

CHELSEA
on a roll

AFP, London



Chelsea maintained their unbeaten start to the Premier League campaign after goals from Fernando Torres and Juan Mata secured a 2-1 win away to Arsenal on Saturday that took attention away from John Terry.

The Chelsea captain led the league leaders in his first appearance after being found guilty of racially abusing Queens Park Rangers defender Anton Ferdinand by the Football Association.

Centre-half Terry was free to play because the four-game ban imposed as punishment for the offence is suspended pending the outcome of any appeal against the decision.

And Terry did not appear to be distracted as Roberto di Matteo's side held on at the Emirates in the face of late Arsenal pressure to come out on top in this clash of the London rivals.

Torres put the visiting side ahead in the 20th minute but Arsenal found their way back into the game when Gervinho levelled shortly before half time.

But Mata struck in the 53rd minute when his free kick was helped in by scrambling Arsenal defender Laurent Koscielny.

Defeat ended Arsenal's unbeaten start to the season and manager Arsene Wenger was left to reflect on his side's poor defensive display and failure to provide a cutting edge in attack in a match he maintained beforehand would be a test of his team's title credentials.

Di Matteo, however, saw his side produce a resilient performance that suggests the European champions will be tough to shift from the summit of English football.

Wenger opted to restore fit-again Thomas Vermaelen, recalling his captain in place of Per Mertesacker who had impressed during last week's 1-1 draw at Premier League champions Manchester City.

But the decision to drop the tall German looked questionable when Torres volleyed the visitors ahead after 20 minutes.

The opportunity arose when Vermaelen fouled Eden Hazard, allowing Mata to deliver a floated free kick into the Arsenal area.

Arsenal should have dealt with the danger but the home defence went missing as the ball was allowed to reach Torres, who held off a weak challenge from Koscielny to finish past Vito Mannone from close range.

The Gunners' back four were again exposed three minutes later immediately after the hosts appealed for a penalty following John Mikel Obi's challenge on Santi Cazorla.

Chelsea broke quickly with Torres finding himself with a clear run on Mannone's goal as he cut in from the left.

The Spain striker opted against taking the shot early, attempting instead to round the keeper only to take an air-shot and tumble over as Koscielny raced back to challenge.

Torres was convinced he had been fouled but television replays confirmed referee Martin Atkinson had made the right decision.

Arsenal's Abou Diaby tested Chelsea keeper Petr Cech but that was one of the France midfielder's few contributions before he limped out of the game after just 17 minutes to be replaced by Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain.

The switch initially unsettled Arsenal and coincided with Chelsea taking charge of the game.

But the young England winger played a significant part in helping Arsenal claw their way back into the game immediately before the break.

Mikel Arteta's pass released Oxlade-Chamberlain on the right and the teenager's excellent low cross flew through the legs of Cole to Gervinho, who took one touch before beating Cech with a powerful shot on the turn.

Chelsea responded immediately with Oscar and Torres both coming close in first half added time before they scored again early in the second half.

Arsenal were again guilty of defensive sloppiness when Vermaelen's foul on Torres presented Mata with another free-kick.

The dipping goal-bound, dipping shot would have caused Mannone problems in any event but Koscielny's touch didn't help.

Arsenal battled hard. Lukas Podolski went close with a header and Cazorla again shot wide, but Chelsea's victory was deserved.



Chelsea star Fernando Torres (C) attacks with the ball during their Premier League encounter against Arsenal at the Emirates Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Blokhin quits Ukraine

REUTERS, Kiev

Oleg Blokhin has resigned as coach of the Ukraine national soccer team after accepting the job of head coach at Dynamo Kiev, Ukraine's Football Federation said on Friday.

"Oleg Blokhin has indeed tendered his resignation," the federation quoted its president Anatoly Konkov as saying.

Konkov did not name any possible replacements for Blokhin.

Blokhin's move to Dynamo was announced on Tuesday and the coach said he would job share for the two World Cup qualifiers against Moldova and Montenegro next month.

Beat Spain, win big

REUTERS, Minsk

Belarus will more than triple bonuses to their players if they beat world and European champions Spain in next month's World Cup qualifier, the country's football federation (BFF) said on Friday.

"Each player will receive a \$10,000 bonus," BFF first vice-president Sergei Safaryan told a news conference. In case of a draw the players will also be rewarded, Safaryan said.

Belarus, who are bottom of Group I after losing their first two qualifiers to Georgia and France, host Spain in Minsk on October 12.



Bangladesh Television

ICC World T20

Australia v South Africa

Live from 4:00pm

India v Pakistan

Live from 8:00pm

ESPN

Primera Liga

Granada v Celta Vigo

Live from 4:00pm

STAR Sports

MotoGP World Championship

Aragon Grand Prix

Live from 3:00pm

Serie A

Lazio v Siena

Live from 7:00pm

English Premiership

Aston Villa v West Brom

Live from 9:00pm

Primera Liga

Real Madrid v Deportivo

Live from 11:45pm

Rovers sack Kean

AFP, London



Steve Kean quit as Blackburn Rovers manager on Friday, saying he'd been "forced to resign" with immediate effect due to his position becoming "untenable", in a statement issued through his lawyers.

The Scot had faced constant criticism from Rovers fans throughout his two-year spell in charge at Ewood Park after the club's owners Venky's, an Indian-based poultry firm, controversially brought him in to replace the experienced Sam Allardyce.

Kean, however, carried on despite the club's relegation from the elite English Premier League in May.

Yet despite Rovers currently lying a promising third in the second division Championship, Kean walked out of the north-west club ahead of Saturday's match away to Charlton.

Before this season started the 44-year-old faced fresh pressure when Rovers' Malaysian global adviser Shebby Singh said Kean would be sacked if the team lost three successive games.

As things stand, however, Rovers have just lost once in seven league games this term -- a 2-1 home defeat by Middlesbrough last Friday.

Kean's position was further undermined though by press reports this week that Tim Sherwood, Rovers captain when they won the Premier League title in 1995, would take over from him as manager in a bid to boost attendances at Ewood Park.

Kean said he was unable to expand on his reasons for leaving. "For reasons that I cannot discuss on legal advice, it is with deep regret, given my hard work and service for the club for a number of years, that I have been forced to resign as manager of Blackburn Rovers Football Club with immediate effect, due to my position as team manager becoming untenable," he said in the statement.

Bale eyes future foreign move



REUTERS, London

Tottenham Hotspur's flying winger Gareth Bale finds the idea of one day playing abroad appealing despite signing a new four-year deal with the Premier League side in June.

The 23-year-old Welshman has long been coveted by top European names such as Inter Milan.

"I'd never be scared of it," he told Saturday's Guardian newspaper while admitting he did have a fear of spiders.

"It's something I'd like to experience. It's in the future but if something did come up I would obviously look at it with interest."

Spurs visit Manchester United later and are still getting used to life under new coach Andre Villas-Boas, who ruffled too many feathers at Chelsea last season and was given the sack.

Reports have also said his training methods have not won universal approval at their London rivals but Bale said the Portuguese was a good listener.

"For example, if we feel we are working too hard in training, if we say that to him, then he'll ease off. He's still learning as well as a manager," Bale said.

"Sometimes it just takes a bit of time."

The left winger also sought to clear up confusion over why he pulled out of Britain's Olympic squad in July only to appear for Tottenham in pre-season friendlies at the same time as the Games soccer tournament.

"I had a problem with my back. I just wasn't expecting to recover that quickly," said Bale, who added that British Olympic defender Micah Richards is the toughest right back he has faced despite the Manchester City man's continual England snub.

Richards, who has won 13 caps, last played for the national team in February and was not selected for Euro 2012 under coach Roy Hodgson who was appointed in May.

'Extra linesmen unlikely'

REUTERS, Undated



Extra linesmen behind the goals are unlikely to be used at the 2014 World Cup in Brazil despite the system's apparent success at Euro 2012, FIFA president Sepp Blatter said on Friday.

He added that the system, featuring one additional linesman behind each goal, had not featured in the World Cup qualifiers and it would be inconsistent to employ it at the finals.

Blatter said the use of the extra linesmen, championed by UEFA president Michel Platini who is an opponent of goal-line technology, was too expensive for most domestic leagues.

"All around the world, the qualifying system is done with the conservative system of one referee, two assistant referees and the fourth official," Blatter told reporters.

"I'm not going to say what is the final decision before the World Cup, but if you have the system which has run for the qualification, then you should have the same system in the final."

"There are not so many associations in the world of football that can afford to have so many referees, even in professional leagues."

"The referees (behind the goals) must

have the same quality as the referee in the middle, that is the first principle," he said.

However, Blatter did not completely write the system off.

"Let us wait and see how many of the national associations will use this system of additional referees and how it will work in the different leagues," he added.

UEFA employs five referees in Champions League and Europa League matches and the system is also used in Italy's Serie A.

Blatter is a keen supporter of goal-line technology, which FIFA has already confirmed will be used at the 2014 World Cup when it is not clear if the ball has entered the goal.

UEFA has argued that the extra linesmen also help reduce pushing and shoving in the penalty area, inhibit players from diving to win penalties and improve fair play.

Blatter said FIFA was also considering the use of vanishing spray to stop defensive walls creeping forward at free kicks.

Widely used in South America where it was pioneered, it involves referees pacing the regulatory 9.15 metres between the ball and the nearest defender and then spraying a white line on the pitch to mark the correct position of the wall.

The line disappears from the pitch within a minute.

Blatter said the idea might be tested at the Club World Cup in Japan in December.

Fortuna peg back Schalke

REUTERS, Berlin

Fortuna Duesseldorf's Dani Schahin struck twice in the second half to earn a 2-2 draw at home to Schalke 04 in the Bundesliga on Friday with the visitors only having themselves to blame for not taking all three points.

Klaas-Jan Huntelaar and Joel Matip gave the Champions League side a 2-0 lead by halftime but Schahin's double, including a powerful 77th minute header, took Fortuna's unbeaten run since the start of the season to six matches.

Schalke moved up to third place on 11 points.

Promoted Fortuna, still unbeaten along with Bayern and second-placed Eintracht Frankfurt, are fifth on 10 points.

Huntelaar, last season's Bundesliga top scorer, drilled in a stunning left-foot shot after slipping the ball past two defenders in the 13th minute.

Joel Matip added a second goal seven minutes later and Schalke looked to be cruising to an easy victory.

However, Schahin cut the deficit three minutes after the break, connecting with an Andriy Voronin corner.



Schalke striker Klaas-Jan Huntelaar (L) is ecstatic after scoring against Fortuna Duesseldorf during their Bundesliga tie in Duesseldorf on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP