



Napoli defender Miguel Angel Britos (2nd from R) heads in the opening goal during their Serie A match against Chievo Verona at the San Paolo Stadium on Monday.

PHOTO: AFP



Napoli ended a winless run of five matches on Monday with a 2-0 win over Serie A rivals Chievo thanks to goals from Uruguayan duo Miguel Angel Britos and Edinson Cavani.

The win - which followed a run of four draws and a defeat - saw them climb to a point off sixth-placed AS Roma, who slumped to a surprise 1-0 defeat by relegation-threatened Siena.

Napoli had the game won by half-time as first Britos rose to head home a 14th minute corner and then Cavani otherwise known as the 'Matador' tucked away a 37th minute penalty he had obtained himself when fouled by Chievo goalkeeper Stefano Sorrentino.

Napoli coach Walter Mazzarri said that his side were capable of playing better football once they relaxed.

"This is an important victory," he said.

Roma were left kicking themselves as they missed the chance to leapfrog ailing Inter Milan - who had seen their winless run extended to five games with a stunning 1-0 defeat by tailenders Novara on Sunday.

Siena's goal came from the penalty spot in the 51st minute after Danish central defender Simon Kjaer - who had only come on at half-time - brought down Mattia Destro earning him a yellow card to boot.

Siena's leading scorer Emanuele Calaio made no mistake as he put away his 10th goal of the season and help his side move five points clear of the relegation places.

RESULTS

Siena 1 (Calaio 51-pen) Roma 0

Napoli 2 (Britos 15,

Cavani 38-pen) Chievo 0

Napoli end winless run

UCL exit frustrates Fergie

AFP, London

Sir Alex Ferguson admits Manchester United's Champions League exit still leaves a bitter taste because he believes his side were good enough to have reached another final.

United return to European action this week in the second tier Europa League against Ajax after missing out on the Champions League knockout stages for the first time since 2006.

Benfica and Basel progressed at United's expense, but veteran manager Ferguson remains convinced the English champions, beaten by Barcelona in last year's final, are still a European powerhouse.

"It was a massive disappointment."

'I was treated like a dog'

Football

AFP, London

"I do not think I was wrong, but if they (the club) think so I apologise.

"I am ready to return, to win and do the best for the club's shirt," he added. "Hopefully I can help City to be champions again."

But given his description of events in Munich, it may take more than Tevez saying 'sorry' to repair his relationship with Mancini.

"I was kind of in a bad mood and when he brings on (Nigel) de Jong and takes off (Edin) Dzeko and we're losing 2-0 I thought it was a defensive substitution so I decided to sit back on the bench," Tevez recalled.

"I had already warmed up for 10 minutes and he has this attitude that he wants to lose 2-0 instead of 4-0.

"So I sat down and at the same time Dzeko comes off and is really angry and has a go at Mancini. He then sees the tunnel is closed so he has to sit down next to him and they start to have an argument.

"Dzeko was speaking Bosnian and Mancini would swear at him in Italian

so it was a real mess.

"So I go and sit down and he doesn't see me because he's having this discussion. But then he turns around and sees me and you can imagine what happens.

"He's in the middle of an argument so then he tells me to keep on warming up and treats me like a dog."

"So when he spoke to me in that tone of voice, and I said 'No, I'm not going out'. So I was willing to play, but the coach was in such a foul mood because he had that argument with Dzeko.

"He started on me as well, started swearing at me that was him, because I was very calm... Mancini said some horrible things to me."

"I believe the fans were misinformed, they weren't told the facts."

"So that when they were told I didn't want to play they naturally turned against me."

"When I saw them burning my shirt with my name on it or hurling insults at me it really hurt. I gave everything to that club and what I love above all is to play football."

Stars defend Robben

Football

APP, Berlin

Former and current team-mates of Arjen Robben have come to the defence of the Bayern Munich winger after he was branded an "egoist" by German legend Franz Beckenbauer.

Robben, 28, has been dropped to the bench for Bayern's recent Bundesliga matches after suffering a loss of form with Munich second in the German league behind defending champions Borussia Dortmund.

He came off the bench and impressed late in Bayern's 2-0 win over Kaiserslautern last Saturday, but Beckenbauer went on the attack when he dubbed the Dutchman a selfish egoist on German Sky last Sunday.

"He is an egoist. Just like many others, he needs to think more about what he can do for the team," fumed former Bayern president Beckenbauer.

But Tottenham Hotspur star Rafael van der Vaart, who played alongside Robben in the Netherlands' team which reached the 2010 World Cup final, backed his Oranje teammate to prove himself on the pitch.

"In his first few years at Bayern, Arjen played exactly the same way he is now, he just scored a few more goals," Van der Vaart told German daily Bild.

Cash bonus for ANC winners

APP, Lusaka

The Zambian government has given \$59,000 to each player in the national side which won the country's first Africa Cup of Nations title on Sunday, the sports minister said Tuesday.

"The government has given each one of you \$59,000, and that is beside what the corporate organisations might decide to give. This money is from the government," Chishimba Kambwiri said on national radio.

The award is a princely sum in a nation where, per capita, the gross domestic product is less than \$1,500.

Zambia defeated hot favourites Ivory Coast 8-7 on penalties after 120 goalless minutes in Sunday's final.

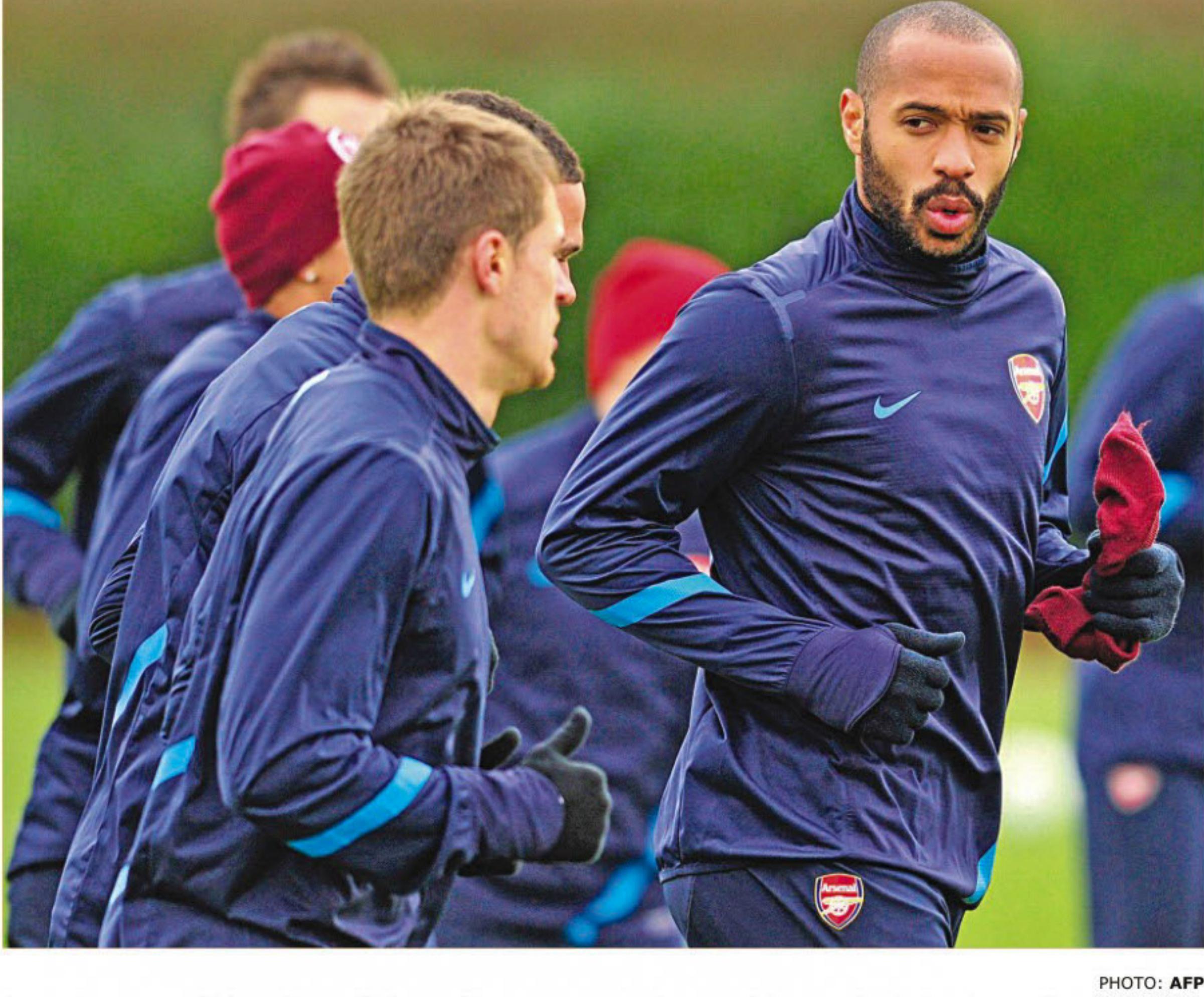
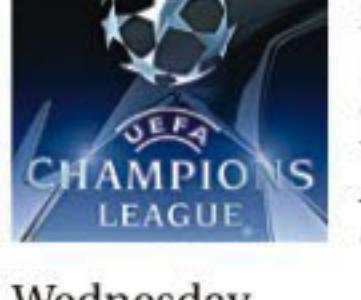


PHOTO: AFP

Arsenal superstar Thierry Henry (R) jogs with teammates during a training session in London on Tuesday ahead of their Champions League second round encounter against AC Milan.

Henry's final match

APP, Milan



Thierry Henry will be looking to give the club a farewell gift as he makes his final appearance for Arsenal against AC Milan in the Champions League on Wednesday.

Henry's second spell at the North Londoners is set to come to an end on Thursday when he will return to the New York Red Bulls in Major League Soccer.

And having bowed out of his Premier League commitments on Saturday with a vital winning goal at Sunderland, Henry will be hoping to leave an equally lasting impression at the San Siro.

These two sides meet at this stage of the competition for the second time in four years.

Back in 2008/09 Milan came away from the Emirates with a goalless draw but two goals in the final six minutes in Italy from Cesc Fabregas and Emmanuel Adebayor saw Arsenal triumph 2-0 on aggregate.

That was the start of a miserable run for the rossoneri who were also knocked out at the second round stage by English opposition in the next two years with Manchester United and Tottenham both winning at the San Siro as well.

Until that juncture Milan had never lost at

home to an English side but now they will be looking to end this run of three successive reverses.

And they will have to keep an eye on Henry who at 34 proved during his six-week spell with Arsenal that he can still cut it at the top level, even though he was mostly used as a substitute.

Having twice already been a match-winner for the Gunners in the last six weeks, French manager Arsene Wenger is hoping his compatriot has one more trick up his sleeve before he leaves.

"I hope he will add some more (goals) in the Champions League on Wednesday. Certainly he got us the three points in a very difficult game (at Sunderland)," said Wenger.

Arsenal may be boosted by the Frenchman's presence but Milan are also looking set for an increase in playing resources.

Star forward Zlatan Ibrahimovic returns to the team after a domestic suspension while Kevin-Prince Boateng, Alessandro Nesta, Mathieu Flamini and Pato have all resumed training with their team-mates following injuries.

The return of Boateng is particularly welcome given how his forward thrusts from midfield have been missed.

More important than that for coach Massimiliano Allegri, though, has been Milan's improved fighting spirit.

Liverpool apologise

APP, Liverpool

Liverpool denied Tuesday reports they'd apologised for Luis Suarez's conduct at Old Trafford as a result of pressure from shirt sponsors Standard Chartered bank.

Uruguay striker Suarez sparked fresh uproar last weekend when he refused to shake the hand of Manchester United's Patrice Evra, having only recently returned from an eight-game ban for racially abusing the French defender.

Liverpool subsequently apologised for Suarez's conduct but, hav-

ing steadfastly supported their forward up until that point, there were suspicions they had been pressured into taking action by Standard Chartered, who are currently half-way through a four-year deal worth £81 million (\$128 million).

However, Liverpool insisted Tuesday that managing director Ian Ayre and manager Kenny Dalglish had not been prompted by anyone from outside Anfield.

United manager Sir Alex Ferguson branded Suarez's conduct ahead of Liverpool's 2-1 defeat on Saturday a disgrace, while Professional Football-

ers' Association chief Gordon Taylor called the Liverpool star's actions "disrespectful, inappropriate and embarrassing".

Suarez finally showed some contrition in a statement expressing his regret for his actions.

"I have spoken with the manager (Kenny Dalglish) since the game at Old Trafford and I realise I got things wrong," Suarez said Sunday on Liverpool's official website.

"I've not only let him down, but also the club and what it stands for and I'm sorry. I made a mistake and I regret what happened."

ZAYED KHAN
I am coming to watch...

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* শর্ট এবং মাঠ