

Van Persie lifts MU

AFP, Southampton



Robin van Persie struck twice in the dying moments to complete his first Manchester United hat-trick and ensure Sir Alex Ferguson's side marked the manager's 1,000th English league game with a 3-2 victory over Southampton on Sunday.

Ferguson appeared destined for disappointment on his landmark occasion when United trailed with three minutes of normal time remaining at St Mary's.

But van Persie -- who had earlier cancelled out Rickie Lambert's 16th minute opener and missed a penalty after Southampton had again gone ahead through Morgan Schneiderlin -- equalised from close range in the 87th minute after Rio Ferdinand's header had struck the post.

Then with the game in stoppage-time, the Holland international met Nani's corner with a near post header that brought the striker's 100th Premier League goal and secured a fortunate win for Ferguson's team.

Van Persie's late intervention was agonising for a Southampton side who had performed well and dominated periods of the game but are still looking for their first point of the season.

The visitors started brightly enough with van Persie producing two moments of quality, a neat backheel followed by an expert chest and volley, that suggested it could be a long afternoon for Nigel Adkins' side.

side.

But a clever corner routine created an opening for Adam Lallana that the Saints captain fired wide moments before Lambert claimed his second league goal of the season with 16 minutes gone.

Jason Puncheon cut inside and sent a left foot cross towards Lambert at the far post and the forward was far too powerful for his marker Rafael da Silva, rising to head home past Lindegaard.

However, van Persie produced an outstanding finish for the 23rd minute equaliser, volleying home from a tight angle after being picked out by Antonio Valencia's deep cross and profiting from right back Nathaniel Clyne's slip.

Southampton refused to be intimidated and were rewarded for their adventure 11 minutes after the restart when Schneiderlin headed the homeside into the lead for a second time.

This time Lambert turned provider, crossing for the midfielder who profited from yet another slip, this time by Patrice Evra, to send a free header well clear of Lindegaard.

With more composure, Southampton might have added a third but they conceded a penalty when Jos Hooiveld clattered through the back of van Persie in the 69th minute.

The United striker stepped up to take the spot-kick but appeared to be caught in two minds as he sent a poorly struck chip to Kelvin Davis's right and the keepers saved easily.

But there would be further twists as van Persie went from zero to hero with a close-range equaliser and then a clinical stoppage-



Manchester United striker Robin van Persie is ecstatic after scoring his third goal against Southampton during their Premier League encounter at St Mary's on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

Italy recall Pazzini

AFP, Rome

AC Milan striker Giampaolo Pazzini was rewarded for his hat-trick heroics on Saturday with selection to Cesare Prandelli's Italy squad to face Bulgaria and Malta next week.

Prandelli announced his 25-man squad on Sunday, with Pazzini being called up a day after a 3-1 win at Bologna gave the Rossoneri their first league win of the season.

Italy face Bulgaria in Sofia on Friday in their first qualifier for the 2014 World Cup to be held in Brazil and host Malta in Modena four days later.

Also in Group B are Denmark, the Czech Republic and Armenia.

There was no place, however, for striker Antonio Cassano, who left Milan to join city rivals Inter last week in a deal that took former Inter man Pazzini the other way.

Pazzini was not a part of Italy's squad for the Euro 2012, where the Azzurri were beaten in the final by Spain. His last call-up was against the United States in February 2012.

Zlatan stars in first win

AFP, Paris



Paris Saint-Germain registered their first win of the new Ligue 1 season on Sunday night as a first-half double from Zlatan Ibrahimovic helped the capital club to a 2-1 triumph at Lille.

PSG's Qatari owners must have been getting restless after seeing their expensively-assembled team limp to three draws in their opening three games, but their signature summer signing Ibrahimovic was the star of the show at Lille's impressive new Grand Stade.

Coach Carlo Ancelotti responded to an impotent attacking display in last Sunday's goalless home stalemate against Bordeaux by restoring Marco Verratti and Jeremy Menez to his starting line-up, and the latter provided a fine assist for the opening goal, which arrived after just 27 seconds.

His cushioned pass allowed Ibrahimovic to slot past Lille 'keeper Mickael Landreau from the left-hand side of the area to give the visitors a dream start.

However, Lille responded like a side whose confidence had been buoyed by their midweek win against FC Copenhagen which took them into the Champions League group stage, and they were level 11 minutes later when Aurelien Chedjou stole in front of Ibrahimovic to head home a corner.

But the super Swede beat the outtrussing Landreau to a Javier Pastore through ball and fire PSG back in front midway through the first half for his fourth goal in Ligue 1, and the capital club held on to their 2-1 lead for the remainder of a keenly-contested encounter.

"It is a good win, to come here in front of a great atmosphere and beat a Lille side who showed in the Champions League play-offs that they are in fine form was important," PSG goalkeeper Salvatore Sirigu told Canal Plus television.

PSG are six points adrift of leaders Marseille, however, after OM continued their perfect start to the campaign thanks to a 3-1 home victory against Rennes at the Stade Velodrome.

Adriano keeps Barca atop

AFP, Madrid



Barcelona maintained their winning start to the season with a fine strike from Adriano Correia giving them a 1-0 victory over Valencia in La Liga action on Sunday.

The Catalan side may have lost the domestic Super Cup to Real Madrid in midweek but they have now picked up maximum points from their first three league games that keeps them top of the table.

It also maintained their five-point lead over defending champions Real, who earlier beat Granada 3-0, Cristiano Ronaldo hitting a brace to reach a landmark 150 goals in 149 games for the capital club.

Barca full-back Adriano's drive from outside the area after 23 minutes was the only goal of the game at the Nou Camp against a Valencia side who battled hard but spent most of the game defending deeply.

Former Arsenal midfielder Alex Song made his first start in a Barca shirt with Sergio Busquets rested and played alongside Xavi Hernandez and Cesc Fabregas who returned to the starting line-up.

Roberto Soldado went within inches of giving Valencia the lead after 11 minutes with a 25-yard strike which whistled past the post.

Lionel Messi had a header saved by keeper Diego Alves after 18 minutes but the Valencia shot-stopper could do nothing about Adriano's sweetly struck

drive minutes later.

There may have been a change of coach in the summer with the departure of Pep Guardiola and the arrival of Tito Vilanova but the football has remained the same and Barca knocked the ball around inside the Valencia half in trademark fashion.

Cesc had the opportunity to extend the lead but with time in the box after receiving the ball from Messi he dinked the ball wide. It has been a disappointing start to the campaign for Cesc and after the restart he blazed over from in front of goal.

RESULTS

Athletic Bilbao 2 (Aduriz 69, Susaeta 75) **Valladolid 0**
Barcelona 1 (Adriano 23) **Valencia 0**
Levante 3 (Juanlu G. 54, Lell 56, Rodriguez 90+3-og) **Espanyol 2** (Longo 21, Tejera 25) **Rayo Vallecano 0** **Sevilla 0**
Real Madrid 3 (Cristiano Ronaldo 26, 54,

Valencia were hanging on but without a second goal Barca could not relax and had their hearts in their mouth several times especially when Victor Ruiz put the ball in the back of the net on the hour mark but was ruled off-side.

Earlier in the evening, Cristiano Ronaldo hit a brace to help Real Madrid get their league campaign back against 10-man Granada.

Despite their cup win the pressure was starting to grow on the team with just a point from their opening two league games but Ronaldo responded with a goal in either half to continue his

remarkable scoring run in Madrid.

The first owed as much to poor keeping from Antonio 'Tono' Rodriguez as the Portuguese's shot from a tight angle after 25 minutes went through his legs, although it did take a slight deflection off Inigo Lopez.

Ronaldo got his second after 53 minutes and Granada's hopes of a comeback took a blow with Borja Gomez sent off six minutes later. Substitute Gonzalo Higuain completed the scoring with a tap-in 15 minutes from the end.

Luka Modric was given a starting place after he came on for the last few minutes against Barca and threaded the ball through to Jose Callejon inside the first few minutes but 'keeper Tono got down well to block him.

Ronaldo had looked sluggish in his first two league games and he failed to trouble the 'keeper with a free-kick and a couple of shots from distance before he did break the deadlock with a soft goal from Granada's perspective.

Angel Di Maria came on after half time and he set up Ronaldo, who saw his shot from inside the box saved by Tono before reacting to knock home the rebound.

Gomez was given his second yellow card for a foul on Ronaldo and then Higuain sealed the win from a Benzema pass.

Earlier Rayo Vallecano drew 0-0 with Sevilla and Athletic Bilbao overcame Valladolid 2-0, while Levante dramatically came from behind to beat Espanyol 3-2, with defender Raul Rodriguez deflecting the ball into his

Osvaldo sinks Inter Milan

REUTERS, Milan

AS Roma forward Pablo Osvaldo netted a stunning goal but was later sent off in his side's 3-1 win at Inter Milan on Sunday as Antonio Cassano scored for the first time since joining the hosts.

Champions Juventus thumped down-hearted Udinese 4-1 away after the hosts, still coming to terms with their failure to qualify for the Champions League, had goalkeeper Zeljko Brkic controversially sent off after 13 minutes.

Napoli beat Fiorentina 2-1 on a pitch which resembled a ploughed field and Cagliari drew 1-1 with Atalanta behind closed doors because their new venue for this season was not considered ready by local authorities.

Roma went ahead at the San Siro when Alessandro Florenzi, unmarked in the penalty area, met Francesco Totti's cross with a looping header in the 15th minute.

Cassano, left out of the Italy squad on Sunday, levelled with a deflected shot in first-half stoppage time for Inter.

Roma, who have four points, regained the lead with a stunning goal as Osvaldo was sent clear of the defence in the 67th minute and deftly flicked the ball over goalkeeper Luca Castellazzi.



PHOTO: AFP

Bayern Munich midfielder Thomas Mueller (C) scores one of his two goals against Stuttgart during their Bundesliga clash in Munich on Sunday.

Bayern floor VfB

AFP, Berlin



Bayern Munich floored ten-man VfB Stuttgart 6-1 on Sunday, with Germany's Thomas Mueller scoring twice, to finish the second weekend of the Bundesliga season at the top of the table.

Having signed Javi Martinez for a Bundesliga record 40 million euros (\$50.3m) on Thursday from Athletic Bilbao, Bayern still managed to rout Stuttgart before the Spain midfielder came on for the final 15 minutes at the Allianz Arena.

Mueller led the way with two goals after Bayern punished Stuttgart for taking a 25th-minute lead courtesy of a brilliant volley from Austria striker Martin Harnik in front of 71,000 spectators.

Bayern roared back as Mueller scored his first goal after following up his long-range strike, which was parried by Stuttgart 'keeper Sven Ulreich, to stab home on 32 minutes.

His Germany team-mate Toni Kroos then added a second goal a minute later with a superb hit after Bayern broke the Stuttgart defence.

Luiz Gustavo -- whose place in the side has come under threat following Martinez's arrival -- drilled home the third from 30 metres to make it 3-1 at the break.

And the hosts maintained their assault on the Stuttgart goal with three goals in four second-half minutes.

Striker Mario Mandzukic grabbed his fourth goal in his third competitive appearance for Bayern two minutes after the break, before Mueller and Bastian Schweinsteiger added headers to make it 6-1 after only 51 minutes.

RESULTS

Bayern Munich 6 (Mueller 32, 49, Kroos 33, Luiz Gustavo 43, Mandzukic 47, Schweinsteiger 51)
VfB Stuttgart 1 (Harnik 25)
VfL Wolfsburg 0 **Hanover 4** (Hagguir



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