

Milito 1 Milan 0

AFP, Rome

LEGA CALCIO
Inter Milan thrust themselves back into the Serie A title race with a crucial 1-0 win away to city rivals AC Milan at the San Siro on Sunday.

Veteran Argentine forward Diego Milito rolled back the years to score the only goal of the game and move fifth-placed Inter to within five points of their neighbours, who are a point behind leaders Juventus.

The top three picked up only a point between them with Juve's 1-1 draw at home to Cagliari enough to see them take over sole ownership of top spot.

Third-placed Udinese lost 3-2 at Genoa and with fourth-placed Lazio winning there are now just six points separating the top five.

Milan had much the better of the first period but Inter still looked dangerous when they could get forwards.

They had the ball in the net in the fifth minute but Thiago Motta's header from Maicon's free-kick was rightly ruled out for offside.

Milan came close when



RESULTS

AC Milan 0 **Inter Milan 1** (Milito 54)
Cesena 3 (Mutu 19, 39-pen, Rinaudo 45-og) **Novara 1** (Morimoto 89)
Chievo 1 (Sammarco 50) **Palermo 0**
Fiorentina 0 **Lecce 1** (Di Michele 70)
Genoa 3 (Granqvist 49, Jankovic 50, Palacios 71) **Udinese 2** (Feronetti 14, Di Natale 75-pen)
Juventus 1 (Vucinic 7) **Cagliari 1** (Cossu 47)
Lazio 2 (Hernanes 20-pen, Klose 90) **Atalanta 0**
Parma 3 (Biabiany 23, Valiani 66, Giovinco 90) **Siena 1** (Grossi 79)

Urby Emanuelson picked out Kevin Prince Boateng's clever run in a move that looked to have come straight off the training ground but the Ghanaian's finish was high.

Boateng then picked out Zlatan Ibrahimovic with a cross but the big Swede's back flick landed on the roof of the net.

Inter defended for long periods but when they came forwards they were dangerous and Japan full-back Yuto Nagatomo picked out Ricardo Alvarez with a cross but the Argentine, who was free in the box, dallied and then hit his finish straight at Christian Abbiati.

On the stroke of half-time Inter were saved by the woodwork.

On a rapier counter, Pato teed up Mark van Bommel to crash his shot against the bar, with Julio Cesar well beaten, but the goalkeeper sprawled to his right to keep out Emanuelson's follow-up.

Inter took the lead nine minutes into the second period thanks to great work from captain Javier Zanetti and a crucial error from Milan right-back Ignazio Abate.

Zanetti surged past two players and then crossed to Milito. Abate looked set to cut it out but he missed the ball, allowing the Argentine striker to carry it forwards and slip the ball inside Abbiati's far post.



Inter Milan striker Diego Milito (R) scores the all-important goal during their Serie A encounter against AC Milan at San Siro on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

Arsenal all at Swan-sea

AFP, London

Arsenal lost ground in the race to secure a top-four finish as the Gunners slumped to a surprise 3-2 defeat against Swansea City, while Mark Hughes' debut as QPR boss ended in a 1-0 loss at Newcastle United on Sunday.

Arsene Wenger's side needed a win at the Liberty Stadium to keep pace with fourth-placed Chelsea, but Danny Graham's second-half winner condemned the north Londoners to their second successive league defeat.

Fifth-placed Arsenal, beaten by Fulham in their last league outing, are now four points behind Chelsea and 10 behind Tottenham in third.

Wenger left Thierry Henry on the bench despite his match-winning cameo role against Leeds United at the start of his brief return on loan from New York Red Bulls.

It did not look like Henry would be missed as Robin van Persie put Arsenal in front in the fifth minute.

After a magnificent 2011, this was van Persie's first goal of the new year and the Dutch forward took it in style, running onto Andrey Arshavin's pass before clipping a cool strike past Swansea goalkeeper Michel Vorm at his near post.

But Swansea have lost only once at home since winning promotion from the Championship and the Welsh club

drew level in the 16th minute when Scott Sinclair converted a penalty after Aaron Ramsey was harshly ruled to have tripped Nathan Dyer.

Swansea took the lead in the 57th minute when Ramsey allowed Joe Allen to steal possession and slip a pass to Dyer, who punished Arsenal's poor marking with a ferocious strike past Wojciech Szczesny.

Henry made his return to the Premier League after a five-year absence in the 63rd minute and the Gunners drew level thanks to Theo Walcott's composed finish six minutes later.

RESULTS

Newcastle 1 (Best 37) **QPR 0**
Swansea 3 (Sinclair 16-pen, Dyer 57, Graham 70)
Arsenal 2 (Van Persie 5, Walcott 69)

However, Arsenal's defensive frailties were exposed less than 60 seconds later as Swansea striker Graham found space to drill a superb shot into the far corner of Szczesny's goal and secure the hosts' first win over their visitors since 1982.

In the day's early game, new QPR boss Hughes saw Leon Best give Newcastle victory at St James' Park.

Hughes was appointed on Tuesday following Neil Warnock's sacking, but the arrival of the former Fulham, Manchester City, Blackburn Rovers and Wales boss failed to galvanise his new

team, who remain third-bottom of the table.

Best is deputising for Demba Ba, currently away on Africa Cup of Nations duty with Senegal, and he ensured the in-form striker would not be missed with a fine winner in the 37th minute to lift Newcastle into sixth place -- four points off the Champions League spots.

"I was pleased with the players' application -- they gave me everything they had," said Hughes.

"Obviously we've been done with a little bit of individual skill in our own box. We created a number of reasonable chances and on another day those will go in for us.

"It would have been ideal obviously if we could have got something out of the game because overall I felt we deserved something.

"It's a hard place to come, we understand that. It was never going to be easy so that's why I'm encouraged by what I saw."

Hughes -- who made six changes to QPR's starting line-up -- must have been encouraged when Shaun Wright-Phillips and Jay Bothroyd hit the woodwork early on, while Newcastle lost influential midfielder Yohan Cabaye to injury in the 25th minute.

But Alan Pardew's team took the points thanks to a clinical effort from Best, who cleverly tricked his way past Luke Young before slotting home his first goal since September.

Diego treated for kidney stones

AFP, Dubai

Former Argentinian football great Diego Maradona was successfully treated for kidney stones at a Dubai hospital on Sunday.

The 51-year-old began feeling pain after the club's match on Saturday and was later admitted to hospital, an Al-Wasl spokesman said, adding that the treatment was successful and that Maradona is expected to be released on Monday.

Remy not for sale

AFP, Marseille

Tottenham boss Harry Redknapp watched Marseille striker Loic Remy score both goals in Sunday's 2-0 win over Lille, but the French side's coach Didier Deschamps issued a hands-off warning.

Redknapp is keen to sign the international striker, who has hit nine league goals this season, but Marseille are desperate to hang onto the player for their Champions League campaign which resumes next month.

Anelka's new endorsement

Football

AFP, Shanghai

A Chinese Internet company has said it is paying French football player Nicolas Anelka 2.7 million euros (\$3.4 million) to endorse a new online game, as the striker gears up for his first season in China.

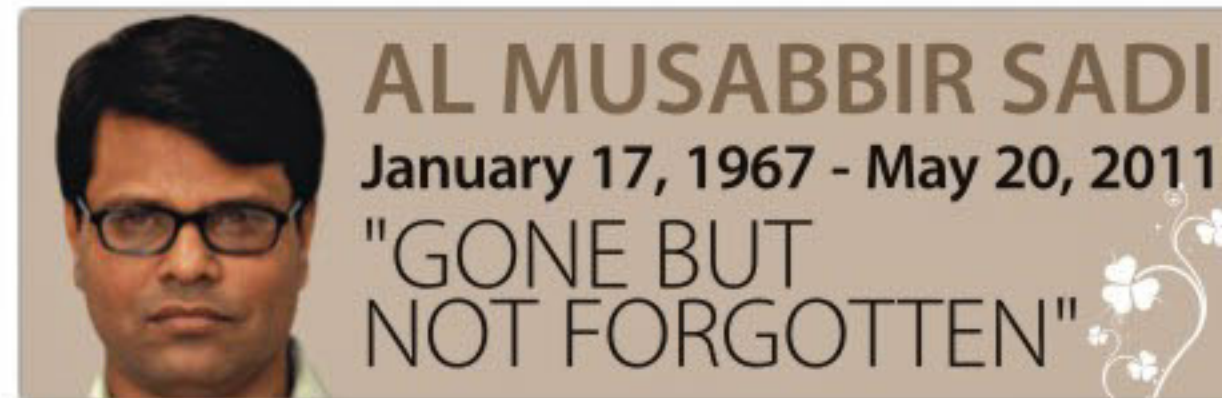
The9 Limited, an online game developer and operator in China, said Anelka would promote "Firefall", in which players fire sophisticated weapons to survive on a post-apocalyptic Earth.

The US-listed company said it had also tied up with Anelka's new team, Shanghai Shenhua, to promote the online game in an endorsement deal valued at 32 million yuan (\$5.1 million).

The major shareholder of Shenhua, Zhu Jun, is also chairman and chief executive officer of The9, the company said in a statement released Sunday.

Under the deal, Shenhua players will wear jerseys with the game's logo at all their matches.

"A big portion of Firefall gamers are also soccer fans, most of whom are male, passionate about sports, and actively followers of entertainment stories of sport stars," the company's vice president of marketing, Chris Shen, said in the statement.



AL MUSABBIR SADI
January 17, 1967 - May 20, 2011
"GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN"

Cahill seals Chelsea move

AFP, London

Bolton defender Gary Cahill on Monday completed his protracted transfer to Chelsea, the London club confirmed.

The 26-year-old centre-back becomes manager Andre Villas-Boas' first January recruit in a deal worth £7 million (\$10.7m), following a fortnight of wrangling over the player's personal terms.

The parties reportedly settled on wages of £80,000-per-week on Friday, £20,000 less than Cahill was said to be demanding.

The player told his new club's official website, www.chelseafc.com: "Chelsea is a massive club, it is a club that looks to win trophies season in, season out and it is a big opportunity for me to be a part of that."

"Opportunities like this, you can't turn down." Despite being part of a Bolton defence among the worst in the Premier League this season, Cahill has performed well alongside Chelsea captain John Terry at international level.

SPORTS POLL

WEEKLY QUESTION

Do you think the BPL will be successful?

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

Follow The Daily Star Sport on



www.twitter.com/dssport

What to WATCH

TEN Cricket

Pakistan v England

First Test, Day 1

Live from 12:00pm

South Africa v Sri Lanka

Third ODI

Live from 6:30pm

STAR Sports

Australian Open

First Round, Day 3

Live from 6:00am (Wednesday)

ESPN

Sportscenter India

Sports News

Live at 8:30pm

DAY'S EVENT

Federation Cup Football

QUARTERFINAL

Abahani v Sk Jamal

Time: 5:30pm

Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

Barca keep up pressure

AFP, Madrid



LFP

Barcelona squandered a two-goal lead before seeing off 10-man Real Betis 4-2 to cut Real Madrid's lead at the top of La Liga back to five points on Sunday.

Two goals from Lionel Messi and a goal apiece from Xavi and Alexis Sanchez fired them to the victory after Ruben Castro and Roque Santa Cruz had levelled.

Betis had Mario Vazquez sent off with the score at 2-2 with 20 minutes remaining and Barca never looked back.

Now the focus is turned to the Spanish Cup on Wednesday when the two giants face each other in the first leg of a quarterfinal tie.

Real Madrid had come from behind on Saturday to win 2-1 at Mallorca with late goals from Gonzalo Higuain and Jose Callejon.

Betis started the better team in the Camp Nou and tested Victor Valdes twice in the opening minutes.

This only served to wake up the home team when Xavi, playing his 400th league game for the club, gave them the lead on 10 minutes, following up after a Cesc Fabregas shot had hit the post.

Two minutes later and Barca were two goals ahead when Messi steered the ball home after good work on the left from Sanchez.

However Betis continued to attack Barcelona with crisp passing and good movement off the ball.

Their reward arrived on 32 minutes when Castro was at hand to finish a pass from Salva Sevilla at close range after good work from Jorge Molina had drawn Valdes out of position.

It was the first league goal conceded by Barcelona at home all season.

RESULTS

Atletico Madrid 3 (Falcao 40, 51-pen, Ribas 80) **Villarreal 0**
Osasuna 0 **Racing Santander 2** (Stuani 39-pen, 70-pen)
Athletic Bilbao 0 **Levante 0**
Sporting Gijon 2 (Galvez 36, Trejo 90+2) **Malaga 1** (van Nistelrooy 88)
Barcelona 4 (Xavi 10, Messi 12, 86-pen, Sanchez 75) **Real Betis 2** (Ruben Castro 32, Santa Cruz 52)



Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi (R) celebrates one of his two goals with teammates during their Primera Liga clash against Real Betis at Nou Camp on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP