

## Setback for Gladbach

REUTERS, Berlin

Borussia Moenchengladbach spurned a chance to join Borussia Dortmund at the top of the Bundesliga on Friday, stumbling to a 1-1 home draw against Hamburg SV.

Former Germany international Mike Hanke put the hosts in front on the stroke of halftime by heading a free kick from Juan Arango past Hamburg keeper Jaroslav Drobný.

The visitors should have levelled two minutes after the restart when Paolo Guerrero set up Tolgay Arslan in the box but the 21-year-old sent a thunderous drive narrowly over.

Turkey under-21 international Arslan quickly made amends, slotting the ball in from close range in the 56th minute as Hamburg climbed to eighth on 27 points.

"We lacked punch today and offered far too little," Gladbach coach Lucien Favre told reporters after his side closed the gap on Dortmund to two points.

"We came up against a quick and strong team and did not have that in our game today."

Surprise title contenders Gladbach, who narrowly escaped relegation last season, extended their unbeaten run to seven straight games despite being without speedy winger Patrick Herrmann (broken collarbone).

## Samba moves to Anzhi

AFP, Blackburn

Blackburn Rovers defender Christopher Samba on Friday completed his move to Russian side Anzhi Makhachkala, the English Premier League club announced.

Blackburn refused to disclose the fee, but reports in England suggested the deal was worth £12 million (14.1 million euros) on a four-year deal.

The 27-year-old Congo international defender had made it his intention to leave struggling Rovers and had previously been linked with a move to Tottenham and QPR.

Samba's move was made possible by the Russian transfer window still being open until midnight on Friday.

He will link up with Dutch coaching legend Guus Hiddink, who took charge of the ambitious Russian team last week.

"It was quite sudden and a little bit anxious. I see it as a new challenge," Samba told Sky Sports News.



Borussia Moenchengladbach striker Mike Hanke (L) celebrates his opening goal with teammates during their Bundesliga encounter against Hamburg SV in Moenchengladbach on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Nani struggling

AFP, Manchester



Nani has admitted he is struggling to regain his top form since returning from injury for Manchester United.

The Portugal international played in both legs against Ajax in the Europa League after being sidelined for a month.

And although Nani helped United edge past the Dutch champions 3-2 on aggregate to set up a last-16 clash with Athletic Bilbao, the 25-year-old said his best form remains elusive.

"I am getting there but I need more minutes," he said. "It has been difficult to get the consistency."

"I will work hard to come back because we need every player. Just now I am not at my best but I will try to recover my form as quickly as possible."

With Antonio Valencia having suffered a hamstring injury in Amsterdam last week and the title race reaching a critical stage, United manager Sir Alex Ferguson needs Nani for the forthcoming trips to Norwich and Tottenham.

They start the weekend two points behind leaders Manchester City with 13 games remaining.

But United could trail Roberto Mancini's side by five points when they start at mid-table Norwich on Sunday as City entertain struggling Blackburn on Saturday.

Norwich have surprised many observers with the way they have adapted to the top-flight since winning promotion at the end of last season, and Ferguson is predicting a

tricky game for his players.

"Norwich bought one or two players from lower divisions but, while it's not easy coming out of the Championship, Norwich have done really well," said the United manager.

"They look as though they are enjoying themselves and there is always a good atmosphere at Carrow Road, a full house every game."

Ferguson, who hopes to have Wayne Rooney available after the England striker missed Thursday's 2-1 home defeat to Ajax with a throat infection, paid tribute to Norwich's 42-year-old manager and fellow Scot Paul Lambert.

"I knew Paul from when he was a kid at St Mirren," he added. "He had a great playing career - a European Cup winner's medal with Borussia Dortmund."

"For a young manager Norwich is probably a good club to go to. Expectations are probably not too high, there is a full house, a lot of enthusiasm down there. I think it suited him well."

Lambert is relishing the opportunity of facing United and says Norwich, who start the weekend in eighth spot after winning their last two league games, fear no one.

"It's not a game we're going to be frightened by," he added. "We are going to try and win, that's the nature of the game. You try and win."

"They are still one of the best teams in Europe, let alone Britain. They have been a fantastic team for many a year now so I am under no illusions as to how hard it is this weekend."

"They are an absolutely brilliant side. Sir Alex Ferguson has done it for 25 years and built the club up to the way it is today."

## Must win for Arsenal

AFP, London



Robin Van Persie has confirmed Arsenal's north London derby clash with Tottenham Hotspur will carry an extra edge by insisting it is a game Arsene Wenger's side simply cannot afford to lose.

Local rivalry ensures the visit of Spurs to the Emirates Stadium is always highly charged.

But for the first time in many years, Harry Redknapp's side go to the home of their rivals as clear favourites to win - and with the Gunners' season in danger of imploding.

Wenger's Arsenal team face their near neighbours having exited the FA Cup at the hands of Sunderland and been all but eliminated from the Champions League after losing their last 16 first leg tie with AC Milan 4-0.

That means a top four finish, and with it a place in next season's Champions League, is Arsenal's only realistic chance of salvaging something from the season.

But with a 10-point gap between Wenger's men and third placed Spurs, and Chelsea, Newcastle and Liverpool all challenging strongly for fourth, van Persie knows there is no margin for error.

"They're above us for the first time in many years but it's in our hands to change the way things are going, win the game and start moving closer to them," van Persie said.

"A draw will not be a good result for us (on Sunday), either in our bid to catch up with Spurs or in our efforts to fight off our other challengers for a Champions League place."

Wenger admits every game counts now and said: "I don't know if this is my most

important derby. It is the most important game because it is the next one.

"That is what top-level sport is like. For us it is important because we have an opportunity to come back closer to Spurs and strengthen our position in fourth place, which is a very important target."

The Arsenal manager has not given up hope of overhauling Spurs, though.

"You judge at the end of the season," he said. "The only thing you can say is that in the last 15 years Spurs have finished behind Arsenal."

Redknapp, meanwhile, made it clear that finishing above Arsenal, and Chelsea too, would be a major achievement.

"It's the most important thing this year to be honest," he said. "I really want to be the top London club and at least keep that third place if we can."

"It can all change very quickly so we have got to keep it going and keep playing the way we are playing to do that but finishing as the top London club would be the key - anything above that would be a bonus."

Then, of course, the hard work to maintain that status would begin.

"Chelsea are not going to lay down and neither are Arsenal if they don't make it this year," Redknapp added.

"You have got to keep improving and it's about how ambitious you are. The chairman is ambitious here and there is no reason why we can't keep pushing on."

Redknapp should be able to welcome Luka Modric back from illness and Benoit Assou-Ekotto, Emmanuel Adebayor and Rafael van der Vaart from injury.

Adebayor, the former Arsenal forward, is likely to receive abuse from Arsenal supporters.



PHOTO: AFP

Iceland midfielder Steinthor Frey Thorsteinsson executes a flip throw during a throw-in at their international friendly match against Japan at the Nagai Stadium in Osaka on Friday. Japan won 3-1.

## Arshavin back at Zenit

AFP, London

Zenit Saint Petersburg have signed Arsenal's Russian midfielder Andrey Arshavin on loan until the end of the season, the player and the Russian outfit said Friday.

The Arsenal player, who cost the Gunners 15 million pounds (20 million dollars) when he arrived in London two and a half seasons ago, tweeted 'it's done' as he prepared to head back to his former club amid reports Zenit had agreed to pay a fee of around 1.5 million dollars and also pay his wages.

Arsenal coach Arsene Wenger had previously insisted that the Russian would be staying in London although the 30-year-old has come in for criticism from fans for some recent below-par performances.

This season he has been a fringe player, generally appearing from the bench.

And with the Russian transfer window shutting Friday night Zenit made their move, saying in a statement on their website that "Arshavin is back!"

The club added: "FC Zenit welcomes the return of Andrey Arshavin to St Petersburg."

Arsenal said in a statement: "Everyone at Arsenal wishes Andrey well during his spell with Zenit."

Arshavin has scored 30 times in 133 appearances for the Gunners since joining in February 2009, including four goals in a 4-4 draw with Liverpool at Anfield in his debut season.

He also scored the winning goal against Barcelona in last year's 2-1 Champions League victory at the Emirates Stadium.

The Russia captain returns to his home city and former club, managed by Luciano Spalletti, in order to maximise his opportunities for regular first-team football ahead of Euro 2012 in June.

### SPORTS POLL

Are you enjoying the BPL?

Yes 73.4%

No 26.6%

TOTAL VOTES: 259

### WEEKLY QUESTION

Which youngster has impressed you the most in the BPL?

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

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### ESPN & STAR Cricket

Australia v India Tri-Series, 10th Match  
Live from 9:20am

Channel 9

BPL T20

Khulna v Rajshahi  
Live from 2:00pm

Barisal v Chittagong  
Live from 6:30pm

ESPN

English Premiership

Arsenal v Tottenham  
Live from 7:25pm

Stoke City v Swansea  
Live from 9:30pm

STAR Sports

English Premiership

Norwich City v Man United  
Live from 7:25pm

TEN Action

Carling Cup Final



BPL T20

Khulna v Rajshahi  
Live from 2:00pm

Barisal v Chittagong  
Live from 6:30pm

Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket

## A family affair

Football

AFP, London

Cardiff defender Anthony Gerrard insists family loyalties will be placed firmly to one side as he targets "taking down" Liverpool captain and cousin Steven Gerrard in Sunday's League Cup final.

Sunday's showpiece sees the relatives meet for the first time in professional football.

And Cardiff's Gerrard told BBC Sport: "You do anything to win."

"Steven has an abundance of medals and he's played in these occasions so many times."

"If push comes to shove, one-on-one, with us winning 1-0, then I think he knows he's getting taken down."

"I think that will be vice-versa. You do what's best for your team."

Gerrard the defender, who began his career at Everton, recalled his days growing up alongside his more illustrious five years older relative in Merseyside.

"One of my earliest memories is playing football with him," said Anthony.

"Steven and his friends made a goal out of scaffolding and had tarpaulin wrapped around it. It was fantastic."

"I remember staying off school, getting a kit and putting it on and then playing with him and his mates."

He says he has been in touch with the Liverpool star.

"I spoke to Steven and sent him a little joke via text message, 'what are you doing on Sunday?', said Anthony, who has made himself available for the Republic of Ireland rather than his native England.

"I might send him a picture message about the white suits (worn by Liverpool when they last reached a Wembley final in 1996): 'Hope you're wearing them again'."