



Everton midfielder Marouane Fellaini (L) heads in the all-important goal against Manchester United during their Premier League encounter at Goodison Park on Monday.

Fellaini stuns Man Utd

REUTERS, London



Everton stunned Manchester United 1-0 thanks to a bullet header in the second half by Marouane Fellaini after both teams got their Premier League campaigns underway on Monday.

The Belgian international, who hit the post in the first half with a close range shot and tormented United's defence throughout with his height, nodded in from a corner on 51 minutes.

The home side had enjoyed the better of the opening exchanges and, as the game developed, created the majority of chances in front of a noisy Goodison Park crowd.

United goalkeeper David De Gea had done well in the first half to keep the home side at bay by producing a string of first rate saves, most notably to deny Steven Pienaar's curling right-foot shot on the half-hour mark.

Wayne Rooney had a decent chance at the other end, only to direct his shot straight at Tim Howard.

However, with Fellaini working hard in the midfield, making his presence felt and linking up well with the Everton strikers, the home side always looked the more likely to break the deadlock.

The Belgian rose above Michael Carrick to get on the end of Leighton Baines' corner and power in his header into the corner of De Gea's goal.

Tom Cleverley's shot on 67 minutes was cleared off the line and the visitors then introduced new signing and league player of the 2011/12 season Robin van Persie, bought from rivals Arsenal last week. However, his debut did not affect the result.

With Phil Jagielka in fine form, clearing Cleverley's 67th-minute shot off the line, the Everton defence held firm, frustrating Manchester United and taking a deserved three points.

Jagielka told Sky Sports he was delighted with the result and hoped it could serve as a platform for the team to build on.

"It's fantastic to start a season with a win rather than the

Milan, Inter swap strikers

REUTERS, Milan

AC Milan forward Antonio Cassano is set to join Inter, with Giampaolo Pazzini moving in the opposite direction, the two clubs said on Tuesday.

The clubs said they had been involved in negotiations over the players, who left Sampdoria during the 2010-11 season, although a deal had yet to be finalised. "It's an interesting operation - who doesn't want a player like Cassano?" Inter president Massimo Moratti was quoted as saying on the club's website. "We think he can be useful and the coach thinks the same."

AC Milan broadcast an interview on their television channel with midfielder Riccardo Montolivo, welcoming Pazzini to the club.

"It will be wonderful if he arrives," said Montolivo, a former team mate of Pazzini's who was signed from Fiorentina earlier in the close season.

"Pazzini has done well in all the teams he played for. He is a fox in the penalty area, he's strong in the air and helps his sides to play well."

Media reports say Milan will pay an additional 7.5 million euros (\$9.26 million) to their city rivals for Pazzini, 28, who scored only five goals in Serie A last season for Inter.

Cassano's departure from Milan comes as a surprise, given that he has revived his career in his 18 months at the club and become firmly established in the Italy line-up.

Having been overlooked for the 2010 World Cup, the 30-year-old formed Italy's strike partnership with Mario Balotelli at Euro 2012, despite missing six months of the season after undergoing minor heart surgery.



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Shaky start for PSG

REUTERS, Paris



Big-spending Paris St Germain continued their shaky start to the Ligue 1 season when they were held to a 0-0 draw at AC Ajaccio and had Ezequiel Lavezzi sent off before the floodlights failed for several minutes on Sunday.

PSG, expected to ease to the title, were missing new signings Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Thiago Silva, who are not fully fit, but still had the best chances before Argentine Lavezzi was dismissed on the hour for a two-footed jumping tackle.

Jeremy Menez had a gilt-edged opportunity but his effort was saved amid PSG pressure while Eduardo hit the post with a classy strike for the Corsicans, relegation contenders last term.

With the game already into injury time, the floodlights at the modest Francois-Coty stadium suddenly went out and fans and players stood about wondering what was going on as the referee chatted with Ajaccio officials.

Eventually the lights came back on and the teams played out the remaining few minutes with no incidents.

PSG coach Carlo Ancelotti, sent to the stands before the blackout for kicking a bottle in disgust, also saw his side draw their opener last weekend when ex-Milan forward Ibrahimovic spared their blushes with a late leveller at home to Lorient.

Olympique Marseille and Andre-Pierre Gignac endured a torrid time last season but the burly frontman finally came good with the first goal in a 2-0 win over Sochaux at the Stade Velodrome.

Rod Fanni sealed the win late on as the southerners racked up a second straight league win under new coach Elie Baup.

"It's good for our confidence. It's a good start to the season. It has been a while since OM started a season like this," Gignac told reporters after scoring following a 54th minute corner and having other chances.

Court upholds Conte ban

REUTERS, Rome

An Italian soccer tribunal on Wednesday confirmed a 10-month ban for Juventus coach Antonio Conte, rejecting his appeal against a verdict handed down earlier this month.

Conte, who led an undefeated Juventus to the Italian title in his first season in charge last term, was accused of failing to report incidents of match-fixing in two games in the 2010-11 season when he was the coach of then Serie B side Siena.

The appeals court modified the original verdict by acquitting Conte of wrongdoing in the game against Novara, but upheld the original 10-month sentence.

Super Cup final tonight

AP, Madrid

Real Madrid and Barcelona renew their Spanish Super Cup rivalry on Thursday when Tito Vilanova faces Jose Mourinho at the stadium where the two coaches clashed last year.

Barcelona hosts the first leg at Camp Nou. Last August's match ended with both teams brawling on the field and Madrid coach Mourinho poking Vilanova in the eye with his finger.

Barca hit 5, Real held

AFP, Madrid



Barcelona thrashed Real Sociedad 5-1 on Sunday with two goals from Lionel Messi and one each for Carles Puyol, Pedro Rodriguez and David Villa, in his first game back after eight months out with injury.

The victory at Camp Nou came after champions Real Madrid started their title defence with a 1-1 draw at home to Valencia.

Barca's La Liga opener under new coach Tito Vilanova saw them 4-1 ahead by half-time with Messi in sparkling form.

Puyol powered home a header from a corner on two minutes before Chori Castro finished off a sweeping move to level for the away team.

However, Barcelona were too strong and ran out easy winners.

Messi added a double in four minutes to kill off the opposition, his first coming when he squeezed past two defenders to power home.

For his second he latched on to a loose ball to hit home and he nearly had three within six minutes when a header went just high.

Barca were enjoying up to 80 per cent of possession and their passing play paid off on the stroke of half-time when Cesc Fabregas and Jonathon Tello combined to provide for Pedro to finish well.

The introduction of Villa on 75 minutes

brought the crowd to its feet and he only had to wait nine minutes to get his reward, finishing off an Andres Iniesta pass.

Real Madrid's title defence got off to a stuttering start when they dropped two crucial home points in a 1-1 draw with Valencia on a hot Sunday night in the Spanish capital.

Gonzalo Higuain put Real ahead on nine minutes before Jonas Goncalves equalised just before the interval for a plucky Valencia side.

When Angel Di Maria went close on four minutes from long range it seemed that Madrid had never been away.

Indeed they looked to be coasting when they took the lead five minutes later.

Di Maria took advantage of a very high Valencia defensive line to float a perfect pass through to Higuain who found himself alone in front of Diego Alves in the Valencia goal.

He had so much time that the Valencia bench were convinced he was in an offside position and he saw two shots blocked by the Brazilian before finally converting at the third attempt to grab Madrid's first goal of the season.

Attacking sorties were so rare for Valencia that it was completely out of the blue when the equaliser came on 41 minutes.

Tino Costa floated a free-kick towards the home team's penalty spot and Jonas emerged out of a group of players to head home.

The Brazilian midfielder's brave attempt to reach the ball was timed so well that Real goalkeeper Iker Casillas and defender Pepe collided in mid-air and needed five minutes

MU snap up Buttner

AFP, London

Manchester United have completed the signing of Dutch defender Alexander Buttner from Vitesse Arnhem on a five-year contract, the Premier League club announced on Tuesday.

The 23-year-old, who was part of the preliminary Dutch squad for Euro 2012, has made 119 appearances over the last four years at the Eredivisie club.

"Alexander is one of the best young left backs in Europe and we're delighted to sign him," United manager Sir Alex Ferguson told the club's official website.

"He's someone we've been watching for a while now. He gives us some really exciting options in that position."

Buttner, who becomes United's second Dutch signing in a week following that of striker Robin van Persie from Arsenal, added: "Joining Manchester United is one of the best days of my life."

"It's a team I have admired for many years now and I can't wait to join my teammates and play my part in helping the club be successful."

Jose keen on return

AFP, London



Real Madrid manager Jose Mourinho admits he remains keen to return to the English Premier League -- as long as clubs interested in hiring him roll out the red carpet.

Mourinho has signed a new contract keeping him at Real until 2016 after masterminding the club's Spanish title triumph last season.

But the self-styled "Special One", who remains a cult hero in England after his three-year reign at Chelsea, never misses a chance to remind the football world of his worth.

Whenever a managerial vacancy comes up at a big Premier League club, Mourinho is linked with the job and he remains the favourite to succeed Alex Ferguson at Manchester United or Roberto Mancini at Manchester City.

A return to Chelsea is less likely given the manner of his sacking in 2007 and owner Roman Abramovich's continued interest in former Barcelona coach Pep Guardiola.

But Mourinho says he would consider any offer -- if the club in question show him enough love and respect.

Asked if a return to Stamford Bridge was possible, Mourinho told BBC radio on Monday: "I will go where people really want me and, when that moment arrives, they show me they really want me."

"But I have to repeat always this: I am at

Real Madrid. I like very much to be. I want one day to be back in English football, yes. I always said that."

Mourinho has enjoyed tremendous success wherever he has managed, winning the Champions League and UEFA Cup with underdogs Porto before moving to Chelsea, where he won the Premier League title in his first two seasons.

More Champions League success followed when Mourinho took over at Inter Milan and he became just the fourth manager to win the title in four major European leagues when his Real side ended Barcelona's reign as kings of Spanish football.

The Portuguese coach, whose Real team were held to a 1-1 draw by Valencia in their La Liga opener on Sunday, believes the secret of his success lies in his ability to immerse himself in a club in the same manner as a supporter.

"When I go to a club, I wear the shirt, I feel the shirt like it's my first one or my last one," he said. "I feel the fans as part of myself. I create eternal links with fans."

"I go to play against Chelsea and I feel (it), I go to Italy and I feel (it). I work for the clubs, I work for the people that trust me and of course the owners and the directors but the clubs are the fans."

"For me, it's one of my qualities. I become immediately one of them and I feel that I am one of them with a privileged position to fight for the club and to try to bring to all of



Barcelona's latest signing Cameroonian midfielder Alex Song (C) poses with former player Andoni Zubizarreta (L) and club's deputy sporting director Josep Maria Bartomeu at Nou Camp on Tuesday. Song left Arsenal after Barcelona agreed to pay 15 million pounds for his services.

PHOTO: AFP