



Lazio forward Libor Kozak is overjoyed after scoring the winning goal against Cesena during their Serie A encounter in Rome's Olympic Stadium on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Lazio fight back

AFP, Rome



Ten-man Lazio thrust themselves back into title contention with a stunning come-from-behind 3-2 victory over Cesena at the Stadio Olimpico here on Thursday.

The biancoceleste turned around at the break 2-0 down and with a numerical disadvantage but a remarkable 10-minute period just after the restart flipped their fortunes

around.

Strike pairing Adrtian Mutu and Vincenzo Iaquinta, from the spot, had given Cesena a seemingly unassailable half-time lead, particularly given Abdoulay Konko had been sent-off for the hosts.

But goals from Hernanes, Senad Lulic and Libor Kozak turned the match on its head and moved Lazio up to third, temporarily at least.

They now trail leaders Juventus by just three points, although they have played more games than all their immediate rivals.

Until their stirring comeback, Lazio had been staring at a possible fourth defeat in seven league games since the turn of the year.

Things had started so well as the hosts dominated the early exchanges with hot-shot Miroslav Klose twice uncharacteristically failing to find the net from good positions.

Lulic played in Klose with a defence-splitting pass but Francesco Antonioli was out quickly to deflect the German's slipped finish past the post.

Then he latched onto Cristian Ledesma's chipped ball over the top but while his chest control was precise, his finish drifted past the far upright.

In between Iaquinta had given notice of the trouble he would cause when forcing Federico Marchetti into a sprawling save at his near post from a lashed effort.

And moments later the former Italy forward held off Giuseppe Biava and crossed for Mutu to slot home at the back post with Lazio's defence hopelessly stretched.

The match seemed to have taken a decisive turn just past the half hour mark as Mutu was sent scampering away behind the Lazio defence.

Konko caught up to him but slid in with an ill-advised attempt at a tackle, succeeding only in bringing down the Romanian.

The referee had no option but to point to the spot and also brandished the red card as the Frenchman was the last defender.

Iaquinta's penalty was unceremoniously dispatched.

The game appeared over but within 18 minutes of the restart, Lazio had totally turned the game around.

## Giggs extends with MU

AFP, Manchester

Manchester United star Ryan Giggs has signed a one-year contract extension, the English Premier League champions announced Friday.

The deal means 38-year-old former Wales midfielder Giggs, who has only ever played professionally for United, is set to take part in a 22nd season for the Old Trafford club, having made his debut as a teenager in 1991.

Since then Giggs has made a club record 898 appearances, scoring 162 goals and won 12 Premier League titles, two Champions Leagues, four FA Cups and three League Cups.

"Ryan is a marvellous player," said United manager Sir Alex Ferguson. "In many ways, he epitomises all my teams here at United; he has constantly re-invented himself, adapted to the changing nature of the game and retained that desire and hunger for success.

"In every training session and match, he is the example for others to follow.

"The young players in the dressing room have a great chance to learn from a player who will continue to break records that anyone in the game will find hard to beat."

## Siena stun Napoli

AFP, Rome

An under-strength Siena stunned Napoli 2-1 on Thursday to take a decisive step towards a first ever Italian Cup final.

Brazilian Reginaldo and Gaetano D'Agostino scored the goals to give Siena a semi-final, first leg victory although they may live to rue Emanuele Pesoli's late own goal.

Napoli may still be favourites to progress ahead of next month's second leg in Naples but Siena can be well pleased with their night's work.

The visitors played a full-strength side while the Serie A strugglers rested several first choice players.

And yet they had more determination and cohesion as they put one foot in the final and a possible glamour tie against one of the country's heavyweights.

## Suarez-Evra faceoff

AFP, London



United for the first time since his ban for racially abusing Patrice Evra.

The Uruguayan returned from his eight-match suspension when he appeared as a substitute against Tottenham on Monday but is expected to start for the Reds in the latest instalment of the northwest giants' bitter rivalry.

The two clubs met in the FA Cup at Anfield only a fortnight ago, with Liverpool winning a largely trouble-free game 2-1.

However the tie was soured by the relentless barracking of Evra by Liverpool fans, and the subsequent arrest of one fan on suspicion of making racist taunts to the French international.

Mindful of the potential for Saturday's fixture to turn ugly, both United and Liverpool officials have attempted

to defuse tensions with calls for calm.

Liverpool manager Kenny Dalglish said Suarez had been instructed to shake Evra's hand in the pre-match ritual.

"I thought everyone involved in the FA Cup tie at Anfield played their part in making sure that the match was played in

under what happened and move forward.

"People are already speculating on the pre-match ceremony, but from Luis's point of view we have spoken to him and I know he will shake the hand of Patrice Evra and the other Manchester United players before the game."

While the animosity between Liverpool and United means Suarez is unlikely to be given an easy ride on Saturday, fullback Glen Johnson has backed his team-mate to cope with the bearpit atmosphere.

"It is a tough place to go Old Trafford. Luis is a strong character and he will try to let his football do the talking," Johnson said.

"He has had a long break now and hopefully he will be fresh and ready to put in a performance."

A victory for United will see Ferguson's team inch one point clear of leaders Manchester City, who travel to Aston Villa on Sunday after beating Fulham 3-0 last weekend.

the right way, so let's make sure that happens again this weekend," Dalglish said.

"I'm sure people will want to talk about Luis Suarez but he accepted his ban, served his suspension and returned against Spurs on Monday.

"It's time for all of us to draw a line

### FIXTURES

(1500 GMT unless stated):

#### Saturday

Man Utd v Liverpool (1245 GMT), Blackburn v QPR, Bolton v Wigan, Everton v Chelsea, Fulham v Stoke, Sunderland v Arsenal, Swansea v Norwich, Tottenham v Newcastle (1730 GMT)

#### Sunday

Wolves v West Brom (1330 GMT), Aston Villa v Manchester City (1600 GMT)

## Barca not giving up

AFP, Madrid



Despite Real Madrid's seven-point lead in La Liga, Barcelona defender Gerard Pique says that the title race is not over and they will fight to the end and make it as difficult as possible for their bitter rivals.

While the Catalan side have come out on top when they have faced Real so far this season -- beating them in the league and knocking them out of the Spanish Cup -- their stuttering away form has seen them fall behind in the league.

They cannot afford another slip-up this weekend in Pamplona against Osasuna while they will be hoping that fourth-placed Levante can do them a favour when they play the leaders at the Bernabeu.

The dropped points have

been blamed on many reasons from a small squad and injuries through to a lack of desire but the fact is that they have won only four of 10 matches on their travels.

At the same time Real continue to roll over their opposition having won 18 of 21 games and scored 71 goals in the process, 10 more than Barca, the side widely admired over recent years for their attacking football.

"I would have signed for where we are at the moment at the start of the season. We are very much alive in the league, in the Champions League and we are in the final of the cup," said Pique, with Barca's midweek win over Valencia setting them up for a repeat of the 2009 King's Cup final against Athletic Bilbao.

"There is a lot of work ahead of us in the next two months but we are still alive and you can count on us being there at the end of the season."

"We will give everything in the league, it will be the others who will have to win it and it is going to be a long battle."

### FIXTURES

#### Saturday

Racing Santander v Atletico Madrid (1800), Osasuna v Barcelona (2000), Real Betis v Athletic Bilbao (2200)

#### Sunday

Espanol v Zaragoza (1200), Malaga v Mallorca (1600), Rayo Vallecano v Getafe (1600), Valencia v Sporting Gijon (1800), Villarreal v Granada (1945), Real Madrid v Levante (2130)

#### Monday

Real Sociedad v Sevilla (2100)

## Harry wary of dual role

Football

AFP, London

Tottenham Hotspur manager Harry Redknapp said Friday he was "flattered" to be the odds-on favourite to replace Fabio Capello as England manager but was cautious about combining the job with his club role.

The Football Association (FA) have indicated they could opt for a 'caretaker' manager to steer the side at the European Championships in Poland and Ukraine in four months' time following Capello's shock resignation on Wednesday -- just hours after Redknapp was cleared of tax evasion charges.

A host of other Premier League managers have backed Redknapp for the England role, with the 64-year-old, whose Tottenham team are third in the top-flight, the outstanding English candidate to replace Capello.

"It is flattering, other managers have come out and said nice things and I appreciate everybody's support really," said Redknapp at Tottenham's training ground on Friday.

However, as for being in charge of both Spurs and England, a wary Redknapp said: "It is hard enough managing a league club let alone managing your country, it's two very difficult jobs.

"I think your focus has got to be on one job, you can't be going home thinking, 'Who's playing well in this situation?'"

"I can't take my eye off the ball at Tottenham at the moment because we're looking to get Champions League football, we're still in the FA Cup and I owe it to them to continue to keep completely focused on the job I'm doing here.

"It wouldn't be fair to anybody here if I started to let my thoughts wander elsewhere," he added with Spurs bidding for their first English title since 1961.

Capello resigned on Wednesday after the FA stripped John Terry of the England captaincy without consulting the Italian manager as the Chelsea defender prepares to contest a charge of



HARRY REDKNAPP

racially abusing QPR defender Anton Ferdinand at a trial which will take place in July -- after Euro 2012.

Just hours earlier Redknapp had emerged from a London court having been found not guilty of tax evasion charges and the former West Ham and Portsmouth boss said the last few weeks had been a draining experience.

"It's knocked me for six. I haven't felt so good the last couple of days but I feel better today," Redknapp said.

"(My appetite for the Spurs job) has never waned, things were going well in the football but things were hanging over me which were always a problem for me, but thankfully it's gone now and we can move on."

Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson said Redknapp was the best man for the England job but warned against combining two jobs, having been in charge of both Aberdeen and Scotland

at the 1986 World Cup following the death of Scotland boss Jock Stein.

"I tried it myself with Scotland (at the World Cup) in Mexico. I found it very difficult," Ferguson said.

In the short-term, former England defender Stuart Pearce, the current Under-21 coach, will take charge of England for their friendly against the Netherlands at Wembley on February 29.

After that, all scenarios are under consideration, suggesting it would be possible for Redknapp to lead England at Euro 2012 before making way for another manager if he chose to stay at Tottenham.

"That is a possibility," FA chairman David Bernstein said Thursday when asked if a caretaker coach could lead England in Poland and Ukraine.

"It might not be the case, but all options are open. I'm only talking common sense -- we're not prepared to restrict ourselves at this stage."

## Milan to miss Ibra's service

AFP, Rome



Defending Italian champions AC Milan begin a crucial phase of their season when they travel to fourth-placed Udinese this weekend.

Star striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic starts a three-match ban on Saturday in a period when second-placed Milan must play two of the other two top four teams.

Following their trip to Udine, Milan will host Cesena and leaders Juve in successive league games at the San Siro.

It is a crucial period in which to be missing their best player and top scorer, especially with fellow forwards Pato and Antonio Cassano also on the sidelines.

It means extra pressure being piled on the shoulders of misfiring Brazilian Robinho, veteran Filippo Inzaghi, youngster Stephan El Shaarawy and new signing Maxi Lopez.

The latter three have hardly played for Milan this season while Robinho, the most used forward after Ibrahimovic, has managed a paltry return of just three goals in 17 Serie A games.

In fact he has only five goals in 24 games in all competitions and has come under fire for some shocking misses, including two in front of an open goal from inside the six yard box in successive games back in November.

He also missed a one-on-one during last weekend's game with Napoli, firing wide of Morgan De Sanctis's post.

Milan captain Massimo Ambrosini acknowledges that the big Swede, who with 15 in the league has scored more than double the number of goals as all Milan's other strikers put together, will be sorely missed.

"Ibrahimovic is a fundamental player and it will be important to understand how the team will react to his absence," he said.

"However, last year we had some good performances without him."

### SPORTS POLL

#### WEEKLY QUESTION

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### STAR Cricket & Channel 9

BPL T20

Dhaka Gladiators v Khulna Royal Bengals

Live from 2:00pm

Barisal Burners v Durrat Rajshahi

Live from 6:30pm

### STAR Sports

English Premiership

Sunderland v Arsenal

Live from 9:00pm

### ESPN

English Premiership

Man United v Liverpool

Live from 7:00pm

Everton v Chelsea

Live from 9:00pm

Tottenham v Newcastle

Live from 11:30pm

### TEN Action+

La Liga

Osasuna v Barcelona

Live from 1:00am (Sunday)

### TEN Sports

Serie A

Cagliari v Palermo

Live from 1:40am (Sunday)



### Premier League

Mohammedan v Brothers Union

Time: 3:15pm

Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

### BPL T20

Dhaka Gladiators v Khulna Royal Bengals

Time: 2:00pm

Barisal Burners v Durrat Rajshahi

Time: 6:30pm

Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Mirpur