

## Catania stop Milan march

AFP, Rome

AC Milan's relentless pursuit of the Serie A title hit a stumbling block on Saturday as Catania held them to a 1-1 draw in Sicily.

Brazilian Robinho had given the champions a first half lead but Nicolas Spolli equalised in the second period.

The draw took Milan five points clear of second-placed Juventus, who host Napoli on Sunday, with eight games left.

Milan coach Massimo Allegri vented his frustration at the refereeing in the match after his team were denied a valid goal, when the referee didn't see the ball go over the line, while Catania had one ruled out for a marginal offside.

Allegri took the opportunity to hit out at title rivals Juve who have made a habit of complaining about refereeing decisions.

"It was difficult to see but Robinho's was a goal, as were the two offsides," Allegri told Sky Sport.

"But it's not a question of referees, everyone talks about it but they should shut up. Given that the others complain now we'll do likewise. We never grumble but we must learn how."

Catania are now just one point behind Roma in the final Europa League qualifying position.

### RESULTS

Catania 1 (Spolli 57) AC Milan 1 (Robinho 34)  
Parma 3 (Mariga 6, Floccari 12, 77) Lazio 1 (Scaloni 36)

## Balotelli leaves coach fuming

INTERNET, Undated

Manchester City manager Roberto Mancini claimed he might have substituted striker Mario Balotelli after just five minutes of his side's frustrating draw with Sunderland.

The enigmatic Balotelli may have scored twice but Mancini was frustrated by his fellow Italian's performance as City surrendered two potentially vital points in the title race.

When asked if he thought about taking Balotelli off, Mancini said: "I thought this after five minutes but in the end he scored two goals. He didn't play well. In a game like this the strikers should be the difference - but not in the last two minutes, in the minutes before."

"A player like Mario or (Edin) Dzeko should score two or three goals in a game like this. In this moment we need Carlos (Tevez), a striker who can do different. I want this."

Mancini said: "On the ball it should be Mario and Ali - after they decide who shoots. But it can happen in a moment like today, things like this. It is the last time."

### SPORTS POLL

#### WEEKLY QUESTION

Were you happy with Mushfiqur Rahim's captaincy in Asia Cup?

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## What to WATCH

### ESPN

Sportscenter India

Sports News

Live at 8:30pm

English Premiership

Blackburn v Man United

Live from 1:00am (Tuesday)

## DAY'S EVENT

### Bangladesh Premier League

Arambagh v Rahmatganj

Time: 4:00pm

Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium



Manchester City striker Mario Balotelli (L) is seen arguing with captain Vincent Kompany during their Premier League match against Sunderland at the Etihad Stadium on Saturday. City could only draw 3-3 to put a further dent in their title hopes.

PHOTO: AFP

# City falling apart

AFP, London



Manchester City's challenge for the Premier League title suffered a setback as they were forced to stage a late fightback just to salvage a 3-3 draw against Sunderland at Eastlands on Saturday.

With leaders Manchester United not in action until Monday's trip to Blackburn, Roberto Mancini's side would have returned to the top of the table on goal difference if they had beaten the Black Cats.

But City, who had won their previous 20 home league games to set a Premier League record, are now two points behind United and that gap will extend to five if the champions win at Ewood Park.

City, on a run of only one win in four league matches, fell behind to Sweden midfielder Sebastian Larsson's cool finish in the 31st minute.

Mancini's men equalised two minutes before half-time when referee Phil Dowd harshly awarded a penalty for Craig Gardner's challenge on Edin Dzeko.

Mario Balotelli stroked home the spot-kick, yet City were behind again moments later as on-loan Arsenal forward Nicklas Bendtner headed in

Stephane Sessegnon's cross.

Larsson added the third goal as he fired Sessegnon's pass beyond Joe Hart in the 55th minute.

But, to their credit, City kept going and Balotelli struck again in the 85th minute before Aleksandar Kolarov hit the equaliser moments later.

### RESULTS

Aston Villa 2 (Collins 77, Lichaj 80) Chelsea 4 (Sturridge 9, Ivanovic 51, 83, Torres 90)

Everton 2 (McAuley 18-og, Anichebe 68) West Bromwich 0

Fulham 2 (Dempsey 2, Duff 13) Norwich City 1 (Wilbraham 77)

Manchester City 3 (Balotelli 43-pen, 85, Kolarov 86) Sunderland 3 (Larsson 31, 55, Bendtner 45)

Queens Park Rangers 2 (Taarabt 22, Diakite 66) Arsenal 1 (Walcott 37)

Wigan 2 (Alcaraz 54, Moses 90) Stoke 0

Wolverhampton 2 (Knightly 53, Jarvis 88) Bolton 3 (Petrov 63-pen, Alonso 80, Davies 84)

Chelsea kept their top-four bid alive with a 4-2 win over Aston Villa as the home faithful paid tribute to stricken captain Stiliyan Petrov.

Petrov's presence at Villa Park just 24 hours after being diagnosed with acute leukaemia produced an emotional atmosphere.

With reports circulating that the Villa midfielder will retire to focus on his battle, a tearful Petrov was given a rapturous reception from the home fans.

Chelsea made the perfect start when Daniel Sturridge slotted home in the ninth minute and Serbian defender Branislav Ivanovic doubled their lead in the 51st minute goal.

Villa looked to have snatched a point when James Collins struck in the 77th minute header and Eric Lichaj equalised three minutes later.

But Ivanovic restored Chelsea's lead in the 83rd minute and Fernando Torres moved the Blues within two points of fourth placed Tottenham, who host Swansea on Sunday, with his first league goal since September.

Struggling QPR ended Arsenal's run of seven successive league wins with a shock 2-1 victory at Loftus Road.

The third placed Gunners fell behind in the 22nd minute as Adel Taarabt skipped past Thomas Vermaelen to fire in his first Premier League goal.

Theo Walcott equalised in the 37th minute, but Mark Hughes's side regained the lead as Mali midfielder Samba Diakite notched his first QPR goal in the 66th minute.

QPR remain third bottom but they are now level on points with Blackburn.

# Battling Bayern keep up chase

AFP, Berlin



BUNDESLIGA

Bayern Munich trimmed Borussia Dortmund's lead at the top of the German league back to three points on Saturday as the Bavarians' 1-0 win at Nuremberg heated up the title race with six games left.

After champions Dortmund were held to a dramatic 4-4

draw at home to Stuttgart on Friday night, second-placed Bayern seized their opportunity with Dutch winger Arjen Robben hitting the winner.

The win was also a perfect boost ahead of Tuesday's home Champions League quarter-final second leg tie against Marseille where Bayern start with a 2-0 lead.

At Nuremberg, Munich were frustrated by their hosts' robust defence, but after Germany striker Mario Gomez was harshly ruled offside having found the net, Robben soon put the Bavarians ahead just moments later.

Bayern midfielder Toni Kroos chipped over the Nuremberg defence and although Franck Ribery's shot was blocked by goalkeeper Raphael Schaefer, Robben was on hand to fire home on 69 minutes.

### RESULTS

Nuremberg 0 Bayern Munich 1 (Robben 69)

Kaiserslautern 0 Hamburg 1 (Jansen 29)

Werder Bremen 0 Mainz 05 3 (Szalai 19, Choupo-Moting 48, 74)

Bayer Leverkusen 0 Freiburg 2 (Schuster 8, Caligiuri 60)

Augsburg 2 (Koo 19, Rafael 45-pen) Cologne 1 (Podolski 42-pen)

Hertha Berlin 1 (Kobiaschwili 13)

VfL Wolfsburg 4 (Jancker 29-og, Helmes 34, 81, Mandzukic 77)

## Leverkusen show door to Dutt

AFP, Berlin

Bayer Leverkusen on Sunday sacked coach Robin Dutt in the wake of his team's 2-0 home defeat by Freiburg in the German league with ex-Liverpool defender Sami Hyypia to now help coach the side.

Dutt was summonsed to a meeting with Leverkusen's director of sport Rudi Voeller and chairman Wolfgang Holzhaeuser on Sunday morning when he was formally dismissed.

For the rest of the season and the next six league games, Leverkusen's former Finland defender and Anfield favourite Hyypia will coach the team alongside Bayer's Under-19 coach Sascha Lewandowski.

"We simply had to act and send a signal that we are pursuing our goal of international competition with a fresh wind behind us," explained Holzhaeuser.

After 10 years at Anfield, Hyypia, 38, left Liverpool in 2009 to join Leverkusen where he spent two seasons before retiring last year.

"We want the Hyypia/Lewandowski team to turn things around and start moving us in the right direction again," said Voeller.

## Cisse puts L'pool to sword

REUTERS, London

Papiss Cisse scored with two clinical finishes as Newcastle continued their surprise push for a top-four finish on Sunday with a 2-0 victory over Liverpool, who had keeper Pepe Reina sent off late on.

The Senegal striker headed the first from a Hatem Ben Arfa cross before sidestepping Reina and side-footing home for the second.

It was a miserable afternoon for an out-of-sorts Liverpool, who felt they should have been awarded a first-half penalty when Danny Simpson appeared to handle on the line, while Cisse looked offside in the build-up to Newcastle's second.

Liverpool had Reina sent off with seven minutes remaining when he was judged by referee Martin Atkinson to have headbutted Newcastle's James Perch after being tripped up by the defender.



Real Madrid striker Karim Benzema is ecstatic after scoring a stunning volley in their 5-1 romp over La Liga rivals Osasuna at Pampalona on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

# Madrid imperious

AFP, Madrid

Cristiano Ronaldo took his La Liga season goal tally to 37 on Saturday as Real Madrid smashed through the 100-goal barrier to move closer to the Spanish title.

Ronaldo, who scored twice in the 5-1 demolition of Osasuna, is now just three shy of his own record of 40 league goals set last season and there are still eight matches left.

More importantly, his team maintained their six-point lead over bitter rivals Barcelona who stayed in touch with a 2-0 win over Athletic Bilbao, a match which saw fellow free-scorer Lionel Messi grab his 36th league goal.

"I dream of winning La Liga and I haven't considered for one moment that we could lose it," said Ronaldo.

"But there are still eight games to play and we know that we have to keep winning because Barcelona are still on our heels."

Saturday's win in Pamplona took Real to 100 goals scored in 30 league games against just 27 conceded.

Karim Benzema set Real on their way with a delightful volley in the seventh minute before Ronaldo, on 37 minutes, and Gonzalo Higuain, three minutes later, made it 3-0 at the interval.

Higuain's strike took the Argentina international to 100 goals in his Real career.

While Osasuna threatened a brief comeback after the break through a Juan



LFP

Francisco 'Nino' header, Ronaldo struck again after 69 minutes and Higuain wrapped up the scoring in the 77th.

A minute from the end, Osasuna substitute Roland Lamah was dismissed for a second yellow card as his team's six-match unbeaten run came to an end on the day that coach Jose Luis Mendilibar had extended his contract for another year.

"We scored from the first chance

that we had with a goal which was out of this world and the second was also fantastic," said Real coach Jose Mourinho.

"We adapted well against a tough side like Osasuna and we continued to play our attacking style which involved looking for our strikers. Even when we conceded the goal we knew how to respond and did not panic at 3-1. It was a good performance by us."

At Camp Nou, Barca went ahead five minutes before the break against Bilbao through Andres Iniesta.

In the 58th minute, Messi scored his 36th league goal of the season after Cristian Tello was felled in the box.

The Argentine star now has 56 goals in all tournaments, nine more than his great rival Ronaldo.

"We were very strong at the back and much better than we have been for a long time, if not we would have been in a lot of trouble as this was one of the toughest games that we had left," said Barca coach Pep Guardiola.

"The match was decided by the quality of the players."

Athletic had less than 48 hours to prepare for the match following their 4-2 victory over Schalke in the Europa League and they made several changes, leaving out Fernando Llorente and Iker Muniain.

Guardiola said he would not keep players in reserve with the second leg of their Champions League tie coming up against AC Milan following the 0-0 at the San Siro last Wednesday.

Even so Xavi Hernandez and Carles Puyol found themselves on the bench.

Defender Jon Aurtentxe headed a Gerard Pique effort off the line but a goal for Barcelona was on the cards and it arrived through Iniesta after 40 minutes.

Known for crucial goals rather than being a regular scorer he smashed the ball into the roof of the net after being supplied by Messi.

Tello was causing problems for the Athletic defence and he was felled by Javi Martinez in the penalty area after 58 minutes with Messi firing in Barcelona's second from the spot.