

City wallop L'pool

AFP, Manchester



Manchester City moved three points clear at the top of the Premier League as a comfortable, if eventful, 3-0 victory over Liverpool at Eastlands maintained their incredible home form.

First half goals from Sergio Aguero and Yaya Toure were followed by the 72nd minute dismissal of City midfielder Gareth Barry for a second bookable offence.

But within 60 seconds, James Milner had extended City's lead from the penalty spot against a Liverpool side that was without Uruguay striker Luis Suarez, his club having decided before kick-off not to appeal the eight-match suspension handed to him for racially abusing Manchester United's Patrice Evra.

After 10 minutes, City took the lead at a home stadium that had been virtually impregnable in 2011, the team having collected 52 points out of an available 54 in home league games during the calendar year.

Milner robbed the ball from Dirk Kuyt on the left and found David Silva whose touch opened the path for Aguero to unleash a 20-yard shot which should have presented the Liverpool keeper Pepe Reina with no problem, only for the Spaniard to allow the ball under his body and into the goal.

A difficult task was rendered virtually impossible after 33 minutes when City doubled their lead.

Reina made amends for his earlier error when he spectacularly tipped a Vincent Kompany header over his crossbar from a Milner corner.

However, from the resulting Silva flag

kick, Liverpool's marking was found wanting and Yaya Toure was allowed the space to guide an unstoppable header into the goal via the underside of the bar.

Events might have unfolded very differently had the visitors taken the game's first real chance after just seven minutes when Jordan Henderson played a clinical through ball for Stewart Downing only for the winger to be denied by Joe Hart's sprawling body.

But, as in that instance, Liverpool's best opportunities would be limited to the counter-attack and, even before the goal, Reina had been forced to save at the foot of his post from Edin Dzeko's shot on the turn.

After his error for the opening goal, Reina was soon tested again when Aguero's intelligent chip had the goalkeeper backpedalling to make a solid catch and, in the 22nd minute, Dzeko maintained the pressure with a shot which deflected off Glen Johnson and passed inches wide, with Reina wrong-footed.

Liverpool finally found their feet around the midway point of the clash with Charlie Adam's 20-yard free-kick beating the City wall and forcing Hart into a diving save and, moments later, Henderson chanced his arm with a ferocious 25-yard drive which flew just past Hart's right-hand post.

Liverpool's general attacking play improved after Kenny Dalglish introduced Steven Gerrard and former City forward Craig Bellamy as 57th minute substitutes but Bellamy's inaccurate 65th minute shot from outside the area was the first attempt on goal in the period.



Manchester City striker Sergio Aguero (L) scores the opening goal against Liverpool during their Premier League encounter at the Etihad Stadium on Tuesday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

'Fergie will never be emulated'

AFP, Newcastle



Newcastle boss Alan Pardew has laughed off suggestions of Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson setting a benchmark for his colleagues, saying the Scot's trophy haul will never be emulated.

The 70-year-old Ferguson takes English champions United to St James' Park on Wednesday with the visitors still level on points with Premier League leaders Manchester City after the cross-town rivals' recent defeats by Blackburn and Sunderland respectively.

Pardew, asked if Ferguson, in charge at United since 1986, had set a benchmark for his fellow Premier League bosses, replied: "He isn't really because he's just ridiculous.

"Something like 50 trophies -- you just can't possibly imagine getting yourself into a position to win that many.

"But in the terms of the way he handles his club and the way he runs his club, he is a bit more fortunate than a lot of us because he has a lot of power there and he has earned that power.

"That's what we all aim to do."

Ferguson is one of the last managers in English football who has a huge say in the way he runs the club, with no-one at Old Trafford between him and United's chief executive

"I'm lucky here in that I have got a bit of a free hand. I have got no general football manager here," Pardew said.

Juve sign Boriello

REUTERS, Rome

Serie A joint leaders Juventus have signed striker Marco Boriello on loan from AS Roma, the Turin club said on their website (www.juventus.com) on Tuesday.

Juve, unbeaten in Serie A and level with Milan on 34 points at the top, said the agreement with Roma included an option to buy the 29-year-old in the close season for eight million euros (\$10.4 million)

Boriello, who has won seven caps for Italy, has made only seven appearances for Roma this season. He was shunted out of coach Luis Enrique's starting lineup by Pablo Osvaldo.

Raised at Milan, his career has taken him to Triestina, Treviso, Empoli, Reggina, Sampdoria, Genoa, back to Milan and then Roma.

His most successful season was at Genoa where he scored 19 goals in the 2007-08 season.

Despite their impressive run and being second top scorers after Milan, Juventus have often been wasteful in front of goal and striker Milos Krasic has fallen out of favour this season.

Family comes first



AFP, Doha

David Beckham will not join Paris Saint-Germain for "family reasons", the big-spending Qatar-backed French club's sporting director Leonardo said on Tuesday, amid reports the club will now try to lure either Kaka from Real Madrid or Pato from AC Milan.

"He will not come to PSG," said the Brazilian, citing "family reasons" for the 36-year-old former England captain's decision not to relocate from Los Angeles to the French capital.

"It's over," Leonardo was later quoted as saying by lequipe.fr.

"It's a shame. But the well-being of his family in Los Angeles and the desire to not change everything in his life weighed heavily."

Club president Nasser al-Khelaifi added: "We are disappointed a little bit, of course, that he is not coming.

"But we are agreed it would be better for everyone if that were so."

Leonardo's announcement brings to an end months of speculation linking Beckham, whose contract with Los Angeles Galaxy finished on December 31, with a transfer to PSG, which on Friday named Italian Carlo Ancelotti as new coach.

"It's not Carlo Ancelotti's arrival that changed everything," Leonardo was quick to stress.

PSG, which play AC Milan in a friendly in Dubai on Wednesday, earlier trained under the watchful eye of new owner, Qatar's Crown Prince Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, and club president Khelaifi.

Reds accept Suarez ban

AFP, London



Liverpool said Tuesday they had accepted Luis Suarez's eight-match ban for racially abusing Patrice Evra, seeking to draw a line under the affair while maintaining their player's innocence.

Liverpool had lashed out at Suarez's ban and £40,000 fine, but had stopped short of launching an appeal until the full written ruling of a disciplinary panel was released last weekend.

"Liverpool FC have this afternoon informed The FA that they will not be appealing the decision of an Independent Regulatory Commission in relation to the recently proven misconduct charge against Luis Suarez," the FA said.

In the 115-page written ruling from the case released last Saturday, the FA panel said Suarez had given "unreliable" and "inconsistent" evidence during the hearing, where elements of his testimony were "incredible."

A Liverpool statement released on Tuesday maintained that the case against Suarez remained "highly subjective" and was "based on an accusation that was ultimately unsubstantiated."

However the club said it now wished to draw a line under the affair despite disagreeing with the verdict.

"There are ultimately larger issues than whether or not Luis Suarez has been treated fairly by the Football Association in this matter," it said.

"The issue of race in sports, as in other industries, has a very poor history. Far too often, and in far too many countries, the issues of racism and discrimination have been covered over or ignored."

"Continuing a fight for justice in this particular case beyond today would only obscure the fact that the Club wholeheartedly supports the efforts of the Football Association, the Football League and the Premier League to put an end to any form of racism in English football."



Real Madrid striker Gonzalo Higuain is ecstatic after scoring the equalising goal against Malaga during their King's Cup clash at Bernabeu on Tuesday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Real's late comeback



REUTERS, Madrid

Holders Real Madrid scored three times in 10 minutes at the Bernabeu on Tuesday to beat Malaga 3-2 in their King's Cup last 16 first leg, sparked by a furious dressing down from Jose Mourinho.

Real coach Mourinho threw caution to the wind with a triple substitution after delivering a withering halftime team talk with his side trailing 2-0, calling them "rubbish."

Two of his replacements, Sami Khedira and Karim Benzema, and Gonzalo Higuain led the fightback, netting between the 68th and 78th minutes to turn the tie and spare Real's blushes.

"I told the players at halftime I would have changed all 11 if I could have," Mourinho told reporters.

"I had considered making changes before the break but I don't like to do this. I asked them to clean up the rubbish of the first half."

Up to that point, the underdogs had held sway in the Cup with three surprise results earlier in the evening.

Third tier Mirandes, who knocked out Villarreal in the previous round, took a 2-0 lead over Racing Santander while another Segunda B side, Albacete, drew 0-0 with Athletic Bilbao.

Second division Alcorcon, who eliminated Real Zaragoza last month, grabbed a

2-1 win at home to high-flying Levante, who lie fourth in La Liga.

Qatari-owned Malaga had been thrashed 4-0 and 7-0 in their last two meetings with Real, but took the lead through Sergio Sanchez and Martin Demichelis, both scoring with headers from Santi Cazorla corners.

Mourinho threw on Germany midfielders Khedira and Mesut Ozil and France striker Benzema for the second half to try and shake his side out of their lethargy, and the former barged his way through to start the fightback.

Argentina's Higuain pounced on a wayward backpass to level two minutes later and Benzema slotted the third after a wonderful backheel from Higuain as Malaga desperately tried to keep the floodgates closed.

"We gave them a goal at a crucial moment," Malaga coach Manuel Pellegrini said referring to Sanchez's underhit backpass for the equaliser.

"We should have come away with a better result. We had the chances to finish them off."

Pablo Infante was the hero for Mirandes, scoring after 32 minutes and laying on the second for Mikel Martins just after the restart, leaving La Liga's lowest scoring team Racing with a tough task in the second leg.

Alcorcon, who famously dumped city neighbours Real out of the Cup while in the Segunda B two years ago, surprised Levante with Borja Perez and Nagore twice giving them the lead.



STAR Cricket Australia v India Second Test, Day 4 Live from 5:30am (Friday)
TEN Cricket South Africa v Sri Lanka Third Test, Day 3 Live from 2:30pm
ESPN Sportscenter India Sports News Live at 8:30pm



Premier Division Cricket League, Round 2 Sk Jamal v Brothers Union Venue: Mirpur Old DOHS v Kalabagan Venue: Fatullah Biman v CCS Venue: BKSP-2 All matches start at 9:00am
Fed Cup Football Sk Jamal Dhanmondi v Agrani Bank Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium Sk Russel v Victoria Venue: Kamalapur Stadium Both matches start at 3:00pm