

Chelsea march on

AFP, London



Chelsea extended their lead at the top of the Premier League to four points with a 4-1 win against Norwich, while Manchester City got back on track after their recent struggles as the champions crushed Sunderland 3-0 on Saturday.

Roberto Di Matteo's unbeaten Chelsea have made a flying start to their title challenge and this was the Europeans champions' sixth win in seven league matches.

The Blues recovered from the shock of Norwich striker Grant Holt's 11th minute opener at Stamford Bridge to take complete control before half-time.

Fernando Torres equalised with his fifth goal of the season when the Spaniard headed home from a Branislav Ivanovic cross in the 14th minute.

Frank Lampard put Chelsea in front in the 22nd minute with a drive from the edge of the area and Belgian playmaker Eden Hazard, netting a cool 31st minute strike from Juan Mata's pass, shattered Norwich's resistance.

Ivanovic rubbed salt into Norwich's wounds when he bagged the fourth goal with 14 minutes left.

Roberto Mancini's City spluttered through the start of their title defence and assault on the Champions League, but a convincing display at Eastlands secured a second victory in their last seven fixtures in all competitions and their first cleansheet of the season at the 10th attempt.

The hosts were ahead after five minutes

RESULTS
Chelsea 4 (Torres 14, Lampard 22, Hazard 31, Ivanovic 76) Norwich 1 (Holt 11)
Man City 3 (Kolarov 5, Aguero 60, Milner 89) Sunderland 0
Swansea 2 (Michu 71, Routledge 78)
Reading 2 (Pogrebnyak 31, Hur 44)
West Brom 3 (Morrison 5, Gera 22, Mulumbu 85) QPR 2 (Taarabt 35, Granero 90)
Wigan 2 (Kone 10, Di Santo 23) Everton

when Serbian defender Aleksandar Kolarov curled a superb free-kick past Sunderland keeper Simon Mignolet.

Argentine substitute Sergio Aguero got the second goal on the hour when he steered in a Kolarov cross from close-range for his first goal at Eastlands since the dramatic strike that won the title on the final day of last season.

And England midfielder James Milner ensured City would move into second place with an 89th minute free-kick that glanced in off Sunderland's Craig Gardner.

Third-placed Everton salvaged a 2-2 draw at Wigan thanks to a late penalty from Leighton Baines.

Wigan went ahead in controversial circumstances when Arouna Kone finished off a fine run from Shaun Maloney even though the Ivory Coast striker was clearly offside.

Everton hit back one minute later through Nikica Jelavic, the Croatia forward heading home for his 13th goal in 16 league starts.

The Latics regained the lead through Franco Di Santo in the 23rd minute, but England left-back Baines fired home from the spot following Maynor Figueroa's foul on Kevin Mirallas with three minutes to go.

West Bromwich Albion continued their surprising start to the season as the Baggies climbed to fourth place with a 3-2 victory over bottom of the table QPR at the Hawthorns.

Steve Clarke's team took the lead after just five minutes when Scotland midfielder James Morrison fired into the bottom corner and the hosts increased their advantage through Zoltan Gera in the 22nd minute.



PHOTO: AFP

Manchester City fullback Aleksandar Kolarov curls home the opening goal from a freekick during their Premier League encounter against Sunderland at the Etihad Stadium yesterday.

SEASON'S 1ST EL CLASICO TODAY

Focus is back

REUTERS, Madrid



Real Madrid's players are over their early season malaise and have regained their focus coach Jose Mourinho said on Saturday ahead of the team's trip to play La Liga leaders Barcelona.

The champions head off to the Nou Camp on Sunday eight points adrift of their arch-rivals after a wobbly start to the league campaign in which they have lost twice, the same number of games they lost over the whole of last season.

"I have confidence in my players, as always," Mourinho told a news conference.

"When they work hard obviously I have more confidence in them, complete confidence."

Mourinho was highly critical of the attitude of his players after their defeats at Getafe and Sevilla, but they have responded since then winning four matches on the trot in all competitions, netting 14 goals.

"I think you can see the players have understood they had to change," he said.

"They understood they had to be more motivated, to be more focused and that the way the team was, would have led to a negative end to the season."

"It's a credit to them. They have changed, and in this way it is easier for good things to happen."

There have been a steady stream of media stories about rifts within the dressing room over the last month, with time on the substitutes' bench for Spain defender Sergio Ramos and Germany midfielder Mesut Ozil being reported as some kind of 'punishment'.

In response, Mourinho said the decisions were all part of the normal routine of a team.

"There is no need for drama when a player is on the bench," he said. "There are 24 in the squad so that means there are 13 who don't play, and every time there is some one on the bench there is a furore."

"I am paid to decide on the lineups, I try to do it to the best of my abilities. Full stop."



Real Madrid coach Jose Mourinho arrives to give a press conference in Madrid yesterday on the eve of their Primera Liga El Clasico against Barcelona.

Falcao eyes EPL move

AFP, London

Conte ban slashed

AFP, Milan



Atletico Madrid striker Radamel Falcao has revealed he is keen to follow in the footsteps of his idol Faustino Asprilla by moving to the Premier League.

Falcao has been linked with several Premier League clubs including Chelsea and it has been reported that the Colombia international could move to Stamford Bridge in a £45 million deal during the January transfer window.

The 26-year-old, who underlined his talent with a hattrick against Chelsea in the European Super Cup earlier this season, admits a switch to the Premier League would appeal to him because he grew up watching fellow Colombian Asprilla in action for Newcastle during the 1990s.

"England? One day, I could go. It is a game I have watched for a long time and one day I would like to sample it," Falcao told The Times.

"I used to watch it on television when I was a kid. Players like Roy Keane, Eric Cantona, (Gianfranco) Zola. But the one I supported was (Faustino) Asprilla, when he was at Newcastle."

"I think I could adapt to England. I think I could score goals."

Sevilla lose again

REUTERS, Madrid

Sevilla slumped to their second consecutive defeat with a 2-0 reverse at promoted Celta Vigo on Friday, putting the breaks on their strong start to the La Liga season.

Michel's side won plaudits for their battling 1-0 home victory over champions Real Madrid last month, and for pushing leaders Barcelona all the way only to lose 3-2 in stoppage time last weekend.

At a noisy Balaidos, however, they conceded a penalty when a freekick hit Hedwiges Maduro on the arm in the wall after an hour, and local favourite Iago Aspas netted from the spot.

As the visitors pushed up in search of an equaliser Enrique De Lucas glanced home a header in the 85th minute to secure Celta's third victory on their return to the top-flight.

Sevilla are fifth with 11 points from seven games, one point and one place ahead of Real Madrid.

Champions Real visit the Nou Camp on Sunday to play arch-rivals Barca, who top the standings with a perfect 18 points from six games.

Borowka reveals alcohol problems

AFP, Berlin



Former Germany international Uli Borowka, a recovering alcoholic, has revealed current Bundesliga stars with a similar problem have approached him for advice.

Borowka, 50, has written a book -- "Flat Out" -- describing his battle with alcohol at the end of his career having played for Borussia Moenchengladbach and Werder Bremen in the 1980s and 1990s.

The ex-defender says there are currently players in the Bundesliga with a similar problem.

Having not drunk alcohol since 2000, Borowka, who won six caps for West Germany in 1988 and played at Euro '88, says Bundesliga players have approached him to ask for advice.

"Of course there are! I can not give a number, but the grey area is very large," he told German daily Bild when asked if there are current Bundesliga players struggling with alcohol problems.

"Besides alcohol, there are other problems. Drugs and other addictions."

"I will never name names, but when I told my story for the first time, many professional footballer contacted me."

"Some wanted advice from me, as they didn't know who else they could turn to."

"I am planning to found an organisation to which professionals can turn to with their problems. In four weeks it should be ready."

But Borowka was clear that players should not go public in admitting their problems.

"Not in this life! Whether they are an alcoholic, suffer with burnout or are gay," he said.

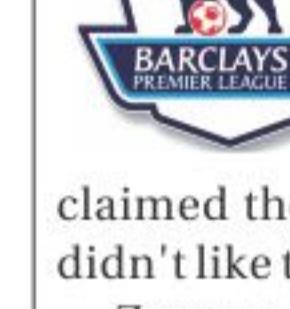
"They would be finished. As a professional athlete, you can't show weakness."

Borowka says at the height of his alcoholism he was drinking a crate of beer, a bottle of whiskey and various shots per day at the end of the 1990s.

"I would wake up in my own vomit in the morning, knock back the remains of the previous night and continue drinking," he said.

Jol angry at Zamora

AFP, London



Fulham manager Martin Jol has accused his former striker Bobby Zamora of "sour grapes" after the England international claimed the majority of the club's players didn't like the Dutchman.

Zamora quit Fulham to join west London rivals QPR in January after reports the forward had clashed with Jol on several occasions.

The 31-year-old this week said he was not the only Fulham star to have a problem with Jol and insisted that was the reason several senior players had left Craven Cottage since the end of last season.

Mousa Dembele, Clint Dempsey, Danny Murphy, Andrew Johnson and Dickson Etuhu have all departed in recent months, but Jol insisted Zamora's bitter blast meant nothing to him.

"It is probably sour grapes," Jol said on Friday. "I think nothing is what it seems. Everyone knows me. The players know me so one player will say this, another player will say that."

"It doesn't matter. I don't care. For me, the most important thing is we get the results so you will have to ask the players."

"If they do well and work hard, I try to

Brandao lifts St Etienne

AFP, Saint Etienne



Brazilian footballer Brandao proved that his judicial woes are finally behind him with a first-half double which helped lift Saint Etienne to a 4-0 win against Nancy on Friday.

The 32-year-old Brandao was cleared in a rape case this week after the alleged victim opted not to appeal a decision that saw charges against him dismissed for lack of evidence.

The alleged incident occurred when Brandao was playing for Marseille in March 2011. He was later loaned to Brazilian clubs Cruzeiro and Gremio in a bid to avoid media scrutiny.

The striker returned to Marseille in January this year but last month signed a two-year deal with Ligue 1 rivals St Etienne.

And the Brazilian showed his form in the Stade Geoffroy-Guichard with his first goals of the season as he opened for the home side after nine minutes with a header into the net of Nancy goalkeeper Damien Gregorini.

Midfielder Romain Hamouma doubled the hosts' account after 18 minutes before Brandao added a second three minutes later, again with header this time off a Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang cross.

And Gabonese striker Aubameyang completed the scoreline after 25 minutes for just Saint Etienne's second win at home this season as they move up to seventh with 11 points from eight games.

Nancy remain second from bottom with just four points.

What to WATCH

Bangladesh Television
ICC World T20 Final
Sri Lanka v West Indies
Live from 7:30pm

ESPN
China Open Final
Live from 2:30pm

Serie A
AC Milan v Inter Milan
Live from 12:40am (Monday)

STAR Sports
F1 World Championship
Japanese GP
Live from 11:45am

Serie A
Roma v Atalanta
Live from 4:30pm

English Premiership
Southampton v Fulham
Live from 6:30pm

Newcastle v Man United
Live from 9:00pm

Primera Liga
Barcelona v Real Madrid
Live from 11:45pm

STAR Cricket
Women's World T20 Final