

Potters break Spurs

AFP, Stoke

Tottenham Hotspur's Premier League title hopes suffered a setback as Matthew Etherington scored twice against his former club to earn Stoke a hard-earned 2-1 win here on Sunday.

Etherington's first-half double put the Potters in firm control at the Britannia Stadium.

But Spurs pulled a goal back via Emmanuel Adebayor's penalty only to see their hopes of a comeback undermined by Younes Kaboul's late red card.

It was Spurs' first Premier League defeat in 12 matches and London rivals Chelsea now have the opportunity to climb above them into third with victory over leaders Manchester City on Monday.

Victory for the Potters made it three consecutive wins in the English top as continuing record against in the Premier season, with also beaten drawn with United and

RESULTS

Stoke 2 (Etherington 13, 43)
Tottenham 1 (Adebayor 62-pen)
Sunderland 2 (Vaughan 84, Larsson)

flight as well their fine the big clubs League this Stoke having Liverpool and Manchester Chelsea.

Stoke manager Tony Pulis named an unchanged side which included the former Tottenham trio of Peter Crouch, Etherington and Jonathan Woodgate, while Spurs boss Harry Redknapp recalled Rafael van der Vaart in place of Jermain Defoe.

As so often at the Britannia, Stoke piled on the pressure straight from the whistle and took just 37 seconds to create their first opening.

With Rory Delap on the bench, it was left to Ryan Shotton to deliver one of those trademark Potters long throws.

Benoit Assou-Ekotto's attempted headed clearance fell straight to Etherington, whose stinging volley was palmed away by Brad Friedel, and Jonathan Walters could only find the side netting from the rebound.

Redknapp's team could barely escape their own half and there was an air of inevitability about Stoke's 13th-minute opener.



Stoke City midfielder Matthew Etherington (L) celebrates one of his two goals during their Premier League encounter against Tottenham Hotspur at the Britannia Stadium on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

Espanyol revive Europe dream

AFP, Madrid

Espanyol put their European ambitions back on track with a feast of attacking football in a 4-2 victory over a slack Atletico Madrid in La Liga on Sunday.

Espanyol had only scored three goals in their last five games, but on Sunday they were 2-0 ahead after only seven minutes.

Atletico goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois gave the ball away to Koffi Romaric, who found Juan Verdu, and his shot from distance caught the Belgian shot stopper off guard for the opener.

A clinical finish from Verdu followed from the edge of the area and then Romaric added a third after a one-two with Sergio Garcia.

Espanyol were walking through the Atletico defence at ease and Thievy Bifouma should have headed in another before Radamel Falcao reduced the arrears with a header after 32 minutes.

After the break Sergio Garcia missed a couple of good openings before slotting the

fourth under the keeper after embarrassingly little effort to stop him from the Atletico backline.

Arda Turan pulled a goal back with eight minutes to go.

Athletic Bilbao are a point behind Espanyol after an injury-time goal from Alvaro Gonzalez earned Racing Santander a 1-1 draw at San Mames, with Jon Aurtentxe having put the home side ahead.

Substitute Juanmi Jimenez rescued a point for Malaga who maintained their sixth place with a 1-1 draw against Osasuna.

Malaga have played some attractive football this season but struggled to convert their good play into results and that was the case also against Osasuna.

Having squandered three points in a defeat by Real Sociedad last weekend, when they conceded two late goals, they were heading the same way against Osasuna.

Malaga bossed the match from beginning to end with Santi Cazorla missing their first chance in the first minute.

Further opportunities came and they went closest to scoring when a Nacho Monreal volley came back off the woodwork.

RESULTS

Rayo Vallecano 1 (Michu 90+2)
Sporting Gijon 3 (Barral 9, Nacho Novo 37, 67)
Villarreal 1 (Ruben 71) Real Sociedad 1 (Aranburu 52)
Getafe 1 (Casquero 78) Grenade 0
Malaga 1 (Juanmi 70)
Osasuna 1 (Balde 33)
Real Zaragoza 0 Real Mallorca 1 (Victor 39)
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Aurtentxe 80)
Racing Santander 1 (Gonzalez 90+2)
Espanyol 4 (Verdu 5, 7, Romaric 19, Sergio Garcia 54) Atletico Madrid 2

A night of shame

AFP, Toyota

Esperance blamed the referee for denying them a date with Barcelona at the Club World Cup, where they face possible FIFA sanctions after their supporters brought shame on the Tunisian side.

The African champions dominated but went down 2-1 Sunday to Qatar's Al Sadd, leaving fans and players of the Tunis team furious at refereeing decisions that they felt had denied them a semifinal clash with the European champions.

At least one seething Esperance fan made it to within feet of players and officials at the end of a tense match at Toyota Stadium in Japan before he was wrestled to the ground, while supporters grappled with police in the stands.

FIFA said that it would ratchet up security for Esperance's match with the Mexicans Monterrey on Wednesday, which will decide who takes fifth place at the annual tournament of continental champions.

Esperance supporters and players were incensed after Chilean referee Enrique Osses ruled two goals out for offside.

Milan, Napoli stumble

AFP, Rome

Udinese went top of Serie A with a 2-1 win at home to Chievo as AC Milan were held to a 2-2 draw at Bologna on Sunday.

Juventus can reclaim the lead on Monday when they travel to Roma.

Captain Antonio Di Natale and Dusan Basta gave Udinese a 2-0 lead before Alberto Paloschi's late consolation kept things interesting right to the end.

Udinese now lead by a point from Juventus with Milan and Lazio, 3-2 winners at rock bottom Lecce on Saturday, a point further back.

Ghana midfielder Kwadwo Asamoah broke forward but dragged his shot wide while Morocco centre-back Mehdi Benatia fired in an effort that was tipped over the bar by goalkeeper Stefano Sorrentino as Udinese dominated.

In the second half Di Natale was denied twice in quick succession by desperate defending.

The striker was about to knock home the rebound after Sorrentino saved Mauricio Isla's shot but Boukary Drame slid in to block his effort.

Then moments later Nicolas Frey hacked his back-flick off the line with Sorrentino beaten.

But Udinese got the goal they deserved when Chievo finally cracked under the pressure and Di Natale headed home Isla's cross.

Dusan Basta seemed to have settled the affair with a stooping header from a corner but Alberto Paloschi curled home a shot from outside the box eight minutes from time to keep Udinese's fans on the edge of their seats.

In Bologna it was a controversial tale of penalties given and not as Marco Di Vaio and Alessandro

Bologna were showing no signs of either fatigue from their extra-time Italian Cup defeat to Juve in midweek or being intimidated by illustrious opponents.

Milan had a lucky escape on the stroke of half-time when Seedorf appeared to handle in the area but the referee gave nothing.

Bologna had the bit between their teeth and Di Vaio's deflected shot beat Amelia but hit the post.

Milan were then awarded a penalty for a foul on Ibrahimovic who duly slotted home from 12 yards, although there appeared very little contact between him and Andrea Raggi.

And yet 60 seconds later Diamanti turned inside Thiago Silva and fired home.

Milan then also had a shout for a penalty for handball against Archemide Morleo from Ibrahimovic's point-blank cross but that wasn't given.

Napoli continued to stumble in the league as they were held to a 1-1 draw at second bottom Novara leaving them nine points off the summit.

Ivan Radovanovic gave Novara the lead 20 minutes from time but Blerim Dzemaili equalised six minutes from the end.

In other games Atalanta and Catania drew 1-1 while it remained goalless between Cagliari and Parma.

RESULTS

Atalanta 1 (Tiribocchi 70) Catania 1 (Legrottaglie 18)
Bologna 2 (Di Vaio 11, Diamanti 73) AC Milan 2 (Seedorf 16, Ibrahimovic 72-pen)
Cagliari 0 Parma 0
Novara 1 (Radovanovic 70) Napoli 1 (Dzemaili 84)

Diamanti scored for the hosts with Clarence Seedorf and Zlatan Ibrahimovic, from the spot, replying for the champions.

Bologna were off to a flying start when Di Vaio broke the offside trap on 11 minutes, running onto Diamanti's long ball and lobbing the onrushing Marco Amelia.

The lead lasted only five minutes, though, before Kevin-Prince Boateng beat two players and slipped the ball to Seedorf, who smashed a stunning strike from 20 yards into the top corner.



Bayern Munich forward Mario Gomez raises his fist after his goal against Stuttgart during their Bundesliga match at the Mercedes Benz Arena on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

Bayern pull three clear

AFP, Berlin



Bayern Munich went three points clear at the top of the German league on Sunday after coming from behind as Germany star Mario Gomez struck twice in the 2-1 win at 10-man VfB Stuttgart.

After both defending champions Borussia Dortmund and Schalke had earlier drawn level with Bayern at the top, Munich reopened a comfortable lead as Gomez claimed his 14th and 15th league goals of the season.

Stuttgart went ahead after ex-Germany midfielder Christian Gentner came onto a header from Austria striker Martin Harnik at pace and past Munich goalkeeper Manuel Neuer on six minutes.

Bayern seven minutes when Brazil-back Rafinha his volley flew goalkeeper Neuer on six minutes later in a right-swung in a cross, which took a slight deflection and Gomez fired home from the tightest of angles.

To compound Stuttgart's misery, the hosts then had defender Cristian Molinaro sent off after 29 minutes for tackling Bayern's Dutch winger Arjen Robben from behind for the second time, just five minutes after earning his first yellow card.

Bayern took the lead when captain Philipp Lahm's pass found Gomez who rifled home his 15th league goal in as many German league games, to make him the Bundesliga's top scorer on 57 minutes.

Earlier, Japan winger Shinji Kagawa's first-half strike was not enough to give Borussia Dortmund three points as the defending champions were held to a 1-1 draw at home to Kaiserslautern.

RESULTS

Borussia Dortmund 1 (Kagawa 27)
Kaiserslautern 1 (Sahan 60)
VfB Stuttgart 1 (Gentner 6) Bayern

SPORTS POLL
WEEKLY QUESTION
Who is Bangladesh's sports personality of 2011?
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What to WATCH
ESPN Sportscenter India Sports News Live at 8:30pm
TEN Action+ Serie A Genoa v Inter Milan

DAY'S EVENT
National Cricket League: 2nd Phase (Round 1, Day 3)
Dhaka Metro vs Sylhet
Venue: Sylhet Divisional Stadium