

(L-R) Real Madrid's Argentine midfielder Angel di Maria, French forward Karim Benzema, Spanish goalkeeper Iker Casillas, Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo, Brazilian defender Marcelo and Croatian midfielder Luka Modric holds the World Cup jerseys of their respective countries at a press conference discussing their World Cup groups in Madrid yesterday.

Roma end the rot

REUTERS, Rome



Serie A title challengers AS Roma ended a run of four successive draws with an enthralling 2-1 win over Fiorentina on Sunday, helped by an inspirational display

from Gervinho who set up both their goals. The Ivorian has enjoyed a new lease of life since his move from Arsenal in the close season and repeatedly tormented Fiorentina's defence as Roma recaptured the form which helped

them win their first 10 games. Maicon and Mattia Destro, making his first appearance of the season after a knee injury, were on target as Roma, on 37 points and still unbeaten after 15 games, stayed three behind leaders Juventus who won 2-0

at Bologna on Friday. Serie A is already threatening to turn into a two-horse race with third-placed Napoli having dropped five points behind Roma after their 3-3 home draw with Udinese on Saturday.

The mere presence of talismanic forward Francesco Totti on the substitutes' bench, after more than one month out through injury, also appeared to inspire Rudi Garcia's side, even though the 37-year-old did not play.

Only a needless sending off for Miralem Pjanic, who received a second yellow card for fouling David Pizarro inside the opposi-

RESULTS

Torino 1 (Glik 19) Lazio 0

Roma 2 (Maicon 7, Destro 67) Fiorentina 1 (Vargas 29) Cagliari 2 (Sau 76, 90+2) Genoa 1 (Gilardino 16) Verona 2 (Gomez 82, Jorginho 87-pen) Atalanta 1 (Denis 42)

Sampdoria 2 (Eder 54, Gabbiadini 77) Catania 0 Sassuolo 0 Chievo 1 (Thereau 55)

tion's half in the 87th minute, spoiled Roma's day.

Maicon put Roma ahead with his first goal for the club, the Brazilian bundling the ball home in the seventh minute after Gervinho pulled the ball back.

were certainly not out of it and levelled on 29 minutes when Peru midfielder Juan Vargas rifled home from a Nenad Tomovic pass.

Fiorentina, joint fourth with 27 points,

Both sides created openings early in the second half before Roma grabbed the game by the scruff of the neck.

Gervinho had a shot blocked by Neto and Kevin Strootman hit the Fiorentina post as the pressure mounted, the winner finally arriving when Gervinho pulled the ball back from the byline and Destro fired home.

The overjoyed Destro, who had only been on the field for eight minutes, was mobbed by his team mates and booked taking his shirt off in the celebrations.

Gunners held at home

AFP, London



Premier League leaders Arsenal were left five points clear at the top of the Premier League after visitors Everton fought back to claim a 1-1 draw on Sunday.

It seemed the Gunners were about to go seven points clear of second-placed Liverpool when club record signing Mesut Ozil fired them into the lead with just 10 minutes left at the Emirates Stadium.

But four minutes later Everton, fresh from a win away to champions Manchester United in midweek, equalised when Gerard Delofeu smashed the ball home from 10 yards.

Having seen Chelsea, Manchester City and Manchester United drop points on Saturday, Arsenal are nonetheless five points clear of Liverpool and Chelsea ahead of their trip to City next weekend.

Defending champions United, meanwhile, are now 13 points behind Arsene Wenger's side in ninth place.

It was another spirited performance from advancing Brad Guzan. Roberto Martinez's Everton, who won 1-0 at United on Wednesday and continue to stalk the Champions League contenders, sitting a point below fourth-place City in fifth.

Everton were unchanged from the team that had prevailed at Old Trafford, while Arsenal recalled Kieran Gibbs, Mikel Arteta, Jack Wilshere and Olivier Giroud following Wednesday's 2-0 victory at home to Hull City.

RESULTS

Arsenal 1 (Ozuil 80) Everton 1 (Deloufeu 84) Fulham 2 (Sidwell 21, Berbatov 30-pen) Aston Villa 0

The game had opened up, and with 10 minutes remaining, Arsenal went ahead.

Rosicky's deep cross was knocked back across goal by Walcott and although Giroud completely miscued his volley, Ozil was on hand to lift the ball into the roof of the net from close range.

It looked destined to be the winner, but with 84 minutes on the clock, Deulofeu collected the ball on the right-hand side of the box, shifted it past Gibbs and thrashed a rising shot past Szczesny.

Earlier, relegation-threatened Fulham gave Rene Meulensteen his first win as their manager with a 2-0 victory over Aston Villa at Craven Cottage.

Steve Sidwell put the home side in front in the 21st minute when he scored against his old side after lofting the ball over the

Fulham, who previously hadn't scored Nelson Mandela". two goals at home all season, then doubled their lead through a controversial penalty nine minutes later.

Victory saw Fulham, beaten 2-1 by Tottenham in Meulensteen's first game in charge on Wednesday after he succeeded fellow Dutchman Martin Jol, climb one place into 18th spot but remain in the relegation zone.

Drogba in trouble for tribute

AFP, Istanbul

The Turkish Football Federation has summoned Ivorian internationals Didier Drogba and Emmanuel Eboue for paying homage to Nelson Mandela after a league game, news reports said Sunday.

Drogba, who plays for Turkish giants Galatasaray, removed his club shirt after a match Friday against SB Elazigspor to reveal a T-shirt that read "Thank You Madiba".

His teammate Eboue also honoured the South African anti-apartheid hero, who died aged 95 on Thursday, with a T-shirt that said "Rest in Peace

The federation said the two players faced disciplinary action for breaching a ban on wearing political slogans and messages on T-shirts, according to the Milliyet and Hurriyet daily newspapers.

Real embarrassment

REUTERS, Madrid



Real Madrid were held to an embarrassing 0-0 draw at third-tier Olimpic de Xativa in the King's Cup last 32, first

leg on Saturday as they came down to earth with a bump after a series of big

Real, the world's richest club by income, were missing the likes of Cristiano Ronaldo, Gareth Bale and Xabi Alonso but a team packed with internationals still failed to see off lowly opponents at their tiny stadium near Valencia.

The Olimpic players compete in a regional division one level below Real's B team and worked tirelessly on the artificial pitch to keep their illustrious visitors, the 2011 Cup winners, from barely managing a shot on target.

Real coach Carlo Ancelotti, whose side had scored 18 goals in their last four outings, spent most of the match furiously chewing gum and shaking his head on the sidelines.

striker Karim Benzema and Croatia midfielder Luka Modric in the second half failed to provide the spark to break down a dogged home defence.

The final whistle prompted boisterous celebrations among the several thousand incredulous home fans crammed into the modest arena, who chanted "Yes we can!" ahead of the return at the Bernabeu on Dec. 18.

Olimpic's annual revenue is around 600,000 euros (\$821,000), while Real's is more than 500 million and they set a record transfer fee of 100 million when they bought Wales winger Bale in the close season. "We are not used to the pitch, the

ball travels much more slowly and maybe there is a bit less space here," Real centre back Nacho said in an interview with Spanish television broadcaster Canal Plus. "But we have no excuses and now

we just have to focus on the return leg.

The coach wasn't angry at all at

halftime, he just asked for a bit more intensity." Real came closest to scoring when Jese flashed a shot narrowly wide in the 72nd minute, while Benzema fluffed

an effort when well placed 10 minutes from time. The Olimpic players were clearly Even the introduction of France overjoyed at the result in what was by far the biggest game of their careers and made sure to swap shirts with their opponents at the end of

> each half. "We knew it was going to be very

RESULTS

Sant Andreu O Atletico Madrid 4 (Raul Garcia 12, Turan 20, 56, Villa 84) Girona 1 (Timor 15) Getafe 1 (Marica 37)

Celta Vigo 1 (Mina 71) Athletic Bilbao 0 Olimpic Xativa O Real Madrid O

Recreativo Huelva 1 (Ruyman 90) Levante 0

tough to get anything from the game but we got the draw," beaming fullback Jose Peris told Canal Plus, adding he was delighted to have snared Marcelo's jersey.

"We know it's going to be extremely hard to win at the Bernabeu but the tie is still open."

In Saturday's other first legs, holders Atletico Madrid eased to a 4-0 win at third-tier Sant Andreu thanks to an Arda Turan double and a goal apiece from David Villa and Raul Garcia.

Athletic Bilbao were beaten 1-0 at La Liga rivals Celta Vigo, Getafe were held to a 1-1 draw at second-division Girona and Levante lost 1-0 at Recreativo Huelva, who also play in the second tier.

Barcelona, the record winners with 26 King's Cups, conceded a surprise early goal in their first leg at third-tier Cartagena on Friday but a Pedro double helped them fight back to secure a 4-1 victory.

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Bayern in 7th heaven

AFP, Berlin



Pep Guardiola admitted he was 'honoured' to coach Bayern Munich as they extended their record unbeaten Bundesliga run to 40 matches, while Borussia Dortmund's injury woes

worsened Bayern ran riot in a 7-0 romp at Werder Bremen on Saturday with France winger Franck Ribery creating two goals and scoring twice to boost

his claim for the 2013 world footballer of the year award to be announced on January 13. "It was an honour to coach them today, but I know Bremen can play

much better than that," said Guardiola as his team posted their biggest win since he took charge in June. "I must say a big thank you to my

team, they played very, very well." Having won 14 trophies in four

years as Barcelona coach, Guardiola can win his second piece of silverware with Bayern later this month in the Club World Cup in Morocco having won the UEFA Super Cup in August.

Bayern have already reached the knock-out stages, but warmed up for Tuesday's Champions League match at home to Manchester City, when they hope to extend their record European winning streak to 11 victories.

makes it fun to play," said Ribery, making his first start for a month after a rib injury. "But we must keep playing at this

"This team has a great mentality, it

Bayern, who last lost in the German league in October 2012, cut Bremen's defence to tatters.

Belgium's Daniel van Buyten, Croatia's Mario Mandzukic plus Germany's Thomas Mueller and Mario Goetze all got on the scoresheet after

Bremen scored an own goal. The victory was just short of the Bundesliga's 57-year-old record of 9-0 for an away win and was Werder's heaviest home league defeat.

Bremen coach Robin Dutt kept the team on the pitch for a stern lecture as they dropped to 14th after just two wins in their last 10 games.

Second-placed Bayer Leverkusen stayed four points behind Bayern with a hard-fought 1-0 win at third-placed Borussia Dortmund, who now find themselves six points behind Leverusen and ten points behind Munich.

"I am especially pleased for the team," said Leverkusen coach Sami Hyypia, whose side must beat Real Sociedad on Tuesday, and hope foul Shakhtar Donetsk lose at Manchester United, to reach the last 16 of the Champions League.

'In the first-half, we really showed what's possible.

"After the break, we fought hard and we won, the victory was important because Dortmund were only three points behind us (before the match).

South Korea striker Son Heung-Min hit the 18th-minute winner after Leverkusen's attack pounced on a mistake by Dortmund defender Manuel Friedrich for Son to score his fifth goal in his last three games against

"It's never easy to win at Dortmund

and we gave it everything," said Son. Both sides finished with 10 men as

Borussia M'gladbach 2 (Raffael 25, Kruse 45+1-pen) Schalke 04 1 (Farfan 17-pen) VfB Stuttgart 4 (Harnik 13, Ibisevic 33, Traore 51, Rausch 83) Hanover 2 (A. Sobiech 28, Sane

Werder Bremen 0 Bayern Munich 7 (Lukimya 21, van Buyten 27, Ribery 38, 82, Mandzukic 60, Mueller 68, Goetze 90)

Hamburg 0 Augsburg 1 (Bobadilla 18) Eintracht Frankfurt 1 (Joselu 48) Hoffenheim 2 (Schipplock 46, Roberto Firmino 51) Borussia Dortmund 0 Bayer Leverkusen 1

Leverkusen had Bosnia defender Emir Spahic sent off for striking Dortmund's Henrikh Mkhitaryan while Borussia had Greece centre-back Sokratis dismissed late on for a second bookable

Dortmund had both midfielders Sven Bender and Nuri Sahin taken off with ankle injuries and are doubtful ahead of Wednesday's Champions League game at Marseille, which Dortmund must win to reach the knock-out stages.

"Miracles happen repeatedly, but it does not look good," said Dortmund coach Jurgen Klopp.

"We didn't play well, we didn't find our way into the game, while Leverkusen did with their aggressive-

"We played with more passion in the second half, but we still weren't good

"Then we picked up more bloody stupid injuries, which is very annoying.'

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