

Chelsea go second

AFP, London



Fernando Torres exploited a 90th-minute horror show from Manchester City to earn Chelsea a 2-1 win on Sunday that sent them up to second place in the Premier League.

City looked on course for a draw at Stamford Bridge after a Sergio Aguero thunderbolt cancelled out Andre Schurrle's opener, only for Torres to pounce at the death after a mix-up between Matija Nastasic and Joe Hart.

It was the latest in a series of blunders by England goalkeeper Hart, who came to the edge of his area but did not clam the ball, and he could be seen venting his disbelief as Torres wheeled away to celebrate.

Jose Mourinho's Chelsea have now won five consecutive games in all competitions and trail leaders Arsenal by just two points.

Meanwhile, City manager Manuel Pellegrini, who was succeeded by Mourinho at Real Madrid, saw his side finish the week-end down in seventh place, four points below Chelsea and six shy of Arsenal.

In the continued absence of injured City captain Vincent Kompany, Martin Demichelis was handed his debut at centre-back, while Aguero was deployed as a lone striker in a cautious 4-2-3-1 system.

Chelsea recalled Ashley Cole at left-back, in the only change to the team that won 3-0 at Schalke in the Champions League in mid-

RESULTS

Chelsea 2 (Schurrle 33, Torres 90) Manchester City 1 (Aguero 49) 1
Sunderland 2 (Fletcher 5, Borini 84) Newcastle 1 (Debuchy 57)
Swansea 0 West Ham 0
Tottenham 1 (Soldado 80-pen) Hull 0

week.

Mourinho wore a broad smile as he settled into the dug-out and his side started positively, with Gary Cahill volleying over from a deep Oscar cross and Torres heading straight at Hart.

It was attritional fare, but in the 29th minute Torres found himself with only Hart to beat from Ramires's pass, only to hook an ugly half-volley high over the bar from just 10 yards out.

In the 33th minute, he outpaced Clichy with a burst of acceleration down the right flank and then squared the ball for Schurrle to steer in his first Chelsea goal from close range.

Encouraged, Torres almost extended the hosts' lead four minutes later, but after slipping away from Demichelis, he saw his right-foot curler come back off the angle of post and bar.

Aguero stung Cech's gloves shortly before the interval, while Yaya Toure headed over, but although Chelsea reached half-time with their lead intact, it took the visitors only four minutes to equalise after the break.

Shafiu out in a few moments!

It was a light fitness drill for Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (R) and Shafiu Islam. The pace duo was running merrily on the greens of the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. But suddenly Shafiu twisted his right ankle and was ruled out for six weeks. It was indeed a freak injury that no one had anticipated a few moments ago.

PHOTOS: FIROZ AHMED



Roma roll on

AFP, Milan



League leaders Roma beat Udinese 1-0 away on Sunday to set a new all-time record of nine consecutive wins at the start of a Serie A season to restore their five-point cushion.

Roma, who have conceded just one goal in their nine wins under French coach Rudi Garcia, were reduced to 10 men in the second half after Brazilian Maicon saw red for a second bookable offence.

However the setback failed to shake the leaders, who virtually sealed the points when American Michael Bradley scored with a precise first-time shot in the 82nd minute.

Udinese were unlucky to see one goalbound shot cleared off the line in the first half and coach Francesco Guidolin said: "Roma are a great side, they showed that when they were reduced to 10 men, but in the first half they rode their luck a little."

Garcia said if there was good fortune, Roma had created it themselves.

"You make your own luck," Garcia told Sky Sport Italia. "Especially when you give everything, week in week out."

Defending champions Juventus had set a record of nine successive wins at the start of the 2005-2006 campaign, although that feat no longer stands after the Turin giants were stripped of that season's crown, as well as the previous year's, due to their role in the 'Calciopoli' match-fixing scandal.

Title challengers Napoli had heaped the pressure on Garcia's side before what was always going to be a tough away trip to Udinese by dominating Torino 2-0 at the San Paolo to reduce their arrears to two points.

And for much of what was a balanced encounter, Roma finally looked as if they

RESULTS

Napoli 2 (Higuain 14-pen, 32-pen) Torino 0
Bologna 1 (Crespo 3) Livorno 0
Catania 0 Sassuolo 0
Chievo 1 (Cesar 13) **Fiorentina 2** (Cuadrado 45, 64)
Juventus 2 (Vidal 23-pen, Tevez 36) Genoa 0
Parma 3 (Parolo 11, 90+4, Cassano 45+1) AC Milan 2 (Matri 61, Silvestre 63)
Udinese 0 **Roma 1** (Bradley 82)

would fail to take all three points for the first time in the league this season.

Roma now lead Napoli by five points with Juventus remaining in third, also five points adrift, after a 2-0 home win over Genoa.

Juve coach Antonio Conte was pleased with his side's performance, especially the emerging pairing of Tevez and Spain international Fernando Llorente: "I liked what I saw from Tevez and Llorente, they are beginning to play well together."

Days after an impressive performance which earned a 1-1 draw at home to Champions League group opponents Barcelona, AC Milan dropped precious points in a 3-2 defeat at Parma.

Parma held a 2-0 lead at half-time thanks to goals from Marco Parolo and former Rossoneri and Inter striker Antonio Cassano.

Mario Balotelli returned from a ban and recent injury but was replaced early in the second half.

Milan battled back into contention in two second-half minutes when Alessandro Matri scored his maiden league goal for the visitors, with Matias Silvestre bundling the ball home two minutes later.

Parma, however, stunned Massimiliano Allegri's side when Parolo grabbed his second in the fourth minute of injury time to send his side up to seventh in the table.

Sunderland get Papal approval

AFP, London

Pope Francis received one of his unlikeliest gifts since he was elected in March last Wednesday when the chaplain of struggling English Premier League club Sunderland gave him a team shirt.

The Argentine pontiff -- who is a passionate supporter of Buenos Aires club San Lorenzo -- received the shirt with 'Papa Francesco' inscribed on the back when Sunderland chaplain Marc Lyden-Smith was part of a group of 60 or so pilgrims from the Sunderland area to attend the Papal audience in St Peter's Square in the Vatican.

It came just days before Sunday's North East derby with Newcastle United, a match in which the 'Black Cats' are in desperate need of a result as they have just one point from eight matches.

"We have 60 pilgrims from the North East in Rome at the moment visiting churches and shrines," Father Lyden-Smith was quoted as saying by the BBC.

Historic fourth for Vettel

AFP, Noida



Sebastian Vettel roared into the history books as Formula One's youngest four-time champion and celebrated in outlandish style after a superlative win at the Indian Grand Prix on Sunday.

Pole-sitter Vettel pitted early to change his soft tyres but then scythed through the field to win 30 seconds ahead of Mercedes's Nico Rosberg, with Lotus driver Romain Grosjean third.

The 26-year-old German becomes the youngest man to win four straight titles, with Juan Manuel Fangio and Michael Schumacher the only other drivers to achieve the feat.

And despite teammate Mark Webber's retirement with a mechanical problem, Red Bull also sealed their fourth straight constructors' title with three races to go.

"Unbelievable day," said the jubilant Vettel over the team radio. "We did it! Yes! Yes!"

"You've done it in style," Red Bull team principal Christian Horner said on the radio as Vettel raced past the chequered flag. "Brilliant drive, you join the greats."

With his fourth championship, achieved with 10 wins this season, Vettel levels French great Alain Prost on the all-time list with only Fangio (five) and Schumacher (seven) ahead of him.

He celebrated jubilantly by spinning doughnuts for a cacophonous grandstand,

and then leapt on top of his car and saluted his fans before kneeling in front of the Red Bull in mock worship.

An emotional Vettel, who was hoisted onto the shoulders of Rosberg and Grosjean on the champagne-spattered victory podium, said it was the "best day of my life".

"First of all I want to thank the crowd for an unbelievable reception," he said. "I am speechless. I spent ages thinking what to say, there is so much you want to say at a time like that."

"It is a pleasure to jump in the car and go out and drive for the guys and give it all I have. The car was phenomenal today and has been phenomenal all season to be honest."

"I want to say a big thank you to everyone who is behind the team. It has not been an easy season. From the outside, people will think it was easy but it wasn't."

Vettel said the enthusiastic applause from the Indian crowd was particularly sweet after he was unsportingly jeered after winning in Belgium, Italy and Singapore.

"It has been hard for me in particular, to be booed when I have not done anything wrong was hard, but I think I answered the things on the track which I am very pleased about," he said.

"I am overwhelmed, I don't know what to say but it is the best day of my life so far."

Vettel's sixth win in a row, 10th in 16 races this season and 36th of his career left him poised to shatter more records in the remaining three races in Abu Dhabi, America and Brazil.

Aminul joins Muktis again

SPORTS REPORTER

Former national goalkeeper Aminul Haque joined Muktijoddha Sangsad for a third stint yesterday for the upcoming season.

The former national number one 'keeper, who stood under the bar for Team BJMC in the last two seasons, had played for Muktijoddha in two stints -- 1997 to 1998 and then from 2000 to 2006. Even though Aminul had initially thought of calling his time on football after the end of last season, he changed his mind after a discussion with the Muktijoddha Sangsad officials.

Aminul yesterday had his first practice session with the All Reds, which is set to sign up Abahani's Enamul Haque, Ibnul Siraji, Chowmrin Rakhain, Mohammedan's Intiaz Sultan Jitu, Maruf Ahmed and Team BJMC's Shahedul Alam and Bipul for the upcoming season.

Blatter wants 'racism' kicked out

AFP, London

FIFA president Sepp Blatter wants tougher sanctions over racism in football with teams kicked out of tournaments and points deducted.

Blatter, speaking at the Football Association's 150th anniversary gala in London, became the latest high-profile figure to react to accusations of racism in the game.

Manchester City's Ivory Coast midfielder Yaya Toure claimed he was the target of monkey chants during the midweek Champions League clash at CSKA Moscow.

Manikganj football

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Manikganj City Club recorded a 3-0 win over Soukhin Sporting Club in the opening match of the Prime Bank Premier Division DFA Football League at the Shaheed Miraz-Tapan Stadium here yesterday.

Swadhin, Gafur and Bakar scored for the winners.

Earlier, SP of Manikganj Bidhan Tripura formally inaugurated the prestigious football tournament.

Serena downs brave Li Na

AFP, Istanbul

Serena Williams successfully defended her WTA Championships title on Sunday, beating Li Na, 2-6, 6-3, 6-0, to finish 2013 with a 78th victory and 11th title of the year.

The 32-year-old world number one from the US had admitted to feeling physically exhausted before, during and after a fraught semi-final with Jelena Jankovic on Saturday and at 3-3 in the second set on Sunday, she looked in danger of a surprise defeat.

"But I had to keep going, I hung in there, and it's amazing to win this," said Williams.

Li, the first Chinese player to make the final of the end of season showpiece and about to become the highest-ranked Asian woman at number three in the world, made one break of serve for 2-1 in the first set with a wrong-footing backhand drive, and another for 4-1 by punishing a moderate Williams serve.

The world number one looked subdued and shackled. The emotional eruptions of her semi-final with Jankovic were nowhere to be seen or heard and her movement was leaden.

Two in 2 for Del Potro

AFP, Basel



Juan Martin del Potro claimed a second straight Swiss Indoors trophy on Sunday with a 7-6 (7/3), 2-6, 6-4 win over Roger Federer to earn his second title in a month.

Even though Federer lost a chance to clinch a spot in the ATP World Tour Finals in London from November 4, the Swiss can assure himself a place in the eight-man field by winning his opening second-round match next week at the Paris Masters.

Federer will face the winner from Russia's Mikhail Youzhny, the Valencia champion on Sunday, and South African Kevin Anderson.

He if wins he will be into the London year-ender for a 12th straight edition where he would be bidding for a sixth title.

Del Potro, the Tokyo champion three weeks ago, profited after Federer, who had squared the match at a set each, double-faulted twice in the opening game of the final set in front his 9,200-strong home public at the event which he has won five times from ten finals.

"I played my best match of the week today," said the Argentine winner who

could not stop expressing his respect for Federer, the 17-time Grand Slam champion.

"Roger is a great person and he has already won this title too many times.

"I know how it feels to lose big matches like this. I played well today and felt I got better at the end. My last two service games were the best I could have hoped for."

Del Potro has now defeated Federer in their last three matches.

"It's always a pleasure to play Roger. He's the hero here and for me my biggest inspiration. You make history at every tournament you play."

Federer fired 14 aces to no avail in the final as he failed to win what would have been just a second title in a disappointing season.

"I may have lost but it was perhaps my best match of the week," said Federer. "It was a high level. But it's hard to judge when you lose."

"I shouldn't have handed the break over to him so easily in the third set (first game) but overall I did well today."

"I felt I was getting better in the third set but at the end he wasn't giving me anything. Overall it was a great week. I'm happy to have some tough matches and withstood the challenge."

"Physically I'm fine. The crowd gave me amazing support, which makes it easier when you lose a match like this."