



PHOTO: REUTERS
Arsenal midfielder Santi Cazorla (L) reacts after an unsuccessful scoring attempt during their Premier League encounter against Everton at the Emirates Stadium on Tuesday.

Everton hold Arsenal

AFP, London



Arsenal wasted a chance to cement their place in the Premier League's top four as the Gunners were held to a 0-0 draw by Everton on Tuesday.

Arsene Wenger's side would have moved four points clear of fifth placed Tottenham with a win at the Emirates Stadium.

But they were forced to settle for a point as obdurate Everton's physical approach succeeded in frustrating the hosts.

Third placed Arsenal are now two points clear of Chelsea and Tottenham in the race to qualify for the Champions League.

However Arsenal still have plenty of work to do as Chelsea have two games in hand on Wenger's team, while Tottenham have played a game less than their north London rivals.

Everton remain in sixth place, two points behind Chelsea having played two games more, and a spot in the Europa League now looks their best bet.

David Moyes' men should have taken the lead in the opening moments when Steven Pienaar eluded the statuesque Bacary Sagna and raced onto Seamus Coleman's pass.

But with just Wojciech Szczesny to beat, the South African midfielder lifted his shot high over the crossbar.

Despite admitting he had rushed Jack Wilshere back from an ankle injury too quickly, Wenger gave the England midfielder his second appearance in four days.

And the Frenchman was wincing as Wilshere came in for some rough treatment in the early stages.

Crunching challenges from Ross Barkley and Kevin Mirallas left Wilshere writhing on the turf while Wenger leapt to his feet to berate referee Neil Swarbrick for failing to afford his player more protection.

Everton's aggressive approach

had knocked Arsenal out of their rhythm and it took a mistake from Marouane Fellaini to gift the Gunners their first sight of goal.

Fellaini's wayward pass was collected by Kieran Gibbs in space on the edge of the penalty area, but the left-back's powerful strike flashed over the bar.

Everton's attempts to stifle Arsenal were becoming increasingly crude and Darron Gibson's foul on Theo Walcott finally brought a booking from Swarbrick.

Gibson was fortunate to avoid being sent off for a second booking soon after when he barged into Walcott with no attempt to play the ball.

Swarbrick settled for a quiet word with the Everton midfielder, in the process infuriating the increasingly exasperated Wenger, who made his feelings clear to fourth official Kevin Friend.

The temperature rose even higher when Pienaar was booked for taking out Walcott.

But Victor Anichebe went close to opening the scoring when his shot from Barkley's pass was blocked by Szczesny.

The best chance of the half fell to Arsenal striker Olivier Giroud.

Aaron Ramsey's burst down the right produced a teasing low cross that picked out Giroud, only for the France international to drag his close-range effort woefully wide.

Santi Cazorla threatened for Arsenal early in the second half as the Spaniard's half-volley forced a good save from Tim Howard and moments later Giroud clipped a first-time shot narrowly over.

Everton went even closer in the 65th minute when Barkley worked space for a superb strike that beat Szczesny but curled agonisingly past the far post.

Arsenal had Moyes' side on the ropes, yet couldn't deliver the knockout blow.

Aguero says sorry to Luiz

AFP, London

Manchester City striker Sergio Aguero has apologised to David Luiz for his ugly two-footed foul on the Chelsea defender in Sunday's FA Cup semifinal at Wembley Stadium.

Aguero launched into Luiz with his studs showing and caught the Brazilian high on the back of his left leg towards the end of the game, which City won 2-1.

However, he escaped retrospective punishment from the Football Association because match referee Chris Foy saw the incident at the time and awarded a free-kick in Chelsea's favour.

Aguero nonetheless decided to apologise for his actions, writing on Twitter: "I've contacted @DavidLuiz_4 and apologized for what happened during the match. It was an impulse reaction that shouldn't have happened."

Luiz, who had called on Aguero to say sorry after the game, said he accepted the Argentine's apology.

'Italy needs change'

REUTERS, Miami



Italy's Serie A needs radical change and investment if their struggling clubs are to compete for European trophies, former AC Milan captain Paolo Maldini has told Reuters.

No Italian club has made the Champions League semifinals since Inter Milan won the title in 2010, with Serie A leaders Juventus' 4-0 loss on aggregate to Bayern Munich in the quarter-finals causing consternation and Maldini said it was time for the league to look at the reasons why.

"To compete with the great teams in Europe, you have to invest money, there is no other way to reach that kind of level," said Maldini, who earned 126 caps for Italy and holds Milan's record for most appearances.

"You could see it with Juventus against Bayern. Juventus are a great team, especially in Italy, but when you compete with a team like Bayern, you can see the difference. They need at least two or three more great players."

Maldini won the European Cup/Champions League five times during

his 25-year career with Milan and played until 2009 when he retired at the age of 41 and he looks back with nostalgia on the years when Serie A was the top league in Europe.

"In the 1990s we had seven great teams - Milan, Inter, Juventus, Parma, Lazio, Roma, Fiorentina. If you look at the players, they were great players but there was some crazy investment and some teams went bankrupt, like Parma and Lazio.

"Then you had the Moratti and Berlusconi families who put in so much money and are still surviving, it is hard though."

Maldini, widely considered one of the great defenders in world soccer in the last 30 years, has played no role in the game since hanging up his boots.

The only benefit Maldini can see from the lack of investment in Italian teams is that it is forcing clubs to give homegrown talent a chance.

But Maldini is not going to take on the role of reforming Italian soccer, at least not for some time.

"I'm not working in football. Basically I'm a father with two kids and taking some time for myself," he said.

Petrov lucky to be alive

AFP, London

Aston Villa midfielder Stiliyan Petrov says he is lucky to be alive after completing his first year of treatment for leukaemia.

The 33-year-old Bulgaria international was diagnosed with the illness in March last year, forcing him to abruptly suspend his playing career.

"I've had my hard moments but I've had good moments as well. I'm lucky because some people with this disease will die very quickly," he said in a video published on the club website on Wednesday.

"I'm glad that this hard year is behind me now and I can concentrate on getting back to my life."

Petrov also announced plans to launch his own leukaemia foundation.

Bayern crush Wolves

Football

AFP, Berlin

High-flying Bayern Munich kept alive their dreams of becoming Germany's first team to win the treble by booking their German Cup final berth with a 6-1 win at home to VfL Wolfsburg in Tuesday's semifinal.

Having already won this season's Bundesliga crown, Bayern are bidding to become the first German side to win the European Cup, cup and league titles as they face Barcelona at home in the Champions League semifinal next Tuesday.

Bayern will discover their opponents for the cup final, which takes place on June 1 at Berlin's Olympic Stadium, when Stuttgart host Freiburg in Wednesday's other all-Bundesliga semifinal.

Swiss midfielder Xherdan Shaqiri, in for suspended France winger Franck Ribery, impressed as he set up three of Bayern's goals for Mario Mandzukic, Arjen Robben and Mario Gomez, then scored one of his own.

But Gomez was the star of the night as he warmed up for Barcelona by coming off the bench to score three goals in six minutes to double Bayern's tally in the last 10 minutes.

"You could see that we have three top strikers, I'm really pleased for Mario that he managed a hat-trick," said Bayern coach Jupp Heynckes.



PHOTO: REUTERS

Bayern Munich striker Mario Gomez celebrates one of his three goals against Wolfsburg during their German Cup semifinal in Munich on Tuesday.

Style means more: Xavi

AFP, Madrid



Barcelona midfielder Xavi Hernandez has claimed the Catalans' successes have more merit because of the style with which they are achieved.

The 33-year-old has won almost everything at both club and international level, but said he is motivated more by the manner in which his sides play than just results.

"Football is played to win, but our satisfaction has to be double," he told Uefa.com

"Other teams win and are happy, but it's not the same. The identity is lacking. In football the result is an impostor. You can do things really, really well but not win. There's something greater than the result, more lasting - a legacy."

Barca's run to a record sixth successive Champions League semifinal has certainly allowed the current side to leave their mark in history, but Xavi is desperate to keep going and win the competition for the third time at Wembley in May.

"Wembley makes us dream of getting there again. It will be difficult, but we want to be there with all the good feelings we've had in London and at Wembley in particular.

"In 1992 we won with (Ronald) Koeman's goal. Two seasons ago against Manchester United we were the dominant side and did what we train for every day: took the lead and kept the ball.

"It was the same against United in the 2009 final in Rome, and in several games against Real Madrid - we've had four or five excellent years. This generation is still capable of doing great things."

What to WATCH

Maasranga TV & TEN Cricket
Bangladesh v Zimbabwe
First Test, Day-2
Live from 2:00pm

SET Max
Indian Premier League
Delhi v Chennai
Live from 8:30pm

ESPN
Sportscentre India
Sports News

DAY'S EVENT

Bangladesh U-19s v Sri Lanka U-19s
(2nd four-day match, Day-3)
Time: 9:30am