



Stoke City striker Kenwyne Jones (R) performs a somersault after scoring the second goal against Liverpool during their Premier League encounter at the Britannia Stadium on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Napoli reject Cavani bid

AFP, Rome

Napoli have turned down a 55 million-euro offer for striker Edison Cavani with club owner Aurelio De Laurentiis indicating that the Uruguayan's "warrior" spirit will be key to a Serie A title push.

"Cavani is a warrior who embodies all that's best of the Napoli spirit and our supporters. It is because of this I turned down an offer of 55 million", De Laurentiis told Radio Marte, without identifying the chasing club.

"Cavani has become the symbol of our resurgence. If I have kept him here it is not because of money, but a love for the club," added the team chief of the 25-year-old who has scored 13 league goals this season.

Cavani arrived at Napoli having spent three seasons with Palermo.

## Stoke stun Liverpool

AFP, London



Jonathan Walters scored twice as Stoke beat Liverpool 3-1 in an entertaining affair under the lights at the Britannia Stadium on Wednesday.

Steven Gerrard put Liverpool into an early lead from the spot but Walters replied almost immediately before Kenwyne Jones headed the hosts in front.

After the break Walters made it 3-1 with a superb finish and despite some late pressure, Stoke held on for a more-than deserved win.

Luis Suarez was booed when the announcer read out his name as the home faithful did not forget the dive that the Uruguayan pulled off at Anfield in the October meeting between these two.

While Suarez did not get anything for that then, Stoke manager Tony Pulis was livid he was not punished but it was hard to argue against Howard Webb's decision to hand Liverpool a penalty in the second minute of this clash.

Ryan Shawcross tugged Suarez's

shirt in the area and the Reds striker went down before Gerrard calmly slotted home the penalty.

However, just three minutes later Shawcross helped Stoke grabbed what many will say is a trademark goal as he launched a long ball forward that Jones nodded on to Walters and the Republic of Ireland international raced through before firing home.

The last two times these sides met in the Premier League, the games ended goalless so it would not have been pessimistic to believe before this it could be dull again but that was proved wrong as Jones made it three goals in 12 minutes.

The Stoke striker rose to head home Glenn Whelan's corner and send the home fans wild before Matthew Etherington made Liverpool goalkeeper Pepe Reina pull off a stunning save after 21 minutes.

The midfielder fired high but the Spaniard stretched to tip the ball over after a neat cutback by Steven Nzonzi to set up the chance.

Liverpool came into this game on the back of a 4-0 demolition of Fulham at the weekend that proved

they were still in with a chance of a top-four place, but they knew away at Stoke would be a much sterner test.

Especially since they have not won on the four visits to the ground in Premier League history but Gerrard had a chance to level the game up moments later but he hit a tame effort wide with Asmir Begovic, the Stoke goalkeeper, seemingly beaten.

Raheem Sterling came on for Suso at the break and the winger almost made an instant impact with a cross for Suarez but the Uruguayan fluffed his effort well wide.

Andy Wilkinson's long throw in the 49th minute made it 3-1 as he found Jones who nodded on again for Walters.

This time he rose to chest the ball and turn before volleying past Reina who could not keep it out despite getting his fingertips to it.

The Stoke fans sang "3-1 to the rugby team" as Liverpool pressed forward desperately trying to get back into the game with Suarez getting booked for a high challenge on Begovic on the hour mark.

## Berg lasts just 57 days

### Football

REUTERS, London

Blackburn Rovers sacked Henning Berg on Thursday after only 57 days and 10 games in charge, becoming the second manager to depart a foreign-owned English Championship (second division) club in the space of a few hours.

The Norwegian was axed by Blackburn's Indian owners after a 1-0 defeat at Middlesbrough on Wednesday, their fifth loss in six games which left the club languishing in 17th place. Under Berg, Blackburn won just once.

Berg's dismissal follows hot on the heels of Sean O'Driscoll's departure from Nottingham Forest with the Kuwaiti-owned former European champions sacking the Irishman late on Wednesday, hours after they had beaten Leeds United 4-2 at home.

The Stoke fans sang "3-1 to the rugby team" as Liverpool pressed forward desperately trying to get back into the game with Suarez getting booked for a high challenge on Begovic on the hour mark.

from fans.

Supporters have long been venting their frustration at owners Venky's although the team topped the second tier before Kean's exit.

Blackburn said on their website that 43-year-old Berg, assistant Eric Black, first-team coach Iain Brunskill and goalkeeping coach Bobby Mimms had all been fired.

"This decision has been taken following a very disappointing sequence of results," the statement read.

Venky's director Balaji Rao told the Times of India newspaper: "We have not been doing well and dropping points and losing matches quite often. I want to go up."

O'Driscoll was sacked by Nottingham Forest despite the club sitting in eighth place, one point away from the top six.

"We are looking to bring in an ambitious manager with Premier League experience," said chairman Fawaz al-Hasawi, adding that Forest's lack of consistency under O'Driscoll was a major factor in the decision.

Eighth-placed Forest have not won more than two games in succession since O'Driscoll was hired in July.

## Bale fires treble

AFP, Birmingham



Man of the match Gareth Bale claimed his first Premier League hattrick as Tottenham Hotspur won 4-0 at Aston Villa on Wednesday to climb to fourth place in the Premier League.

Villa were better than in their 8-0 humiliation at Chelsea on Sunday, but their obduracy only lasted until mid-way through the second half, when Jermain Defoe and Bale sprang to life to give Spurs a comfortable win.

Spurs dominated the first half at Villa Park, dispatching 11 attempts at goal and hitting the target on six occasions, but they could not find a way past Villa goalkeeper Brad Guzan.

The American produced a finger-tip save to prevent Bale from putting Tottenham ahead with a rising drive from 25 yards in the 11th minute, before gathering William Gallas' header from a corner.

When Spurs did manage to remove Guzan from the equation, his defenders stepped up, as when Ciaran Clark slid in to produce a superb block that denied the advancing Defoe after 25 minutes.

An Emmanuel Adebayor header drew another regulation save from Guzan, although he was made to feel rather more uncomfortable by a wickedly swerving Bale effort five minutes prior to half-time.

Villa improved after the interval but their resistance finally gave way in the 57th minute.

Bale rolled the ball back to Kyle Naughton and the full-back produced a beautifully measured through-ball to find Defoe, who raced through before poking the ball beneath Guzan with his right foot.

Four minutes later it was 2-0, and yet Spurs' second goal stemmed from a Villa attack.

Christian Benteke tore down the Villa right but he could not pick out a team-mate with his pull-back and the visitors broke.

Bale did brilliantly to keep the move alive after Joe Bennett slid in to thwart Defoe, nipping in front of his man and then masterfully rounding Guzan before steering the ball home with the outside of his left foot.



Tottenham Hotspur winger Gareth Bale celebrates one of his three goals against Aston Villa during their Premier League clash at Villa Park on Wednesday.

## Jol blasts Berbatov

AFP, London

Fulham manager Martin Jol described striker Dimitar Berbatov as "stupid" after the Bulgarian was booked for a bizarre T-shirt gesture after scoring in Wednesday's 1-1 draw with Southampton.

Berbatov scored his sixth goal for the London side after eight minutes at Craven Cottage before Rickie Lambert levelled five minutes from time.

Berbatov was yellow-carded for his celebration which involved revealing a T-shirt which read: 'Keep calm and pass me the ball'.

"It was a bit stupid and I will have to have a word with him," said Jol.

"He probably thought he would get away with it as he never gets booked. It wasn't the brightest thing to do but he wanted to make a statement."

"He tells the youngsters every day to play with confidence, keep the ball and don't be afraid. You need confidence and self-belief to play your football. He wants us to play in a certain style and that is the message he's trying to get across."

## What to WATCH

BTV

Bangladesh Premier League

Abahani v Mohammedan

Live from 4:30pm

STAR Cricket

Australia v Sri Lanka

Second Test, Day 3

Live from 5:30am

India v Pakistan

Second T20

Live from 5:30pm

ESPN

Sportscentre India

Sports News

## DAY'S EVENT

Bangladesh Premier League

Abahani v Mohammedan

Time: 4:30pm

Venue: Bangabandhu

National Stadium

Bangladesh Cricket League

(Four-day match, Day-2)

Walton Central Zone v

Prime Bank South Zone

Time: 9:15am

Venue: Sher-e-Bangla

National Stadium, Mirpur

Islami Bank South Zone v BCB

North Zone

Time: 9:15am

Venue: Shaheed Chandu