

## Balotelli's brother arrested

AFP, Rome

The brother of Italian striker Mario Balotelli was placed under house arrest on Sunday for allegedly assaulting two police officers during a street brawl, Italian media reported.

Enoch Barwuah, the young brother of Manchester City's wayward star, faces charges of assault and resisting arrest after getting into a fight late Saturday outside a nightclub in Bagnolo Mella, in the province of Brescia.

Barwuah was reportedly shirtless and barefoot when police arrived outside the club following a brawl, and assaulted two officers, the reports said.

The 20-year-old, who shares birth parents with the City striker, spent the night in a prison cell before being transferred to house arrest and is expected in court on Monday.

The episode was the latest controversy to surround the Balotelli family.



Chelsea's Belgian midfielder Eden Hazard (L) celebrates yet another goal, with Brazilian defender David Luiz, during their 8-0 drubbing of Aston Villa at the Stamford Bridge on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

## 'RvP could've been killed'

AFP, Swansea

Manchester United boss Alex Ferguson claimed Robin van Persie could have been killed after the Dutch striker was hit on the back of the head with the ball in the 1-1 draw against Swansea.

Ferguson vented his fury at the 75th-minute incident at the Liberty Stadium that led to Ashley Williams and van Persie being booked.

Having been upended on the edge of the penalty area, van Persie flew at Williams and had to be restrained by his teammates after the Wales defender hit him flush on the back of the head with the ball.

Ferguson later claimed that Williams could have killed his player and demanded that the Football Association take action.

"Van Persie could have been killed. The FA has got to look into it," said Ferguson.

"Irrespective of him (Williams) having a yellow card, he should be banned for a long time because that was the most dangerous thing I've seen on a football field for many, many years.

"It was absolutely deliberate, absolutely no question. The whistle has gone, the game has stopped, and he's done that right in front of the referee (Michael Oliver), a foot from the player.

"He could have really killed the lad. It was a disgraceful act by the player. He should be banned for a long, long time."

The United manager was also less than pleased with Wayne Rooney, who was substituted in the 78th minute after a lacklustre display.

"He didn't play well, it's as simple as that," said the Scot, who added his team should have cantered to a victory which would have restored their six-point lead at the top of the Premier League.

## Marseille keep the heat

AFP, Paris

Marseille remained in a three-way tie for the lead of Ligue 1 on Sunday after a 1-0 win over St Etienne, extending the visitors' miserable record at Stade Velodrome where they haven't won since 1979.

The only goal of the game came in first-half stoppage time when Ghana striker Andre Ayew headed in a pinpoint, right-wing cross from Rod Fanni for his fifth league strike of the season.

Third-placed Marseille move onto 38 points -- the same as Paris Saint Germain and Lyon -- but it is the capital city side who lead the way into the two-week winter break on goal difference.

After breaking the deadlock, Ayew then came close to adding a second 10 minutes into the second-half but his shot was saved by Stephane Ruffier in goal.

At the other end, Steve Mandanda pulled off a flying point-blank save from Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang only for the St Etienne striker to be ruled offside.



Marseille's Ghanaian forward Andre Ayew (C) is congratulated by teammates after his goal secured a 1-0 win over Saint-Etienne in their Ligue 1 match in Marseille on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Chelsea annihilate Villa

AFP, London

Rafael Benitez took a big step in his efforts to win over doubting Chelsea fans by overseeing a stunning 8-0 victory over Aston Villa on Sunday that moved the Spaniard's side back up to third spot.

Fernando Torres kick-started the win with his seventh goal in six appearances, while Frank Lampard marked his 500th Premier League start with a goal that made him the club's leading scorer in the top flight.

Ramires scored twice, with David Luiz, Branislav Ivanovic, Eden Hazard and Oscar also on target in a victory that emphatically drew a line under the club's recent slump.

There was much for Benitez to be pleased about, particularly the continuing good form of Torres.

But for Aston Villa, this result -- their heaviest top-flight defeat -- will come as a crushing blow after the improvement they have shown in recent weeks.

One of the first questions asked of Benitez when he took charge at Stamford Bridge was whether he could revive Torres.

The interim manager insisted he could and the striker's recent strike rate suggests Benitez has been good to his word, as the sharpness of Torres's third-minute header demonstrated.

Picked out by Cesar Azpilicueta's cross from deep, the Spain international connected with a powerful header, twisting his body to direct the ball beyond Brad Guzan from 16 yards out.

It was the perfect start for the Blues, who came into the game on the back of an impressive 5-1 League Cup quarterfinal victory at Leeds United.

Villa are also in the last four of that competition and Paul Lambert's side arrived in west London unbeaten in their previous six games.

But any confidence they have built up during that impressive run was shredded during a first half when Chelsea easily assumed complete control of the game.

Chelsea thought they should have been given the chance to double their lead in the 22nd minute when Torres appeared to be held by Nathan Baker, but referee Phil Dowd waved away appeals for a penalty.

They soon had their second, however, when Luiz assumed responsibility for a free-kick 25 yards out, curling the ball up, over the wall and inside Guzan's right-hand post in the 29th minute.

Lambert had understandably kept faith with the side that won 3-1 at Liverpool last weekend and it was, with an average age of just under 24, the youngest team Villa had ever fielded in the Premier League.

Their inexperience showed as they collapsed under the weight of the Chelsea pressure, falling further behind when Ivanovic made it three in the 34th minute.

A Chelsea corner was met by Gary Cahill, whose deflected shot was beaten away by Guzan, but only into the path of Ivanovic, who headed home unchallenged.

Villa's priority was to save themselves from humiliation in the second period, but it quickly

### LEADING SCORERS

- 13: Michu (Swansea City)  
12: van Persie (Manchester United)  
11: Ba (Newcastle), Suarez (Liverpool)  
9: Defoe (Tottenham)  
8: Fellaini (Everton), Fletcher

### TOP TEN

TEAM	P	W	L	D	PTS
Manchester Utd	18	14	1	3	43
Manchester City	18	11	6	1	39
Chelsea	17	9	5	3	32
Arsenal	18	8	6	4	30
Everton	18	7	9	2	30
Tottenham	18	9	3	6	30
West Bromwich	18	9	3	6	30
Liverpool	18	6	7	5	25
Stoke	18	5	10	3	25

became clear that that task would prove beyond them.

Juan Mata produced an outstanding save from Guzan five minutes after the restart, before Torres had a header ruled out for offside.

It was left to Lampard to add the fourth, the Blues' stand-in skipper marking his big day in style with a powerful low drive from 25 yards.

Chelsea scored their fifth in the 75th minute when Ramires collected a pass from fellow substitute Lucas Piazon and stroked the ball through Guzan's legs.

Four minutes later, Chris Herd fouled Oscar and the Brazilian picked himself off the floor to convert the penalty.

Hazard then exchanged passes with Piazon before creating space inside the area and beating Guzan with a vicious rising drive in the 83rd minute.

Guzan saved excellently from Piazon's penalty after the Brazilian had been fouled by Ciaran Clark, but that was only a temporary reprieve before Ramires struck Chelsea's eighth.

## Jose under the cosh

AFP, Madrid



Jose Mourinho's future as Real Madrid coach looked virtually untenable on Sunday as press and players alike took aim at him especially over his dropping of iconic goalkeeper and captain Iker Casillas.

The self-anointed 'Special One', winner of the Champions League twice with Porto and Inter Milan, had already been under pressure after a poor first half to the title race which had seen their bitter rivals Barcelona take a firm grip on the championship.

His position was under even more scrutiny on Sunday after his dropping of Casillas, the first time the Spain captain had been dropped in 10 years, backfired spectacularly as they lost 3-2 to Malaga to fall an astonishing 16 points behind Barcelona and, almost worse for some, seven points adrift of city rivals Atletico.

While Mourinho was unapologetic and insisted after the defeat he was not going anywhere, the press, never on good terms with the Portuguese coach, bayed for blood.

"Another act of defiance by the coach, this time against the saint of saints of the club."

Another sports daily AS, who like Marca slated Casillas's replacement Antonio Adan for Malaga's third goal, was even less forgiving.

"Mourinho has become an unsupportable problem," it blasted.

Another of the club's discontented stars, Sergio Ramos -- like Casillas part of the Spain side that has collected two European Championships and the World Cup in the past four years -- weighed in on Canal Plus Spain.

"We were all taken aback by the dropping of Casillas, I mean he is the captain," said the defender, who himself fell foul of Mourinho earlier in the season and was dropped and trained on his own.

"It is him who plays and he will continue to play because he is a truly great goalkeeper."

While the Barcelona daily Mundo Deportivo agreed that Casillas's poor form this season had been a cause for concern, it added Mourinho's decision was not solely based on sporting reasons.

"He (Mourinho) was right, but it is also a political decision.

"Mou was not just relegating to the bench one of the best goalkeepers in the world or the team captain, but also the ringleader of the malcontents in the dressing room."

## Casillas vows to prove Jose wrong

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid captain Iker Casillas vowed Sunday to prove Jose Mourinho was wrong to drop him from the Real Madrid starting line-up for the first time in 10 years.

World Cup winner Casillas was benched for Saturday's 3-2 defeat at Malaga with 25-year-old understudy Antonio Adan stepping into the breach.

"I'm not used to being a backup, but above all I am a team player. The thing to do is to keep training and try to regain my place," Casillas told La Sexta television.

"Mourinho didn't say anything during the week, but we abide by the decision of the coach. I am feeling good, but the one who decides is the coach and I have to keep training to regain his confidence. We have a healthy competition for all the places."

Mourinho, whose champions are 16 points behind leaders Barcelona, continued to insist on Sunday that he had been right to drop Casillas.

"I have a clear conscience. I try to have the best team for each match," said the coach on arriving in Lisbon where he will spend the Christmas vacation.

## Huntelaar pens new deal

REUTERS, Berlin

Schalke 04's prolific Netherlands striker Klaas-Jan Huntelaar has extended his contract by two years until 2015, the Bundesliga club said on Sunday.

"I've thought about this decision long and hard and I'm very grateful that the club officials allowed me the time to do so. But now I've made the choice I'm most comfortable with," Huntelaar, 29, said on the club website (www.schalke04.com).

"I've always felt at home at Schalke, with the club and the fans, and I want to send out a positive signal now because I believe in our team and I believe we can still achieve a great deal in the second half of the Bundesliga season.

"And we aren't without a chance against Galatasaray in the last 16 of the Champions League, of course," he added.

The news will be a boost for Schalke manager Jens Keller, who was promoted from youth team coach a week ago to replace the sacked Huub Stevens until the end of the season.

Huntelaar, who joined Schalke from AC Milan in August 2010, was the Bundesliga top scorer with 29 goals last season and has scored 11 times in all competitions so far this term.

He also broke Hermann Eppenhoff's club record, set in 1941, for the most goals in a season with 48 in all competitions in the last campaign.



STAR Cricket  
India v Pakistan  
First T20  
Live from 7:30pm  
Australia v Sri Lanka  
Second Test, Day 1