

'No dressing room conflict'

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid coach Jose Mourinho insisted on Saturday that rumours of dressing room discord were untrue.

The 49-year-old Portuguese slammed the press for speculating that the dropping of Spanish two-time Euro and World Cup winning defender Sergio Ramos for last Tuesday's Champions League match with Manchester City was due to a falling out.

"There are no conflicts in the dressing room," said Mourinho, who on Monday had accepted the blame for Real's poor start to La Liga campaign.

Mourinho, whose side claimed a late 3-2 win over City leading to exuberant celebrations by him, laid into the media for not feting young French defender Rapahael Varane's performance in the City clash after he was preferred to Ramos.

"I don't understand," said Mourinho, who despite his claims that there was nothing amiss with his relations with Ramos had him training with the replacements on Friday.

"You are astonished that Varane was not playing at all before the match, you spoke of his sadness at that.

"And then after the match when the 19-year-old 'youngster' performs brilliantly against City you don't speak about it.

"You have a tendency to speak about those who are not playing which I find incomprehensible."

Mourinho was speaking on the eve of Real's trip to Rayo Vallecano with them trailing arch-rivals Barcelona - who are at home to Granada on Saturday - by eight points after four matches.

Guardiola coy about future

AFP, Mexico City

Former Barcelona coach Pep Guardiola insisted Friday that he is happy living the family life in New York for now as he kept the guessing game about his future in football wide open.

Speculation is rife about the next job of the man who won everything at Barcelona since he decided to take a break from the sport after coaching his last game in May.

Guardiola was forced to address his future while he appeared as a guest speaker at an annual event in Mexico City organized by Fundacion Telmex, the charity of Mexican telecoms tycoon Carlos Slim.

Asked whether he would coach the Spanish national team one day, he said: "You never know. It's just that New York is so nice."

Would his next destination be Manchester United or AC Milan? "I don't know... I said I wouldn't coach this year," he responded.

The 41-year-old former Barcelona midfielder said that he would be in the Big Apple for a year, living a regular life, taking his three children to school, learning English and "getting to know the city."



What to WATCH

BTV

ICC World T20

New Zealand v Pakistan

Live from 4:00pm

England v India

Live from 8:00pm

ESPN

English Premiership

Liverpool v Man United



DAY'S EVENT

GP Federation Shield

Khulna Abahani v Police

Time: 1:30pm

Uttar Baridhara v BKSP

Time: 3:30pm



Southampton defender Nathaniel Clyne (R) is ecstatic after scoring their second goal against Aston Villa during their Premier League encounter at St Mary's Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO:
AFP

Cole fuels title push

AFP, London



Ashley Cole's first goal since May 2010 saw European champions Chelsea go three points clear at the top of the Premier League after they left it late to beat Stoke 1-0 at Stamford Bridge on Saturday.

The Blues, who had to endure a midweek training ground visit from unhappy Russian billionaire owner Roman Abramovich, were on course for a fourth straight game without a win in all competitions until England left-back Cole, following a flick-on from Juan Mata, struck from close range five minutes from time.

In Saturday's early kick-off, Everton moved up into second place with a commanding 3-0 win away to 10-man Swansea.

David Moyes's side surged into a two-goal lead at the Liberty Stadium thanks to first half strikes from Victor Anichebe and Kevin Mirallas.

Swansea's hopes of avoiding a second successive defeat were in tatters when substitute Nathan Dyer was sent off in the second half.

Marouane Fellaini put the result beyond doubt with a late goal.

"Both the result and performance were very good but the result is the most important thing," Everton manager David Moyes told the BBC.

Southampton climbed off the bottom of the table after coming from behind to beat Aston Villa 4-1 at St Mary's.

The Saints were without a point after four straight defeats following promotion and they must have feared the worst when England striker Darren Bent put visitors Villa ahead in the 36th minute with his first Premier League goal since February.

But Southampton striker Rickie Lambert equalised in the 58th minute when, despite having three defenders around him, he scored with a well-struck shot.

And five minutes later full-back Nathaniel Clyne gave Saints the lead when he started and finished a neat move.

Southampton made it 3-1 with a 72nd minute own-goal when Ciaran Clark deflected in a shot from Saints midfielder Jason Puncheon before Lambert wrapped things up with a last-minute penalty.

Hugo Rodallega scored against his old club as Fulham won 2-1 away to Wigan.

The Colombian striker broke the deadlock when he headed in Dimitar Berbatov's 31st minute cross before Damian Duff's 68th minute goal doubled the lead.

Arouna Kone scored a late goal for Wigan.

Elsewhere, West Bromwich Albion's 1-0 win away to Reading put them level on points with Everton and left the Royals propping up the Premier League.

The Baggies had to wait until the 71st minute for the decisive goal when a shot from

Belgian striker Romelu Lukaku, on loan from Chelsea, found its way through a crowd of players.

An early goal from Sunderland's £12 million striker Steven Fletcher gave them the lead away to West Ham before Kevin Nolan's 90th-minute equaliser rescued a point for the Hammers in a 1-1 draw.

Sunday sees Liverpool face arch-rivals Manchester United, who started the weekend in second place, in the first match at Anfield since an independent report cleared the Merseysiders' fans of any responsibility for the deaths of 96 of their fellow supporters during the 1989 Hillsborough disaster.

Montpellier salvage a point

AFP, Paris

Defending champions Montpellier were held to a 1-1 draw by Saint Etienne on Friday, bringing an end to a frustrating week where they had suffered two successive defeats.

Beaten 3-1 by promoted Reims seven days ago, and then 2-1 at home to Arsenal in the Champions League on Tuesday, Montpellier needed a second-half equaliser from veteran Senegalese international striker Souleymane Camara to salvage a point Friday.

In the 69th minute, substitute Marco Estrada released Anthony Mounier down the left flank.

His cross was cleared by Jean-Pascal Mignot before Remy Cabella picked up the loose ball to put Camara through for the goal.

Saint Etienne had gone ahead in the third minute of injury time at the end of the first half when Gabonese striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang grabbed his fourth goal of the season.

Max-Alain Gradel created the opportunity by accelerating away down the left, away from Mapou Yanga-Mbiwa before crossing to the far post where Aubameyang scored into an empty net.

All eyes on Anfield

AFP, Liverpool



Sir Alex Ferguson has called for calm ahead of Manchester United's emotionally-charged clash against bitter rivals Liverpool on Sunday.

United manager Ferguson is well aware that the eyes of the football world will be on Anfield this weekend for the 186th instalment of the English game's most volatile grudge match.

The fixture marks Liverpool's first home match since the publication of an explosive report into the Hillsborough disaster which saw 96 Reds fans killed due to crushing at an FA Cup semifinal in 1989.

Hillsborough remains a hugely sensitive issue for Liverpool fans and feelings are still running high after the report proved that the authorities engaged in a cover-up in a bid to blame the tragedy on drunken supporters.

But United fans, who have often taunted their rivals about Hillsborough in the past, engaged in anti-Liverpool chants during last weekend's win over Wigan, raising fears they could do the same at Anfield and potentially spark serious crowd disorder.

There is also the potential for another ugly meeting between Liverpool striker Luis Suarez and United defender Patrice Evra.

Suarez served an eight-match ban for racially abusing Evra during a Premier League match at Anfield last October and the pair clashed again when the sides met at Old Trafford later in the season.

With such a tense build-up to the game, Ferguson has written a letter that will be distributed to all United fans at Anfield in which he warned them not to drag the club's name through the mud.

"Our rivalry with Liverpool is based on a determination to come out on top - a wish to see us crowned the best against a team that held that honour for so long," Ferguson wrote.

"It cannot and should never be based on

Lazio face racism probe

AFP, Paris

Italian side Lazio will face disciplinary proceedings after their fans were accused of racist behaviour during the Europa League clash at Tottenham, UEFA said on Friday.

Monkey chants were aimed at three of Tottenham's black players, Jermain Defoe, Aaron Lennon and Andros Townsend during the game at White Hart Lane which ended in a 0-0 draw.

"UEFA has begun disciplinary proceedings against Lazio for 'improper conduct' by the club's supporters during Thursday's Europa League tie against Tottenham," said a UEFA statement.

"The Control and Disciplinary Body will meet on 18 October to discuss the case."

Tottenham boss Andre Villas-Boas had said after the match that UEFA should take action if there was a case to answer.

"UEFA is very active on this kind of situation so and our overall objective is to kick racism out of football," said Villas-Boas.

personal hatred. Just 10 days ago, we heard the terrible, damning truth about the deaths of 96 fans who went to watch their team try and reach the FA Cup final and never came back.

"What happened to them should wake the conscience of everyone connected with the game."

"Our great club stands with our great neighbours Liverpool today to remember that loss and pay tribute to their campaign for justice. I know I can count on you to stand with us in the best traditions of the best fans in the game."

While Ferguson is keen to show respect to Liverpool's cause, he has no intention of allowing the occasion to distract him from the task of ending United's poor run at Anfield.

United have not won at Liverpool since 2007 and have picked up just a solitary point in their last four visits, as well as crashing out of the FA Cup there last season.

It is a record Ferguson is keen to improve so that his side can keep on the tails of early league leaders Chelsea.

"It's similar to when I came down here and we couldn't win the league but could beat Liverpool," Ferguson said. "The motivation leans on the side of Liverpool, particularly at Anfield."

"The crowd get behind them. They make it a real competition in terms of challenges and tackles."

Meanwhile, Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard urged his side to get up for their biggest game so far this season and get Rodgers' first league win.

"For me, it's the biggest game in the world because the Premier League is the biggest league in the world and these are the two most successful clubs," Gerrard said.

"I'm not being biased when I say that - I think Liverpool versus Man United is the biggest game. Maybe Barcelona and Madrid is up there close to that, but for me it's still this one."



Montpellier's veteran forward Souleymane Camara (R) scores the equalising goal against Saint Etienne during their League One match at the Mosson Stadium on Friday.

PHOTO:
AFP