

Defoe leads Spurs

England striker Jermain Defoe scored twice as Tottenham Hotspur enjoyed their first victory under Andre Villas-Boas courtesy of a 3-1 Premier League win away to Reading on Sunday.

Spurs had drawn two and lost one of their three previous league matches this term under Villas-Boas.

And doubts were starting to surface at White Hart Lane as to whether the Portuguese, sacked by London rivals Chelsea before they won the Champions League last season, was the right man to replace the popular Harry Redknapp.

Defoe gave Spurs an 18th minute lead at the Madejski Stadium on Sunday when he stroked in a pull-back from Aaron Lennon after a burst down the right flank by the winger.

Spurs, who climbed several places to 10th spot in the table, nearly had a second goal when an error by novice keeper Alex McCarthy, dwelling on the ball in the box, saw him dispossessed by Defoe.

Defoe cut the ball back for Gylfi Sigurdsson but the Iceland international was denied on the line by Alex Pearce.

At half-time, Premier League newcomers Reading, who remained second bottom with just one point from three matches, could consider themselves fortunate to be only 1-0 down.

But, with such a slender deficit, the Royals were still in the game.

And that remained the case until 19 minutes from time when Gareth Bale finally gave Spurs the second goal their dominance deserved.



Manchester City striker Mario Balotelli (C) dives for the ball during a training session in Manchester yesterday on the eve of their Champions League Group D match against Real Madrid.

Test of Mourinho mettle

AFP, Paris



When a club as big as Real Madrid lose two of their first four league games of the season, talk of a crisis is never far behind.

So it is a major test of the mettle of their coach Jose Mourinho as to how he picks his star-studded side up from the disappointment of the latest defeat at Sevilla for Tuesday's Champions League opener with big-spending Manchester City.

Mourinho, of course, is a seasoned campaigner at this level, as one of only three men -- alongside Ernst Happel and Ottmar Hitzfeld -- to have lifted Europe's ultimate prize with two different clubs,

Porto and Inter Milan.

But expectations in Madrid are high, with the fans desperate to end their 10-year drought and finally collect their 10th European crown.

Yet all is clearly not well behind the scenes at the Bernabeu, with Cristiano Ronaldo offering only the most muted of celebrations for his brace of goals against Granada and then declaring himself to be "sad".

New signing Luca Modric is slowly finding his feet, but Mesut Ozil, one of the driving forces of last season's run to the semifinals and the league title, has looked tired and out of sorts.

With Ozil and Ronaldo both misfiring, much rests on the shoulders of playmaker Xabi Alonso and French frontman

FIXTURES
(all kick-offs 1845GMT):
Dinamo Zagreb (CRO) v FC Porto (POR),
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Malaga (ESP) v Zenit Saint Petersburg (RUS),
AC Milan (ITA) v Anderlecht (BEL),
Borussia Dortmund (GER) v Ajax (NED),
Real Madrid (ESP) v

Karim Benzema to reproduce the home form that saw Real fire in 24 goals in their six Champions League home games last season.

Mourinho made no excuses for losing in Sevilla.

"It's a general state of mind," he said. "At the moment there aren't many of them out there thinking

that football is the priority in their lives. I could only count on two or three of them."

But he refused to single out Ronaldo for criticism.

"There is no connection between the rumours in the press these past weeks and our poor performances. We were already bad against Getafe and even against Granda (where Real won 3-0)," he said.

City, on the other hand, have got off to a solid start in the defence of their English League title.

Desperate to join Europe's top table after years in the shadow of mighty neighbours United, City lie in fourth place with eight points and are unbeaten in their first four games.

Johnson out for season

AFP, London

Queens Park Rangers striker Andrew Johnson is likely to miss the rest of the season after suffering a serious knee injury during Saturday's 0-0 draw against Chelsea.

The 31-year-old, who was making his third appearance for the club, was forced off in the first half of the Premier League stalemate at Loftus Road, with subsequent scans revealing the extent of the problem.

"Andy Johnson suffered an anterior cruciate ligament injury against Chelsea and is likely to be sidelined for the majority of the season," QPR posted on their official Twitter account this morning.

Assou-Ekotto sidelined

AFP, London

Tottenham Hotspur left-back Benoit Assou-Ekotto is set to be sidelined for four weeks with a knee injury, manager Andre Villas-Boas confirmed Sunday.

The Cameroon defender has been a regular for Spurs during the last four seasons but missed Sunday's 3-1 win away to Reading -- the London club's first in the Premier League this term and first under Portuguese boss Villas-Boas -- with a nagging injury and is now set for minor surgery.

"Benoit has a small fragment in his knee that makes it swell a lot," Villas-Boas said.

"He has played through pain in the last couple of games. His knee may have to be washed up and if that happens we are looking at a four-week absence."

Kyle Naughton usually plays at right-back but he covered Assou-Ekotto's position against Reading.



Napoli starlet Lorenzo Insigne (top) celebrates his goal with teammates Marek Hamsik (L) and Goran Pandev during their Serie A encounter against Parma at the San Paolo Stadium on Sunday.

Juve back on top

AFP, Milan



Two late goals from Mirko Vucinic and Kwadwo Asamoah sent Serie A champions Juventus back to the top of the table thanks to a 3-1 win away to Genoa on Sunday.

A double strike from Brazilian midfielder Hernanes and a second half effort from Miroslav Klose had been enough to send Lazio top thanks to a 3-1 away victory away to Chievo in the day's early match.

But three days before meeting Chelsea in the Champions League, Juve showed poise and determination to remain unbeaten in 42 matches.

Genoa dominated the first half and went in for the break a goal up thanks to a 17th minute strike from Ciro Immobile.

But a double Juve substitution just before the hour mark, with Vucinic coming on for Alessandro Matri and Asamoah replacing Paolo De Ceglie, proved inspirational.

Genoa seemed ready to grab a second goal with Marco Borriello slamming his header against the bar just before the hour mark. Gianluigi Buffon then did well to save Andrea Bertolacci's strike.

But Juventus pulled level moments later

when midfielder Emanuele Giaccherini shaped a great shot past French keeper Sebastien Frey from 25 metres.

The match then turned when Bertolacci fouled Asamoah and Vucinic put the visitors ahead from the spot.

Asamoah put the match beyond reach for Genoa when he pounced to slam the ball

past Frey after Vucinic's cross-goal pass came off Genoa's Swedish defender Andreas Granqvist.

Prior to Sunday, only four teams had managed to win their first two games of the season and the same four maintained their 100 per cent records.

In a highly entertaining match Sampdoria gave the other half of Genoa some cheer with a 3-2 win away to struggling newcomers Pescara.

Napoli, meanwhile, continued their promising start with a 3-1 home win over Parma.

While Lazio were celebrating, their cross-town rivals Roma were left scratching their heads after a 3-2 reverse to Bologna at the Olympic Stadium.

Fiorentina's 2-0 win came courtesy of goals from Montenegrin striker Stevan Jovetic and former La Viola striker Luca Toni, who made his debut after recently re-signing for the Florence-based club.

Zenit loss upsets Hulk

AFP, Moscow

Brazilian striker Hulk, who joined Russian champions Zenit St Petersburg earlier this month in a multi-million transfer deal, said he was upset his new side had lost 2-0 on his home debut.

"It's a pity that we lost the match," said Hulk, who came on as a half-time substitute.

"The fans' support was really tremendous and the atmosphere at the stadium was terrific. We should have won the encounter to show our gratitude to them. I'm really upset with the defeat."

The 26-year-old forward, who set a new Russian transfer record with his move to Zenit, which reportedly cost the Russian side around 60-million euros, said he was happy to join such a strong club.

"I know that the team is constantly growing. Zenit are already strong but they do not rest on their laurels," Hulk added.

"And my main goal for the moment is to adapt myself to my new team's playing style and to get accustomed to my new teammates."

"It's a new phase of my career. I came here with a great desire to work and I want to keep on playing in the Russian league and win titles here and help Zenit to advance in the Champions League as far as possible."



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Atletico win 7-goal thriller

AFP, Madrid



Atletico Madrid beat Rayo Vallecano 4-3, after going four goals ahead in the Madrid derby on Sunday, to continue their unbeaten start in La Liga.

Mario Suarez, Koke, Arda Turan and Radamel Falcao got the goals for the European Super Cup winners in their first game since their 4-1 victory over Chelsea in Monaco.

Suarez got the only goal of an even first-half, turning home a Diego Costa pass on 29 minutes.

Four minutes after the restart, Koke anticipated another right wing pass from Costa to double the lead and a minute later Turkish international Turan was in the same spot to finish of an almost identical pass from Juanfran.

On 55 minutes Falcao converted a penalty to make it seven goals in four games for him in all competitions.

However, defensive frailties allowed Andrija Delibasic a quick double and Leo Carrilho to frighten the home side in the last eight minutes.

But it all came too late for Rayo who fought until the last kick against their larger city rivals.

The win puts Atletico on seven points after

three games and into fifth position despite playing a game fewer than most of the other teams.

Earlier on Sunday Real Sociedad beat a poor Zaragoza side 2-0 with goals from centre-half Inigo Martinez and Carlos Vela.

After a goalless first period it was ex-Arsenal player Vela who brought the match to life.

The Mexican first placed a perfect corner on to the head of Martinez who powered home an unstoppable header, before winning a penalty that he then converted to end Zaragoza's challenge.

In other games the only two sides pointless to date, Espanyol and Osasuna, picked up important draws.

Osasuna were the better team throughout their 1-1 home draw with Mallorca.

Kike Sola put the home side ahead on 69 minutes only for Israeli international Tomer Hemed to smash home his third goal in three games nine minutes later to leave his side undefeated with eight points from four games.

Espanyol hosted Athletic Bilbao in a remarkable 3-3 draw in the midday kick-off.

Deportivo La Coruna also remain unbeaten after a 1-1 at Granada for whom another Italian striker Floro Flores hit a late equaliser after Portuguese international Nelson Oliveira had given the Galician side a first-half lead.

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