



PHOTO: AFP

Manchester United striker Dimitar Berbatov (C) scores the second goal against Wigan Athletic during their Premier League encounter at Old Trafford on Monday.

Berbatov fires MU level

AFP, London

Dimitar Berbatov fired Manchester United level on points with Manchester City as his hat-trick inspired a 5-0 win over 10-man Wigan, while the Premier League leaders were held to a 0-0 draw at West Bromwich Albion on Monday.

Berbatov has been a bit-part player for long periods this season but the Bulgarian striker seized a chance to replace the rested Wayne Rooney with a clinical treble and further goals from Park Ji-Sung and Antonio Valencia destroyed third bottom Wigan.

United's five-goal spree -- their second in six days after a 5-0 win over Fulham -- means City are now top on goal difference after Roberto Mancini's side suffered a rare setback at the Hawthorns.

City, who were five points clear of United earlier this month, enjoyed most of the possession, but couldn't find a way past Albion goalkeeper Ben Foster with Mario Balotelli hitting the woodwork and also having a goal disallowed.

At Old Trafford, Sir Alex Ferguson played midfielders Valencia and Michael Carrick in defence, but Park put the hosts ahead in the eighth minute when the South Korea midfielder converted Patrice Evra's cross.

United got another boost when Wigan striker Conor Sammon was harshly dismissed for an elbow on Carrick just before half-time.

The champions took full advantage as Berbatov increased their lead with a clinical finish in the 41st minute.

Berbatov added his third goal in two games with another cool strike from Valencia's pass in the 58th minute.

Former Wigan star Valencia struck in

side took the lead two minutes into the second period through Juan Mata but Dempsey levelled in the 56th minute.

Liverpool's challenge for a Champions League place was dented as struggling Blackburn earned a 1-1 draw an Anfield.

Rovers, beaten in their previous three matches, took the lead in first half stoppage time when Reds midfielder Charlie Adam deflected Morten Gamst Pedersen's corner into his own net.

Maxi Rodriguez equalised with a header from Martin Skrtel's flick in the 53rd minute and Reds boss Kenny Dalglish sent on England midfielder Steven Gerrard, finally back from an ankle injury, for the final 20 minutes.

Newcastle surged back into the race for a top four place with a 2-0 win at struggling Bolton.

Alan Pardew's side had failed to win any of their previous six matches but they got back on track to move within four points of Chelsea thanks to second half goals from Hatem Ben Arfa and Demba Ba.

Bolton remain second bottom after their sixth defeat in seven matches.

Sunderland's revival under new boss Martin O'Neill was hit by a controversial 1-1 draw against Everton at the Stadium of Light.

Evans faces 2 weeks out

AFP, Manchester

Sir Alex Ferguson expects Manchester United defender Jonny Evans to be out of action for two weeks after he suffered a calf injury during the champions' 5-0 win over Wigan at Old Trafford on Monday.

Evans was United's only fit central defender heading into the Wigan game but the Northern Ireland international failed to reappear for the second half.

"Jonny came off injured. He has a calf injury and will be out for two weeks," Ferguson told BBC Radio Five Live.

"We have had a nightmare the last few days. Phil Jones and Chris Smalling have both been ill. Rio Ferdinand called off yesterday with a back injury and Jonny Evans has come off at half-time. It does put you under pressure."

With United now level on points with Premier League leaders Manchester City, Ferguson can ill afford to be without another defender for long.

However, the Scot, who is already without Serbia centre-back Nemanja Vidic for the rest of the season, hopes Jones and Smalling will have recovered from their injury problems before the Blackburn game

Mancini rues fixtures

AFP, West Bromwich



Roberto Mancini bemoaned Manchester City's Christmas fixture schedule after watching his team surrender their lead at the top of the Premier League.

City were held to a 0-0 draw at West Bromwich Albion on Boxing Day and are now top by virtue of goal difference alone after rivals Manchester United thrashed Wigan 5-0.

By the time City face Sunderland on New Year's Day they are likely to have slipped to second with United in action against Blackburn 24 hours earlier.

However, it was not the fact his team had allowed their lead at the top to slip which infuriated City manager Mancini, and the Italian instead took aim at the scheduling of their Christmas calendar to accommodate the television cameras.

Mancini's team -- who failed to score in the league for the first time this season -- will have just two days to prepare to face Liverpool on January 3, while United will have double that amount of time with their previous match against Newcastle having been switched to Friday 30 December - again for

television.

"I am disappointed and not happy with this situation," Mancini said. "To have just two days when everyone else is having at least three days is not correct."

"I don't know why this is - well I do, it's for TV. To play twice in 48 hours will make a difference, in the run of fixtures we are currently in."

"In this moment it is not easy. I think United will win their next game. It is more difficult for us going away to Sunderland and then having to play within 48 hours again."

But Mancini insists his team's title dream remains very much alive because his squad is strong enough to last the hectic pace of an English season.

"If you want to win the title, we have to compete well with United. They have a strong team but we are strong enough to do this," he said.

"But we have a good focus and in January that is important. I'm confident we can do good job by the end. It's important to stay in with a chance of title."

However, Mancini admitted his team will have to improve on their display at the Hawthorns, where they dominated possession but were unable to find a way through the Baggies' resolute defence.

RESULTS	
Bolton 0	Newcastle 2 (Ben Arfa 69, Ba 71)
Chelsea 1	(Mata 47) Fulham 1 (Dempsey 56)
Liverpool 1	(Maxi 53) Blackburn 1 (Adam 45-og)
Manchester United 5	(Park 8, Berbatov 41, 58, 78-pen, Valencia 75) Wigan 0
Stoke 0	Aston Villa 0
Sunderland 1	(Colback 26) Everton 1 (Baines 51-pen)

the 75th minute and Berbatov completed his treble from the penalty spot three minutes later after Park was tripped by Antolin Alcaraz.

At Stamford Bridge, Chelsea's title hopes suffered another major blow as Clint Dempsey's equaliser gave Fulham a 1-1 draw against their west London neighbours.

A third successive draw means even a place in the top four can't be taken for granted as Chelsea will slip to fifth if Arsenal beat Wolves on Tuesday.

Andre Villas-Boas's spluttering

Simeone promises results

AFP, Madrid



LFP

return to the club he helped to a league and cup double as a player in 1996.

"Now it is time to work, that is the most important thing. Words are no use -- it's deeds that matter."

New Atletico Madrid coach Diego Simeone arrived in Madrid on Monday, vowing to pull his former team out of their slump in the Spanish league.

"I am very glad to be back," Simeone, 41, told reporters after touching down from Buenos Aires, to

The former Argentina midfielder was named last week to replace Gregorio Manzano who was fired following a miserable run.

He was due to be officially presented as coach at the Vicente Calderon stadium on Tuesday.

Simeone played for Argentina in the 1994, 1998 and 2002 World Cups.

He served two spells as a player for Atletico, forming part of the team that won the Spanish league and cup double in the 1995-1996 season.

Atletico currently sit 10th in the Spanish top flight with only 19 points from 16 games, 21 points behind neighbours and leaders Real Madrid.

What to WATCH

STAR Cricket
Australia v India
First Test, Day 4
Live from 5:30am (Thursday)

TEN Cricket
South Africa v Sri Lanka
Second Test, Day 3
Live from 2:00pm

ESPN
Sportscenter India
Sports News

SPORTS POLL

WEEKLY QUESTION

Who is Bangladesh's sports personality of 2011?

Visit the sports page of www.thedailystar.net to cast vote

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Guangzhou eye Drogba

AFP, Beijing

Chinese Super League champions Guangzhou Evergrande could be planning an audacious bid for Chelsea striker Didier Drogba, after a rival club bought Nicolas Anelka, a report said Tuesday.

Shanghai Shenhua this month announced the signing of Drogba's former Chelsea teammate Anelka in the most high-profile deal yet for the scandal-plagued Chinese league.

Now Guangzhou Evergrande are looking to match Shanghai's new firepower by possibly making an even more dramatic bid to bring Drogba to China, ahead of next year's Asian Champions League, the Yangcheng Evening News said.

The southern Chinese club, based near Hong Kong, had no comment on the report when contacted by AFP.

Shanghai themselves, having also brought in French coach Jean Tigana, may have their own interest in the 33-year-old Drogba, according to previous reports.

Anelka, 32, will reportedly earn about 200,000 pounds (around \$300,000) a week at Shanghai, although Shenhua dispute the figure and have not revealed the transfer cost.

Guangzhou have spent \$3.16 million dollars in recent days in signing four Chinese national players as they prepare to defend their Super League title and confront Asia's best in the champions league, Xinhua news agency said.



বিস্তৃত পরিসরে ব্যাংকিং সেবা প্রদানের অঙ্গীকার নিয়ে বিডিবিএল এর নতুন শাখার শুভ উদ্বোধন

২০তম শাখা
এলিফ্যান্ট রোড
২৬ ডিসেম্বর ২০১১

২৯৯, এলিফ্যান্ট রোড
ঢাকা।



বাংলাদেশ ডেভেলপমেন্ট ব্যাংক লিমিটেড

(একটি রাষ্ট্রীয় মালিকানাধীন ব্যাংক)
প্রধান কার্যালয় : ৮ রাজউক এভিনিউ, ঢাকা-১০০০, বাংলাদেশ

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আশুগঞ্জ
২৮ ডিসেম্বর ২০১১

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