

Easy win sees Man United go clear

REUTERS, London

Manchester United opened up an eight point lead at the top of the Premier League when they beat 10-man Queens Park Rangers 2-0 at Old Trafford on Sunday.

United won with a highly debatable first half penalty which led to the sending-off, and a trademark rocket shot from Paul Scholes in the second half, to move on to 79 points with six matches remaining.

City, who led the title race for five months before falling behind United a month ago, have 71 points and will attempt to cut United's lead back to five points at the Emirates against an Arsenal side looking to avoid defeat to move back into third place above Tottenham Hotspur.

United took the lead after 15 minutes when Wayne Rooney scored his 30th goal of the season after referee Lee Mason awarded them a controversial penalty.

Ashley Young, who was in an offside position anyway, appeared to dive after the slightest of touches from QPR skipper Shaun Derry who was promptly shown the red card by the referee, QPR's seventh dismissal of the season.

Rooney shot low and hard to goalkeeper Paddy Kenny's right and although the goalkeeper almost got a hand to the ball, the goal virtually settled the game as a contest.

United doubled their lead after 68 minutes when Scholes, who ran the show for United, scored his third league goal since coming out of retirement in January.

QPR failed to clear a corner properly and the ball fell to Scholes who smashed it low and hard past Kenny from the edge of the penalty area to seal United's 11th win out of their last 12 league matches.

DAY'S EVENT



Bangladesh Premier League

Brothers Union v Sk Jamal

Time: 4:00pm

Venue: Bangabandhu

60-goal Messi eyes Muellers record

REUTERS, Madrid



Barcelona's Lionel Messi reached another milestone in his amazing career on Saturday when he became the first player to score 60 goals in a season in European top-flight soccer in almost 40 years.

The Argentine World Player of the Year netted twice in a 4-1 victory at Real Zaragoza to notch up 38 La Liga goals in the campaign and his 60th in all competitions.

Gerd Mueller was the last player to achieve the feat on the way to scoring 67 goals for Bayern Munich in the 1972-73 season and Messi has at least 10 more matches in which to break the German's record.

Messi put Barca 2-1 ahead with a powerful strike into the roof of the net shortly before halftime and also netted from the penalty spot in the closing stages at the Romareda.

Still only 24, he is already Barca's leading scorer in official games with 240 goals, beating Cesar Rodriguez's 60-year-old record of 232 last month when he also became the first player to score five in a Champions League match.

Messi netted his first goal for the Catalan club on May 1, 2005 aged 17 years, 10 months and seven days in a La Liga game against Albacete at the Nou Camp after coming through the youth system with contemporaries Cesc Fabregas and Gerard Pique.

This season, as well as his La Liga tally, Messi has 14 goals in the Champions League, two in the King's Cup, three in the Spanish Super Cup, one in the European Super Cup and has also scored two at the Club World Cup.

He has 11 more goals than Real Madrid forward Cristiano Ronaldo, who has 37 in La Liga, eight in the Champions League, three in the King's Cup and one in the Spanish Super Cup.

Other players who have scored 60 or more goals in a season include Fernc Deak, who netted 66 for Hungarian club Szentlörinc in 1945-46, Henk Groot, who struck 64 times for Ajax Amsterdam in 1960-61 and Dixie Dean, who got 63 for Everton in 1927-28.

Barca keep up chase

REUTERS, Madrid



Barcelona trimmed the gap to leaders Real Madrid to three points when Lionel Messi struck twice in a 4-1 comeback win at relegation-threatened 10-man Real Zaragoza in La Liga on Saturday.

"You always suffer after playing a Champions League game midweek," Barca coach Pep Guardiola told a news conference, referring to his side's 3-1 win over AC Milan on Tuesday to clinch a place in the semi-finals of Europe's elite club competition.

In an action-packed game at the Romareda, in which Zaragoza had to play the second half with 10 men after the dismissal of fullback Abraham Minero, the hosts squandered one chance to lead when Victor Valdes saved Carlos Aranda's 24th-minute penalty.

Barca were struggling to break through some dogged defence and Aranda made amends for his weak effort from the spot with a freakish goal on the half hour.

Sent clear on the right, his initial effort was saved by Valdes but the ball rebounded back on to the burly forward's bald head

before arrowing past Carles Puyol's despairing dive into the net.

A howler by Roberto gifted Barca an equaliser in the 36th minute. The Zaragoza goalkeeper came to collect at a corner but only managed to palm the ball down to Puyol, who volleyed neatly home through a crowd of defenders.

Some tenacious tackling by Alexis Sanchez set up Barca's second when the Chilean thwarted a Zaragoza attack and raced forward before releasing Messi on the left.

The World Player of the Year beat one defender and lashed the ball high into the net.

It was Barca's 159th goal of the season in all competitions, beating the club record of 158 set during coach Pep Guardiola's first season in charge in 2008-09.

Zaragoza were reduced to 10 men when Minero was dismissed for a second yellow card moments before halftime and home coach

Manolo Jimenez was sent from the bench two minutes after the break for his over-enthusiastic protests.

Jimenez's tiring troops did well to hang on until five minutes from time when Alexis was upended in the area and Messi drove the spot kick high past Roberto.

He then set up Pedro to score Barca's fourth.



Barcelona forward Lionel Messi (R) fights for the ball with Zaragoza midfielder Da Silva during their La Liga match at La Romareda on Saturday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Dortmund keep clear

REUTERS, Berlin



Two goals from Robert Lewandowski allowed Borussia Dortmund to grab a 3-1 win at VfL Wolfsburg and stay three points

clear at the top of the Bundesliga on Saturday, while Bayern Munich were hot on their heels following a 2-1 win against Augsburg.

Dortmund top scorer Lewandowski tapped in a fine Ivan Perisic cutback in the 22nd minute and Ilkay Gundogan doubled their lead with a curled shot from the edge of the box as the champions extended their unbeaten streak to 23 games with five left to play.

Mario Mandzukic headed in to cut the deficit in the 61st for Wolfsburg, who were left with 10 men a little later after captain Alexander Madlung received a second booking.

Despite frantic efforts by the hosts for an equaliser, Lewandowski killed off the game in a quick break, beating keeper Diego Benaglio in the 90th for his 19th league goal

to lift Dortmund to 66 points.

Bayern, who are still chasing a treble after qualifying for the Champions League last four, snatched their ninth straight win in all competitions after Bundesliga top scorer Mario Gomez scored twice to take his league tally to 25.

Bayern, who also face Dortmund in the German Cup final in May, were eager to go into the April 11 league match-up against Dortmund with only a three-point gap and got off to a flying start.

The hosts, who had midfielder Bastian Schweinsteiger back in the starting lineup after a knee injury, needed only 25 seconds to score. Gomez found the back of the net with a close range effort following a dizzying run down the wing by Franck Ribery straight after the start.

Gomez, in spectacular form this season, added his 25th league goal on the hour, racing into the box to connect with an Arjen Robben pass from the right after Augsburg had briefly levelled with Koo Ja-cheol.

Bayern are second on 63 with five games left in the campaign.

RESULTS

Bayern Munich 2 (Gomez 1, 60) FC Augsburg 1 (Koo Ja-cheol 23)
VfB Stuttgart 4 (Hajnal 7, Ibisevic 49, 85, Kuzmanovic 65-pen) Mainz 05 1 (Ivanschitz 3-pen)
FC Cologne 1 (Jemal 39) Werder Bremen 1 (Rosenberg 24)
Kaiserslautern 1 (Bugera 86)
Hoffenheim 2 (Salihovic 26-pen, Vukcevic 71)
SC Freiburg 2 (Caligiuri 53-pen, Makiadi 79) Nuremberg 2 (Didavi 8, Pekhart 45+2)
VfL Wolfsburg 1 (Mandzukic 61)
Dortmund 3 (Lewandowski 22, 90, Gundogan 49)
Borussia Moenchengladbach 0

SPORTS POLL

WEEKLY QUESTION

Which Tiger will perform better in the IPL?

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

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TEN Cricket

West Indies v Australia

First Test, Day Three

Live from 8:00pm

SET Max

Indian Premier League

Deccan v Mumbai

Live from 8:30pm

ESPN

English Premiership

Tottenham v Norwich City

Live from 8:00pm

Aston Villa v Stoke City

Live from 10:30pm

Fulham v Chelsea

Live from 1:00am (Tuesday)

STAR Sports

English Premiership

Newcastle v Bolton



Juventus defender Leonardo Bonucci heads home the first goal against Palermo in their Serie A clash at the Renzo Barbero in Palermo on Saturday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Milan lose as Juve go top

REUTERS, Milan



Juventus bounded to the top of Serie A by securing a battling 2-0 victory at Palermo after former striker Amauri condemned AC Milan to a 2-1 defeat at home to Fiorentina on Saturday.

Juve defender Leonardo Bonucci headed in ex-Milan playmaker Andrea Pirlo's corner after 56 minutes and Fabio Quagliarella netted an angled drive to put the Turin side a point ahead of the champions with seven games left.

Milan meekly surrendered top spot after a late goal by Fiorentina substitute Amauri, who flopped at Juve during their wilderness years after a 2006 match-fixing demotion, gave the lowly outfit the points at a scorching San Siro.

The Rossoneri fell apart having gone ahead through Zlatan Ibrahimovic's 31st-minute penalty after a foul on strike partner Maxi Lopez, who later hit the post.

Milan, who drew at Catania last weekend and were eliminated from the Champions League by Barcelona in midweek, were pegged back by Stevan Jovetic's goal on the break in the 47th and a Philippe Mexes mistake allowed Amauri to net the 89th-minute winner.

Not even the late substitute appearance of Antonio Cassano, out for five months after a heart problem, could inspire Milan.

"We'll have to react with the personality of a great team because nothing is lost," Milan coach Massimiliano Allegri told reporters.

"It was a difficult game because of fatigue, the state of the pitch and because Fiorentina did well. It's the first time we've played in the afternoon for a long time, it was quite hot today as well and the ball on the pitch was like a boulder."

RESULTS

Palermo 0 **Juventus 2** (Bonucci 56, Quagliarella 69)
Lazio 3 (Candrea 9, Mauri 68, Ledesma 81-pen) Napoli 1