

United were in front after 15 minutes when Owen converted Park Ji-Sung's pass.

Owen produced another cool finish for his second goal from Mame Diouf's cross in the 32nd minute and Giggs put the result beyond doubt with a fine indi-

vidual effort on the stroke of half-time. Stoke beat Tottenham 7-6 on penalties after a dour 0-0 draw at the Britannia Stadium.

Thomas Sorensen was the hero for Stoke as the Danish goalkeeper saved a spot-kick from Massimo Luongo to end an epic shoot-out.

Newcastle left it late to go through with a 4-3 win at Nottingham Forest thanks to a goal from Fabricio Coloccini in the last minute of extra-time.

Forest had earlier come from behind three times with Robbie Findley, Matt Derbyshire and Marcus Tudgay cancelling out Peter Lovenkrands' double and Danny Simpson's 93rd-minute strike.

Aston Villa boss Alex McLeish won this tournament with Birmingham last season, but he won't be going back to Wembley as Bolton won 2-0 at Villa Park.

Wolves boss Mick McCarthy made eight changes from the team beaten by QPR, but his stand-ins still thrashed Millwall 5-0.

Blackburn built on the momentum from Saturday's win over Arsenal as Steve Kean's team beat League One strugglers Leyton Orient 3-2 at Ewood Park.

AFP, Rome



As expected Inter Milan on Wednesday sacked Gian Piero Gasperini from his coaching role following the previous day's 3-1 Serie A defeat at newly-promoted

Novara.

The club has been put in the temporary charge of assistants Giuseppe Baresi and Daniele Bernazzani.

Gasperini lasted only three months in the job, taking charge of three league games and one match in the Champions League, losing three and drawing one.

Earlier in the day Inter president Massimo Moratti had hinted that Gasperini's time was up.

Speaking to journalists as he arrived at his offices in Milan, Moratti was asked if Gasperini would be staying but replied: "I don't think so."

"It's a difficult situation, especially for him. I haven't thought about a replacement yet."

"I don't think it's a problem related to his relationship with the players."

"His is a difficult situation from every point of view. We'll see during the course of the day."

"I didn't like anything I saw last night."

The 53-year-old Gasperini was not even at training on Wednesday morning with Baresi and Bernazzani taking the session

instead.

The coach was instead in talks with Inter technical director Marco Branca and sports director Piero Ausilio, according to press reports.

And that resulted in his sacking.

Inter failed to win a single game under Gasperini, who had courted controversy by



favouring a back three rather than the traditional back four.

They lost away to Palermo (4-3) and Novara in the league while also being beaten at home by Trabzonspor (1-0) in the Champions League.

They were also held to a 0-0 draw at home to Roma in Serie A and lost the Italian Supercup to bitter rivals AC Milan in August.

## Villarreal win at last

AFP, Madrid



LFP

A Giuseppe Rossi strike helped Villarreal to their first win of the La Liga season on Tuesday as they beat Mallorca 2-0 and finally clicking into gear after a disappointing start to the season.

Villarreal had only picked up one point ahead of the game and were beaten at home by Bayern Munich in the Champions League but they responded against Mallorca with a far more assured display.

Nilmar burst through on goal in the first minute but he over-ran the ball and then minutes later Rossi was a lot more clinical as he slipped the ball over the keeper Dudu Aouate to give the home side the lead.

Villarreal were in charge and Mallorca were defending deeply. Ruben Cani had a shot saved by Aouate before half time and then after the break Nilmar did find the back of the net after being set up by Borja Valero.

Earlier Sevilla missed the chance to take provisional top spot but nevertheless maintained their unbeaten run as they hung on for a 0-0 draw at Osasuna.

The hosts had plenty to prove after their 8-0 thrashing by Barcelona at the weekend and attacked from the outset with Roland Lamah in particular causing plenty of problems for Sevilla who have their sights on a Champions League place this season.

Osasuna were torn apart at the Nou Camp on Saturday night and while this was a very different display they got no reward for their

impressive attacking display. Juan Nino had excellent chances in both halves while Sevilla also survived a penalty claim when Diego Perotti appeared to handle the ball in the area.

Sevilla though could have stolen the points when Jesus Navas was denied from point blank range by keeper Andres Fernandez mid-way through the second half.

Sevilla move up to third with eight points from four games, one point behind leaders Valencia and Real Betis.

Real Sociedad, meanwhile, move up to fifth after beating Granada 1-0 in slightly fortuitous circumstances with a Daniel Estrada cross catching out the Granada keeper Roberto Fernandez who had come off his line.

## Jose accuses press

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid coach Jose Mourinho accused the press Tuesday of unfairly bashing his club for brawling while praising the Spain squad for the same behaviour.

"I don't know if what Khedira did can be called a brawl. To me it was not a brawl," the coach said.

"A brawl is what happened in Spain-Chile and you said it was spectacular, incredible, that it showed the team spirit, that it showed tremendous character and that the players were like brothers."

"Real Madrid does it and, well, we are a group of bandits."

Mourinho said he was surprised at Khedira's sending off because he is a "very, very, very calm player."



Two fans cheer as they watch Fenerbahce take on Manisaspor in a Turkish League match at the Sukru Saracoglu Stadium on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Only women and kids in the crowd

AFP, Istanbul

A 40,000 crowd made up entirely of women and children watched a Turkish league match on Tuesday after sports authorities hit on a novel way to deal with crowd trouble at top flight side Fenerbahce.

Media reports on Wednesday said the league match against Manisaspor passed off without incident at the Sukru Saracoglu Stadium in Istanbul after men were barred from attending.

The Turkish Football Federation (TFF) said the decision had been made to play its matches behind closed doors before coming up with a more unusual solution for Tuesday's match.

The game finished in a 1-1 draw, leaving Fenerbahce top of the Turkish league table.