



Chelsea forward Fernando Torres (R) controls the ball during their League Cup tie against Liverpool at Stamford Bridge on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

City, L'pool in semis

Football

REUTERS, London

Manchester City edged past Arsenal and Liverpool beat Chelsea to reach the League Cup semifinals on Tuesday while Cardiff City also made the last four on an emotional night in south Wales.

Premier League leaders City won at Arsenal for the first in 36 years with a late goal by Sergio Aguero earning a 1-0 victory against a much-changed home side in front of a 60,000 crowd.

Maxi Rodriguez and Martin Kelly scored in the second half as Liverpool beat struggling Chelsea 2-0--their second win at Stamford Bridge in 10 days--to heap more pressure on the west London side's Portuguese manager Andre Villas-Boas.

Blackburn Rovers' dismal season took another turn for the worse when the Premier League's bottom club lost 2-0 at Championship (second division) side Cardiff City, who have reached the semi-finals for the first time since 1966.

Manchester United host another Championship side, Crystal Palace, at Old Trafford on Wednesday.

It was a poignant night in the Welsh capital with a ceremony in memory of Wales manager Gary Speed held before kickoff after his death on Sunday.

There was also a minute's silence at The Emirates for Speed with spontaneous applause breaking out for the former Leeds United, Everton, Newcastle United and Bolton Wanderers midfielder who was found hanged at his home in Cheshire.

City manager Roberto Mancini shuffled his squad but still fielded a side packed with internationals including former Arsenal midfielder Samir Nasri who was roundly booed by the home fans whenever he touched the ball.

Arsenal were the more lively side but struggled to create many clear chances with Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain and Park chu-Young having their best attempts in the first half.

Gignac back in frame

AFP, Marseille

Marseille striker Andre-Pierre Gignac returned to training with the first-team squad on Wednesday, a week after being dropped to the reserves over a row with coach Didier Deschamps.

A statement on Marseille's website revealed the news, a day after the club had indicated that Gignac would have to apologise "to the entire squad" before being reinstated.

The 25-year-old, capped 16 times by France, was dropped for last weekend's match against bitter rivals Paris Saint-Germain.

Juve stay unbeaten

AFP, Rome



League leaders Juventus twice fought back from two goals down to earn a thrilling 3-3 draw at Napoli on Tuesday and stretch their unbeaten start in Serie A to 12 games.

The Old Lady of Turin also opened up a two-point lead over second placed AC Milan having battled back from 2-0 and 3-1 deficits.

Napoli blew the chance to reignite their title chances and the point leaves them down in sixth and nine points behind Juve.

Goals from Marek Hamsik and a Goran Pandev brace looked to have given Napoli victory but the visitors hit back through Alessandro Matri, Marcelo Estigarribia and Simone Pepe.

Napoli suffered a blow before kick-off as top scorer Edinson Cavani was ruled out with injury but his replacement Pandev didn't disappoint.

There was early drama when the hosts were awarded a penalty on the quarter hour mark after Andrea Pirlo's rash challenge on Ezequiel Lavezzi.

Hamsik stepped up to take the spot-kick and coolly slotted home off the post, only for the referee to order it to be retaken for encroachment.

Television replays showed most of the players in the area were Juve ones.

At the second time of asking, the Slovakia midfielder blazed his effort over the bar and although a Juve player may have been in the area, this time there was no retake.

Napoli did not have to wait long to take the lead and did so courtesy of Hamsik on 23 minutes.

Lavezzi swung a free-kick into the box and Leonardo Bonucci's attempted headed clearance was weak, giving Hamsik, who had been in an offside position when the free-kick was taken, a simple headed finish from six yards.

Napoli were in total control and Pandev wasted a pair of glorious opportunities.

Gianluigi Buffon got down well to save his first after the Macedonia forward had made space, but Pandev got his angles all wrong on the second from Lavezzi's pull-back.

Pandev doubled Napoli's lead five minutes from the break. After Christian Maggio and Pirlo challenged for the ball it broke kindly for Pandev inside the box, and the forward's finish with his weaker right foot was class.

Juve earned a lifeline three minutes into the second period as Matri converted Arturo Vidal's pass, although he was helped by a huge gap opening up in the home defence as several defenders had been dragged out of position.

Juve failed to build on that momentum and Pandev seemed to have killed the game midway through the half.

Bonucci over-committed himself on a cross from Maggio and Pandev controlled, turned and shot home in off the post in a flash.

However, just four minutes later Napoli's defence went walkabout again and Estigarribia was left unmarked at the back post to slot under Morgan De Sanctis.

Neymar calls ref a thief

AFP, Sao Paulo

Brazil's 19-year-old superstar Neymar revealed on Wednesday that he has been ordered to pay 6,000 euros (\$8,000) in damages for branding a referee a "thief" on his Twitter account.

He also announced that he would appeal against the decision, handed down by a court in Sao Paulo on Tuesday.

"It was never my intention to offend the referee," the Santos forward wrote on his personal website.

According to his lawyer, Neymar was not even the author of the message criticising referee Sandro Meira Ricci that appeared on his Twitter account after Santos' 4-2 defeat against Victoria in August 2010.

The lawyer claimed the message was written by a friend of Neymar's who had access to the account.

Neymar said he deleted the message "immediately" after being informed of its existence.

"My mistake was not to have taken the necessary precautions," he said.

Barca bounce back

AP, Barcelona



Alexis Sanchez scored twice as Barcelona bounced back from its first loss of the season with a 4-0 victory over Rayo Vallecano in the Spanish league on Tuesday.

A stubborn Rayo held Barcelona at the Camp Nou until the 29th minute, when the Chile forward struck for his first goal since the season opener in August. Sanchez added a second in the 41st minute and David Villa made it 3-0 just two minutes later.

Five minutes after the restart, a solo effort by Lionel Messi brought the Argentina forward his 16th league goal of the season-matching Cristiano Ronaldo's league-leading tally.

Barcelona, which fell to its first loss of the season last Saturday at Getafe, moved within three points of league leader Madrid, which has one game in hand.

The Catalans easily recovered from that defeat although the Madrid side proved tough to break through as it disrupted Barcelona's ability to move the ball out of the backfield early on.

Andres Iniesta returned from injury and was Barcelona's best player in the early stages as he tested goalkeeper David Cobeno with a long-range shot early on, while counterpart Victor Valdes tipped Michel Sanchez's shot over the bar at the other end.

Alexis, who has started to find his rhythm following a near two-month injury layoff, received the ball from Messi and cut back past Alejandro Arribas before floating a shot around Cobeno off the inside of the far post for the opener.

Rayo continued to try and cut Barcelona's midfield build up and find Lass Bangoura on the counter, but Sanchez helped put the game out of reach 12 minutes later. Messi threaded a pass into the area for Xavi Hernandez, who misjudged it and the ball came off his heel to Sanchez, who chested it down before poking past Cobeno.

Gerard Pique burst forward to find Daniel Alves alone inside the area in the 43rd and the Brazil defender slid the ball over to Villa, who only needed to beat Cobeno for his fifth league goal.

Barcelona picked up where it left off after the restart as Alves played Messi down the right side and the Argentina forward burst past one defender to get clear into the area and tuck a left-footed shot under Cobeno for his 26th goal of the season.

Barcelona has outscored opponents 34-0 in eight league matches this season at the Camp Nou, where it has not conceded a goal in 11 consecutive league games.

The 17th round game was brought forward as European champion Barcelona is set to play the Club World Cup in Japan on the corresponding date in mid-December.

Madrid leads with 34 points, Barcelona has 31 and Valencia is third with 27 points.



BT
Bangladesh v Pakistan
First ODI
Live from 1:30pm

ESPN
Sportscenter India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm

TEN Sports
UEFA Europa League
Schalke 04 v Steaua Bucharest
Live from 11:55pm
Redbull Salzburg v PSG
Live from 2:00am (Friday)

TEN Action
UEFA Europa League
Twente Enschede v Fulham
Live from 11:55pm
Stoke City v Dynamo Kiev
Live from 2:00am (Friday)

STAR Cricket
Australia v New Zealand
First Test, Day 2
Live from 5:58am (Friday)

DAY'S
EVENT

National Cricket League
(Round Six, Day 4)
Sylhet v Barisal
Venue: Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium, Chittagong
Rangpur v Dhaka Metro
Venue: Fatullah Stadium, Narayanganj
Time: All matches start at 9:30am

Headers cause brain damage

Football

BBC ONLINE

Frequently heading a football can lead to brain injury, warn doctors who say they have found proof on brain scans.

Imaging of 32 keen amateur players revealed patterns of damage similar to that seen in patients with concussion.

There appears to be a safe cut off level of 1,000 or fewer headers a year below which no harm will be done, but the US investigators say more work is needed to confirm this.

Heading is believed to have killed the English footballer Jeff Astle.

Astle, 59, who died in 2002, developed cognitive problems after years of playing for England and West Bromwich Albion.

The coroner ruled that his death resulted from a degenerative brain disease caused by heading heavy leather footballs.

Although the balls used to play soccer today are much lighter than those used in the 1960s when Astle was playing, they can still pack a punch, says lead researcher Dr Michael Lipton of Montefiore Medical Center, the university hospital for the Albert Einstein College of Medicine.

Footballs can travel at speeds as high as 34 miles per hour during recreational play and more than double that during professional play.

However, others doubt that the force exerted by the ball would be enough to cause damage.

Dr Lipton's team set out to determine what impact on the head repeated contact with the ball might have.

They used a special type of brain scan known as diffusion tensor imaging, which is good for visualising nerve and brain tissue.



Indonesian fans of LA Galaxy star David Beckham watch an exhibition match at the Bung Karno Stadium in Jakarta on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP