



MAMMA MIA: Gonzalo Higuain broke Gunnar Nordahl's 66-year-old Serie A record with a hat-trick against Frosinone on Saturday and the highest praise he got was from the Neapolitans as they serenaded him with a song only reserved for club legend Diego Maradona.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Higuain breaks Nordahl's 66-year-old record

AFP, Rome



Gonzalo Higuain was in high spirits after a hat-trick in a dramatic 4-0 rout of Frosinone set a new all-time record of 36 goals in a single Serie A season and fired Napoli into the Champions League.

"I feel immense joy at overtaking this record," Higuain told Mediaset at the San Paolo stadium.

"But I need to thank a lot of people, from my family to the people of Napoli, the players and the medical staff."

Roma, despite a 3-1 win at AC Milan that has virtually ended the hosts' hopes of Europa League football, finished two points adrift in third.

Champions Juventus, who secured a record-equalling fifth successive title last month, capped their campaign on Saturday with a 5-0 rout of 10-man Sampdoria in Turin where Paulo Dybala struck twice for the hosts.

In scenes not seen since the heady days of Diego Maradona on their second title win in 1990, Napoli fans had packed out the San Paolo stadium hoping to see local hero 'Pipita' set a new record.

Sitting on 33 goals, Higuain was still two short of Gunnar Nordahl's 1950 record of 35 Serie A campaigns.

Frosinone gave Napoli, and Higuain, plenty of incentive after Mirko Gori was shown a straight red card for dissent, moments after a challenge on Napoli winger Lorenzo Insigne.

However, it took until the 44th minute for the hosts to capitalise,

TOP SINGLE SEASON SCORERS

Goals	Player	Team	Year
36	Gonzalo Higuain	Napoli	2015-16
35	Gunnar Nordahl	AC Milan	1949-50
34	Gunnar Nordahl	Milan	1950-51
33	Antonio Valentini	Inter Milan	1958-59
31	Giuseppe Meazza	Inter Milan	1929-30

captain Marek Hamsik powering home from Faouzi Ghoulam's cross.

Higuain flashed a shot over the bar minutes after the restart, but made amends in the 52nd minute with his 34th goal of the campaign after sending Allan's low cross past Massimo Zappino.

A packed San Paolo erupted, but more was to come from Higuain.

He had his second of the night, and record-equalling 35th when he

glanced Jose Callejon's cross past Zappino just after the hour.

When Higuain hit his third of the night ten minutes later, it was a wonder strike from outside the area that he took on the turn and gave Zappino no chance.

Higuain added: "I feel very proud, because everyone helped me to achieve this feat. I knew I could do it, but I had to stay calm. In the first half, I didn't manage to but in the second I did."

"We want to think back on the extraordinary season we've just had. The team and the whole city deserve to soak it all up," said Higuain. "It's difficult to comprehend but I hope it will all sink in soon. After I scored the third goal and the whole team came to hug me, I felt immense joy."

Ecstatic fans showed their appreciation at the San Paolo with a rendition of a song only usually reserved for Maradona.

"Oh mamma, mamma, mamma... I've seen Higuain," sang the crowd. Reports in Italy say it has not been sung at the stadium since Maradona's time at the club, and Higuain understood the significance.

"This season I have felt the love. I feel loved here more than I did at any other club I've been," added Higuain.

Foxes steal a draw

AFP, London

Danny Drinkwater struck a stunning late equaliser as Leicester City concluded their fairytale Premier League campaign with a 1-1 draw against outgoing champions Chelsea at Stamford Bridge on Sunday.

Cesc Fabregas's penalty put Chelsea ahead, but Drinkwater crowned his return from suspension by levelling with a dipping 25-yard effort in the 82nd minute to ensure that manager Claudio Ranieri did not taste defeat on his return to his former club.

Beaten only three times over the whole campaign, Leicester finished the season 10 points clear of second-place Arsenal, with long-time pursuers Tottenham Hotspur a point back in third.

"Ten points [clear], I can say we were so consistent during all the season and the other teams no, because [they] go up, go down, go up, go down," Ranieri told his post-match press conference.

"That was one of our strengths. Every match was for us the last match and we played with this kind of winning mentality. Also today, we wanted to win. We wanted to do something. And we are all happy because we lost just three matches during the season."

Hamilton, Rosberg crash out

AFP, Barcelona

World championship leader Nico Rosberg and his Mercedes team-mate Lewis Hamilton collided and retired in a sensational crash on the opening lap at Sunday's Spanish Grand Prix.

The two were scrapping for the lead and came together in a fashion that wrecked the team's hopes of another one-two triumph and revived the bitter memories of their collision in the 2014 Belgian Grand Prix.

"We have spoken to both drivers and it is not a clear cut decision - we have lost 43 points after lots of effort by the team in the last few difficult weeks," said Toto Wolff, the team chief.

Non-executive director Niki Lauda said: "It is stupid. We could have won this race... Lewis was too aggressive."

"I need to talk to them myself, listen to the explanations, and then we will see...."

Pique, Alba hail fighting spirit

REUTERS, Barcelona



Defender Gerard Pique praised Barcelona's resilience after they ended an emotion-filled season by clinching top spot in La Liga with a 3-0 victory at Granada on Saturday.

Barca were nine points clear at the start of April before three successive defeats set up a thrilling three-way race with Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid who eventually had to settle for second and third respectively.

"We've had to win the league twice, we were so far ahead and we thought we had it wrapped up," Pique said after a hat-trick from Luis Suarez secured their 24th La Liga crown.

"Then it looked as if we'd lost it although we always had it in our hands. Twenty years ago Barca would have lost this league because we've drowned in our own pessimism many times."

"This generation has changed that, this is a winning team, one that can stand up and be counted, a team you can rely on."

Barca left back Jordi Alba hit out at the critics that emerged in April.

"I hope you're all happy although I know that a few of you won't be," he said. "Today is a day to celebrate with the Barca fans who stayed with us in the bad times."

"I suffered because I knew we couldn't slip up again. We deserve this title and those of us who have lived it on the inside appreciate it."

"We have won trophies almost every year and that's for a reason," added Alba.

Suarez said: "We showed we deserve to be champions. We have suffered but Barca are made for this, for winning trophies."

Andy wins Rome on birthday

AFP, Rome



Britain's Andy Murray celebrated his 29th birthday in style Sunday by winning his maiden Rome Masters title with a hard-fought win over disgruntled world number one Novak Djokovic.

Murray, the number two seed who suffered defeat to Djokovic in last week's Masters final in Madrid, prevailed 6-3, 6-3 in one hour, 35 minutes.

From a total of 32 previous meetings it is only Murray's 10th win over tennis's man of the moment.

"Well done Andy, you did a great job today. You were just too good," Djokovic said on court after the final.

It is only Murray's third clay-court title, after his maiden victories on the red dirt in Munich and Madrid last year, but comes in timely fashion just two weeks before the start of the French Open at Roland Garros.

Murray, who cruised into the final with an easy semi-final win over French lucky loser Lucas Pouille early on Saturday, came into the match fresher after Djokovic was forced into a three-hour epic by Japan's Kei

Nishikori later on Saturday.

It was the third three-set match he had played leading up to the final, and amid the challenging circumstances of intermittent rain, it did not take long for nerves to fray.

Murray piled on the pressure from the start, earning a trio of break chances in Djokovic's first service game.

Djokovic saved them all, but two games later Murray grabbed the first break of the match when he forced Djokovic into a backhand error for 3-1.

The slippery conditions were not to Djokovic's liking and Murray, who had no complaints about the weather, tried to capitalise.

He won 16 of his first 19 service points, taking a 5-2 lead with an ace down the T, and then wrapped up the opener with a sublime forehand drop-shot winner to wrap up the set in 46 minutes.

Djokovic's game, and nerves began to come apart in a second set that saw umbrellas come out and hoods pulled up due to the occasional spattering of rain.

Leading 2-1, Djokovic complained to the referee about the lack of a rain stoppage and minutes



Andy Murray (R) defied the odds and bested Novak Djokovic for only the second time in their last 14 matches to win the Italian Open final in Rome yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

later, still battling to win the fourth game, he began remonstrating with himself.

The Serbian skimmed his racket off the ground in another angry gesture after Murray got the first break of the set in game five.

From then on, Djokovic's game fell apart as Murray built on his noticeably superior serve, adding variety with drops shots and volleys at the net.

Murray broke in the seventh game of the second set for a 4-3 lead, prompting Djokovic -- from his chair -- to start demanding a halt to the game due to rain.

He was heard saying he "don't want to play any more", adding: "My friend, it's been raining for an hour."

Djokovic underlined the threat of injuries playing in such conditions, but his pleas went unheard.

Zlatan leaves on a high

Breaks PSG's single season scoring record

AFP, Paris



Zlatan Ibrahimovic headed home a minute from time to break Paris Saint-Germain's single season Ligue 1 scoring record in a 4-0 rout of Nantes

on Saturday. With the title long wrapped up and a French Cup final against bitter rivals Marseille to come a week later, the night was all about Ibrahimovic and his quest to break the 37-goal single season PSG record at the Parc des Princes.

Starting the game with 36 goals, the Swedish striker equalled the 1997-98 club record of Argentine Carlos Bianchi in the 18th minute with his 37th of the season.

Ibrahimovic then netted his record 38th a minute from time from Javier Pastore's cross to end a match-long quest that looked set to frustrate him.

"I'm feeling very emotional. Today is a very special day after four years together winning lots of trophies," said Ibrahimovic.

"Thank you 'Ibracadabra', these four years will remain in my heart."

Ibrahimovic said he hoped PSG would keep on winning, adding: "Without Ibra it's difficult, but it's possible!"

It was the perfect end to his last match at the Parc in a PSG shirt before leaving for pastures new and he was immediately substituted, but not

before his children ran onto the pitch wearing PSG replica shirts bearing the names King and Legend on their backs -- a reference to Ibrahimovic's Friday tweet in announcing his departure: "I came like a king, left like a legend."

If anyone had been in any doubt who the night was about, that was surely dispelled in the 10th minute when the ground as one rose to applaud their talismanic import.

Wearing the number 10 jersey, Ibrahimovic acknowledged the crowd as Nantes obligingly waited for almost a minute before taking a free-kick.

The visiting defence seemed to oblige in more ways than one against a team clearly intent solely on setting up their centre-forward to score.

Ibrahimovic notched his first goal as he played the ball out wide on the right to Angel Di Maria, before sprint-

ing to the back stick where he was able to chest home the Argentine's cross on his knees from six yards out without a yellow-shirted defender in sight.

PSG's desire to tee up their stand-in captain for the night took on comic proportions 10 minutes from half-time. When faced with a clear shooting opportunity inside the box, Di Maria wiggled and twisted in trying to find Ibrahimovic rather than strike at goal.



Zlatan Ibrahimovic left the Parc des Princes for the last time accompanied by his two sons, whose jersey's had 'Legend' and 'King' emblazoned across the back in tribute to their father.

PHOTO: AFP

Rusty Bolt secures win

AFP, George Town



World 100 and 200-meter record holder Usain Bolt of Jamaica opened his 2016 season Saturday with a 100m victory in 10.05 seconds at the Cayman Invitational.

Making his fist strides on the road to the Rio de Janeiro Olympics in August, Bolt crossed the finish line .07 of a second ahead of American runner-up Dentarius Locke.

"It wasn't the best, but as long as I come out injury free, that's the key thing," Bolt said.

"I didn't feel as smooth as I wanted to, but as I always say, it's hard to just come into your first race and do extra well."

Jamaican Kemar Bailey-Cole, who trains with Bolt at Racers Track Club, was third in 10.18 with a light tailwind of 0.1m/sec.

Bolt is planning his campaign with the aim of defending his 100m, 200m and 4x100m Olympic crowns in Brazil, seeking an unprecedented third gold medal in a row in all three events in what he has said will be his final Olympics.

Bolt, who races in Ostrava next week, said he is not worried with his form.

"It's just more races," Bolt said. "My coach will determine what I need to work on, but right now it's just more races. The more races I run, the better I will feel so I am just looking forward to running more races and see what happens."

"I am never worried. I've been in worse situations. It's just race rusty. I can tell. I could feel the difference from when you are flying from when you are not."

The 29-year-old superstar had not competed since winning three gold medals at last August's World Championships in Beijing.

Bolt, who owns the 100m world record at 9.58 seconds and the world 200m record of 19.19, was off his pre-meet projection of a victory in 9.91.

On the other side of the world, American Justin Gatlin showed he remains one of Bolt's biggest obstacles to Olympic glory with a 9.94 second run to win the 100m at the Diamond League meeting in Shanghai.