



AS Roma forward Pablo Daniel Osvaldo (L) is dejected as Cagliari players celebrate their 4-2 victory at the end of the Serie A match at the Olympic Stadium on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

## QPR remain mired

AFP, London

Adel Taarabt saw a second-half penalty saved as Queens Park Rangers were held to a 0-0 draw by Norwich City on Saturday that left them rooted to the foot of the Premier League table.

Victory would have taken Harry Redknapp's side to within a point of safety, but Taarabt saw his 56th-minute spot-kick parried by Mark Bunn to leave QPR three points beneath fourth-bottom Reading.

QPR, who gave a debut to £12.5 million (\$19.7 million, 14.6 million euros) record signing Christopher Samba, had goalkeeper Julio Cesar thank for keeping the visitors at bay with a number of eye-catching saves.

With second-place Manchester City not in action until Sunday's home game with Liverpool, leaders Manchester United can increase their lead at the top to 10 points if they win at Fulham in the evening kick-off.

Chelsea, third, will close to within three points of City if they win at Newcastle United, while Everton can move into the top four if they overcome second-bottom club Aston Villa.



### ESPN

Australia v West Indies  
Second ODI

Live from 9:15am

English Premiership

West Brom v Tottenham

Live from 7:25pm

Man City v Liverpool

Live from 10:00pm

TEN Cricket

South Africa v Pakistan

First Test, Day 3

Live from 2:30pm

STAR Sports

Primera Liga

Sevilla v Rayo

Live from 10:00pm

Valencia v Barcelona



Bangladesh Premier League

Muktijoddha v Brothers Union

Time: 2:45pm

Venue: Gopalganj Stadium

Team BJMC v Sheikh Russel

Time: 4:00pm

Abahani v Arambagh

Time: 6:15pm

## Maradona not off the hook

Football

AFP, Milan

The Italian tax authorities on Friday denied claims that Diego Maradona had won his right to return to the country after being cleared of owing nearly 40 million euros in unpaid taxes.

The former Napoli and Argentina footballer's lawyer had earlier said that the long-running case against his client had been dropped, lifting the ban on him travelling to the country.

But the commission in charge of the dossier later insisted that the ruling that he owed unpaid taxes totalling 37.2 million euros (\$50.5 million, 32 million pounds) had been "neither annulled nor declared lapsed", the Italian news agency ANSA said.

Nor had it "changed the debt owned by Diego Armando Maradona to the Italian treasury", the debt recovery agency was quoted as saying.

The agency said that it had not ruled out a complaint against Maradona for making "false statements".

World Cup winner Maradona helped Napoli to their only two league titles in Serie A in 1987 and 1990 but left Italy under a cloud amid claims of collusion with mafia dons and a positive drugs test for cocaine.

His lawyer, Angelo Pisani, told ANSA on Friday that Maradona had "finally been liberated from this fiscal nightmare and the accusations he faced" in a ruling that also annulled proceedings against other players including Brazil's Careca and Amemao.

An Italian court in 2005 ordered Maradona to pay 37.2 million euros, 23.5 million of which was interest, after being accused of tax evasion. The case was relaunched in 2011 due to a series of procedural errors.

Pisani said on Friday that the former star, one of the greatest but also most controversial figures in football, would now attempt to win nearly 40 million euros in damages for defamation.

Maradona courted controversy throughout his career, not least because of his disputed first goal in Argentina's 2-1 victory over England

in the 1986 World Cup that he claimed was scored by the "Hand of God".

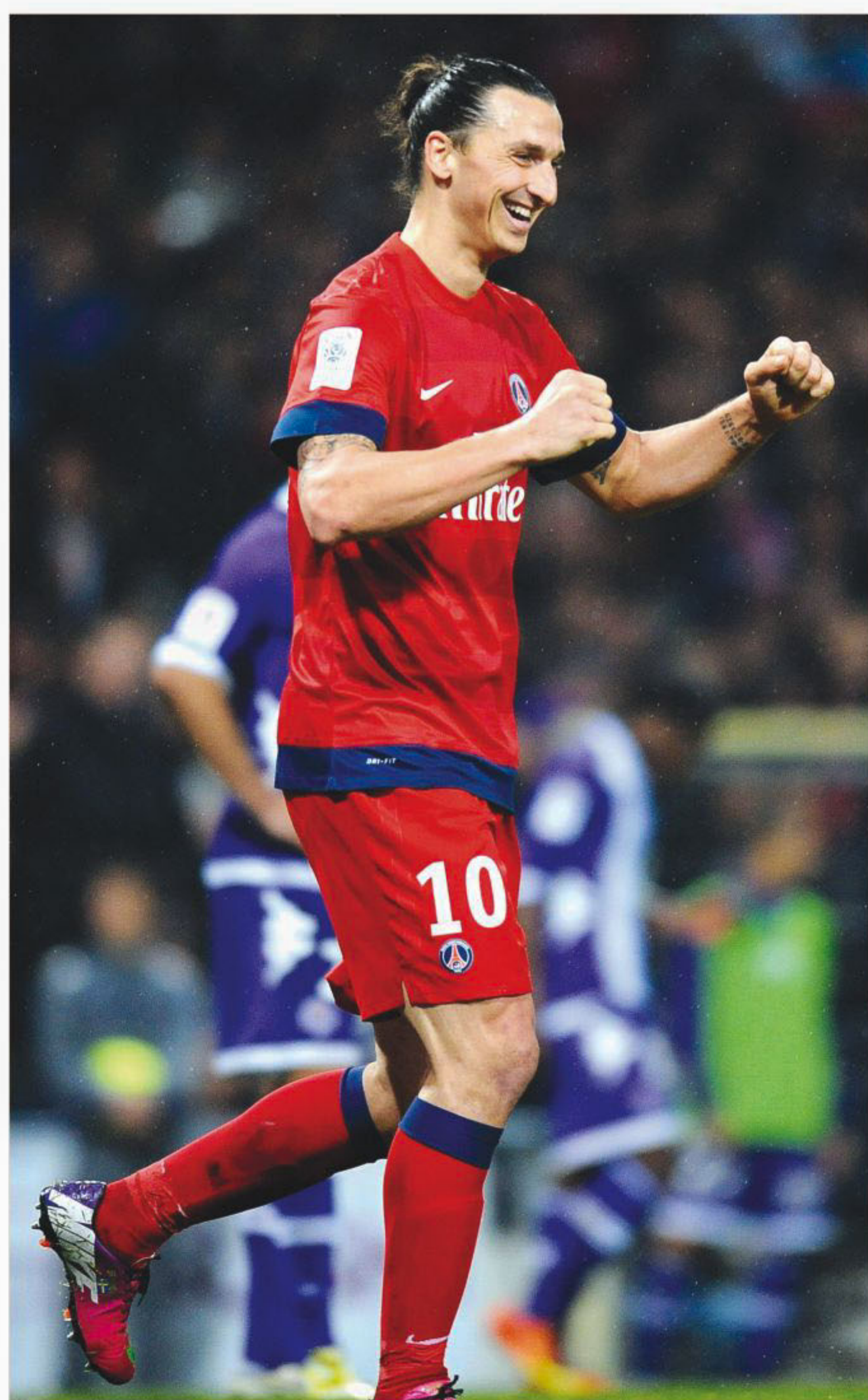
The match was already a highly charged encounter given the short war that Britain had fought in its Falkland Islands territory in the South Atlantic Ocean after Argentinian troops invaded and claimed sovereignty in 1982.

After competing the ban for cocaine use at Napoli, Maradona was sent home from the 1994 World Cup in the United States after testing positive for the banned stimulant ephedrine.

He eventually retired from the game in 1997 after spells with FC Seville in Spain and Newell's Old Boys and Boca Juniors in his native Argentina.

After ballooning in weight, Maradona in 2005 underwent treatment to slim down and overcome his addiction to cocaine.

He went on to a coaching career which has been largely mediocre, coaching the Argentinian national side (2008-2010) and United Arab Emirates club AlWasl (2011-2012).



Paris Saint Germain striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic celebrates his goal against Toulouse during their League One encounter at the Stade Municipal on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Cagliari stun Roma

AFP, Milan



Zdenek Zeman's future as coach of AS Roma was placed in further doubt Friday after the Serie A side suffered a 4-2 reverse at home to lowly Cagliari for their fifth straight game without a win.

Cagliari shocked the Giallorossi with a third-minute opener thanks to Radja Nainggolan before captain Francesco Totti levelled in the 35th minute.

The Sardinians took the lead again a minute after the restart when Roma 'keeper Mauro Goicoechea conceded an own goal and eight minutes later were 3-1 up thanks to striker Marco Sau.

Cagliari all but assured the three points with a Francesco Pisano goal in the 71st minute, with only a 93rd minute consolation goal from Marquinho reducing the arrears at the death.

It was Roma's ninth defeat in 23 games, the most of any side in the top half of the table and the club's general manager Franco Baldini told Sky Sport Italia: "We need to reflect on what happened tonight."

"I will be meeting with the club owner and the other board members before any decision is taken."

With 49 goals scored Roma currently lead Juventus for the best attack in Italy's Serie A. However they have now conceded 42, to the miserly 15 conceded by leaders Juventus.

Last week, sporting director Walter Sabatini lit the fuse when he said: "Zeman's work is satisfactory in some respects, but it's clear there are some less positive aspects as well," Sabatini.

"It's time to ask ourselves whether we need to make a change."

Days later Zeman appeared to have been given the support of the club, but now time appears to be running out for the 65-year-old Czech.

## Leonardo backs Becks

AFP, Toulouse

David Beckham may have coyly stated he expects to have a fight on his hands to take his place in Paris Saint Germain's starting line-up after his arrival this week in the City of Light.

Yet PSG's sporting director Leonardo insists the 37-year-old is not coming to make up the numbers.

"You know what he brings on the pitch -- he is renowned for his professionalism -- he is very rigorous with himself," said the Brazilian.

"For us he is a player. We are not here to have a good time or have photo shoots but to win titles."

"That's what he has signed up for -- and that alone."

And speaking after Friday evening's 4-0 romp over Toulouse which cemented PSG's place at the top of Ligue 1, the Brazilian went further.

"It's normal there should be questions (but) after the departure of seven players and the arrival of two others (in the transfer window) we will have a reduced squad" of 24, Leonardo told reporters.

"He will therefore be an important guy. David Beckham is an exemplary player who has had an exemplary career in all respects, winning top honours throughout."

## Mario settles scores

Football

AFP, Milan

AC Milan striker Mario Balotelli hit out at the English media, weather and food, but had kind words for former club Manchester City as he was officially unveiled at the San Siro Friday.

Balotelli, who grew up as a fan of the Rossoneri, joined Milan for a fee of around 30 million euros in a deal that will see him remain at the Serie A giants until 2017.

Although admitting he would miss the "amazing" English Premier League, Balotelli said he was "really happy" to have returned to Milan, where he played for arch city rivals Inter prior to his City move in 2010.

The football aside, the 22-year-old admitted there are few things he will miss about England.

"The press first, the weather, the food," replied Balotelli when asked to expand on an earlier answer about the bad things he experienced during his two-and-a-half-year stay in the Premier League.

To one journalist from The Sun tabloid newspaper, Balotelli took a firmer stance.

"Ever since I arrived in England, your newspaper has always talked bad about me. So I don't want to talk to you," he added.

Seemingly admired and reviled in equal measure in the Premier League, where his off-field antics garnered as much if not more attention than his feats on the pitch, Balotelli said he would miss City, their manager Roberto Mancini and the club's fans.

"I don't have regrets, but I have to say

## Bilbao rescue a draw

REUTERS, Madrid

Athletic Bilbao recovered from two goals down to rescue a 2-2 draw at Real Valladolid in La Liga on Friday as they failed to build convincingly on last week's 3-0 win over Atletico Madrid.

Javi Guerra nodded the home side in front in the eighth minute of an entertaining match between the two mid-table teams at Valladolid's rain-lashed Jose Zorrilla stadium.

Bilbao striker Ariz Aduriz shot against the frame of the goal in the 15th minute but moments later Valladolid were 2-0 ahead when Alberto Bueno turned in a Daniel Larsson centre.

Oscar de Marcos began Bilbao's fightback in the 22nd when he volleyed Markel Susaeta's cross in off a post and Susaeta tapped in the equaliser at a corner five minutes after the break.

Bilbao have failed to reproduce the form that took them to the final of the Europa League and King's Cup last season.

thanks to all the City fans because they have all been nice to me, they always supported me in the good times and the bad," he added.

"I also have to thank my team-mates and the manager (Mancini) as well."

When asked what good things he would miss, Balotelli said: "Good things? Only when I get to play and train, my team-mates and the manager."

"To be honest, the Premier League is an amazing league and I think it's the best." He added: "The bad things - everything else."

Presented to a 100-strong media by Milan vice-president Adriano Galliani, Balotelli - dressed in a smart suit - was first treated to a video of earlier goalscoring exploits with City.

The video stopped on a famous picture of Balotelli sitting in a Milan cafe while wearing an AC Milan shirt. It was in 2010, while he was still at Inter.

Balotelli was presented with the same number 45 shirt earlier this week, and again on Friday evening.

AC Milan have a reputation for being one of Europe's strictest clubs when it comes to managing their players, and controlling rumours surrounding them.

It remains to be seen if Balotelli, who endured a tumultuous time at City, will get his wish of a successful stay in Milan, where he hopes to remain "for as long as possible".

Asked by AFP of the significance of his move, and what he expects from the different style of football in Serie A, Balotelli replied: "Of course it's a dream come true. (For) a long time I wanted to come here and I couldn't."