

Ruthless Man City humiliate Chelsea

AFP, Manchester

Premier League Sergio Agüero grabbed a hat-trick as Manchester City scored four times inside 25 minutes to thrash Chelsea 6-0 and leapfrog Liverpool again to top spot in the Premier League on goal difference on Sunday.

Agüero should have had even more than three as the Argentine missed a glorious early chance and hit the bar in the second-half in a humiliating afternoon for Maurizio Sarri's men.

Raheem Sterling started and ended the scoring and Ilkay Gundogan also netted in the first quarter of the game as City ended what could have been a testing week with a trip to Everton in between the visits of Arsenal and Chelsea with maximum points.

Manchester City's all-time leading goalscorer Agüero should be "cherished", Sterling said after the match.

"It was a terrific performance from the team -- the manager set us up and got us

ready for the game," Sterling told Sky Sports.

"Sergio is a player we depend on. You saw with his first strike putting the ball in the top corner -- you have to cherish players like that."

"It was just a win and another three points. The most important thing is to get three points."

Man-of-the-match Agüero, speaking about a glaring first-half miss, told Sky Sports: "I don't know, sometimes it happens. The next one I scored. The important thing is to get the ball and for the team to win."

On equalling Alan Shearer's record for Premier League hat-tricks, he added: "I have to continue the same way, but it's important to win."

Earlier, Mauricio Pochettino saluted Tottenham's fighting spirit as they kept alive their bid to gate-crash the Premier League title race with a 3-1 win over Leicester on Sunday.

Pochettino's side took the lead through Davinson Sanchez's first goal for the club, but they were indebted to Hugo Lloris for saving Jamie Vardy's spot-kick after the interval at Wembley.



Manchester City striker Sergio Agüero scored a second consecutive hat-trick in a 6-0 demolition of Chelsea during their encounter at the Etihad yesterday, in the process tying Alan Shearer's record of 11 Premier League trebles. PHOTO: REUTERS

From a veteran's domain to an apprentice's playground

SPORTS REPORTER

BCL Veteran striker Rokonzaman Kanchan's eligibility to play in both the professional and semi-professional league in the same season might raise a few questions about the standard of the Bangladesh Championship League (BCL), the semi-professional football league which has recently become a platform for young players to showcase their talents.

Former national team striker Kanchan was seen captaining Dhaka City FC during their 1-0 loss in the opening match of the seventh edition of the BCL against Farshganj just two months after he had turned up in top-flight football for champions Bashundhara Kings during last December's Independence Cup.

"According to the laws of the FIFA players' status, a player can play in two leagues under an association, subject to terminating his contract with the previous club or playing on loan if the transfer window is open," said Zaber Bin Taher Ansari, the manager of Bangladesh's professional football league.

"Kanchan scrapped his contract with Bashundhara Kings and signed for Dhaka City FC, so he has no barrier to playing in the semi-professional football league after representing Bashundhara Kings in the same season," added Ansari.

"I have decided to play for Dhaka

City FC because it is a new team and I want to make them champions. Then I will be a part of history," said Kanchan, who hit 11 goals and led Bashundhara Kings to promotion to the Bangladesh Premier League [BPL] last season.

The country's semi-professional



A shot of the action from the opening match of the seventh edition of the Bangladesh Championship League between Dhaka City FC and Farshganj SC in Kamalapur yesterday. PHOTO: BFF

football league was introduced in 2012 -- five years after the top-tier professional football league was introduced -- and turned into a stage for veterans who either failed to get contracts with top-tier clubs or resumed playing after a few years away from the sport.

However, the complexion of the league has changed a lot over the

past three seasons and it is now considered a platform that talented youngsters can use to draw attention from top-tier clubs. Names such as Matin Mia, Nabib Newaj Jibon, Rahmat Mia and Sushanta Tripura are among the graduates of the BCL

were given tickets to play in the Bangladesh Premier League.

"Yes, there were a few young players in the first two to three editions of the league but the BCL is now full of young players due to the absence of foreign recruits," said Victoria SC sports secretary AKM Nuruzzaman. "Last season nearly 10 players left Victoria SC to join clubs from the BPL."

"Last season we roped in some young players after the completion of the Senior Division Football League and we produced good results to finish third, but this time around we had to gather players from other sources as the lower division leagues were not held," Nuruzzaman continued, adding that they roped in more than 50 per cent of their players from lower leagues each season over the past couple of years as promising recruits would move on to the top-tier league.

Professional Football League manager Ansari also informed that BPL clubs have to pay Tk 25,000-50,000 in compensation if they rope in new players from the non-professional First, Second and Third Division Football League or other district leagues.

"Last season no BPL club had paid any compensation to lower clubs although it did happen two seasons prior," said Ansari. "However, BCL clubs are regularly paying compensation, ranging from Tk 10,000-50,000 as they are required to rope in at least 10 players under professional contracts."

and not only have they been roped in by BPL clubs but they have also made it into the national team.

Victoria Sporting Club have been playing in the BCL since its inaugural edition and they finished in third place last season, narrowly missing out on promotion to the top-tier while champions Bashundhara Kings and runners-up NoFEL SC

Cavani also out of United clash

AFP, Paris



Edinson Cavani will sit out the first leg of Paris Saint-Germain's Champions League encounter with Manchester United, the club confirmed on Sunday saying the striker had sustained damage to a tendon in his hip.

PSG are already missing superstar striker Neymar, sidelined until at least April with a foot injury, while Manchester United have won ten of their eleven games under new coach Ole Gunnar Solskjaer.

French sports daily L'Equipe reported earlier on Sunday that a medical had revealed a torn right-thigh muscle for Cavani, but PSG reported shortly afterwards the problem was the right hip.

"The tests carried out have shown an injury in the right hip. The treatment and the amount of recovery time will depend on how he reacts over the next few days," PSG said on their website.

L'Equipe suggested Cavani would also miss the return leg March 6.

Earlier Sunday Tuchel described Cavani's situation, stemming from a fiercely converted penalty on Saturday, as bleak.

"There is no good news for Edi this morning," he said. "In my opinion the news is not going to be very good," Tuchel said.

"It will be very difficult for him to play," he predicted.

The Uruguayan has scored 17 times in the French league and twice in the Champions League this season.

PSG visit Old Trafford on Tuesday for the first leg of their encounter in the round-of-16, the stage at which the French champions went out in the last two seasons.

Tuchel said there was good news for another of his key players, midfielder Marco Verratti who started against Bordeaux after three weeks out with an ankle problem.

"Verratti can play and will play," said the German coach. "I'm worried because we are missing key players," said Tuchel.



Paris Saint-Germain striker Edinson Cavani collapsed to the floor after converting a penalty against Bordeaux during a Ligue 1 clash on Saturday. FILE PHOTO: AFP

We're relishing PSG clash, says Smalling

AFP, Manchester

Manchester United's blistering form has left them full of confidence and relishing Tuesday's Champions League clash against Paris St Germain, according to defender Chris Smalling.

"We all knew the run of fixtures we have coming up and we are all relishing that," Smalling told United's website after a 3-0 win over Fulham. "We knew today [Saturday] it was about character and if we can get up for PSG and Liverpool, it was about coming here and making sure we got the three points. The mood going into PSG is as good as ever."

United's fine run has coincided with the return to form of midfielder Paul Pogba under Solskjaer, with the World Cup winner scoring twice at Fulham to take his league tally to 11.

"Paul has got everything, hasn't he? And he's showcasing that," Smalling added. "A big reason why we are in this form we are in is down to Paul, because he's not just scoring goals, he is assisting goals and he is controlling games as well, so we are very lucky to have a player like him in our team."

SHORT CORNER

Atletico highlight derby controversies with screenshots

Atletico Madrid questioned three potentially vital VAR decisions from their 3-1 defeat to Real Madrid, posting screenshots of the incidents on social media.

Although coach Diego Simeone insisted in his post-match news conference that VAR was not to blame for the defeat, Atletico players were angered by several contentious calls during the game, which the club has attempted to shine a light on.

The first controversial moment was the decision to award Madrid a penalty when Jose Gimenez tripped Vinicius Junior on the left side of the box, with VAR officials backing referee Javier Estrada Fernandez pointing to the spot. However, the screenshot of the incident that Atletico uploaded on Twitter appears to display contact first occurring outside the area.

Simeone's men were then denied an equaliser when Alvaro Morata was deemed to be offside before beating Thibaut Courtois, but the club's post seems to show the

former Madrid striker being played inside by Ramos.

Morata was also involved in the third incident, not getting a penalty despite Casemiro appearing to make contact with him in the box, as they attempted to highlight in their final image.

English academies have left German behind Premier League academies have left their German rivals far behind, according to Borussia Dortmund boss Michael Zorc, with Bundesliga clubs now scouting British talent in the hope of unearthing future stars.

"As a German club, we would favour, of course, identifying and signing German talent or developing them in our academy," said Dortmund's sports director. "But when it gets to absolutely top talents, it's more and more difficult to find them in Germany, to be honest."

"Go back say five to ten years, there was a time that English clubs were keen to sign German players," said Zorc. "But in the meantime, we have the feeling that the education and development of youth players in the English academies is quite good, to be honest." --AFP



Winners of the 2nd Max Group Cup Golf Tournament, which began on February 7 with a total of 676 amateur golfers, pose with their trophies at the Golf Garden on Saturday. Quarter Master General of Bangladesh Army Lieutenant General Md. Shamsul Haque distributed prizes as chief guest while Army Golf Club president Major General SM Shafiuddin Ahmed and Max Group Chairman Gulam Mohammed Alomgir were also present. PHOTO: COLLECTED

Klopp is calm, says Robertson

AFP, London



Liverpool defender Andrew Robertson has laughed off suggestions that manager Jurgen Klopp is feeling the strain after the wobble that allowed Manchester City to return to the Premier League summit.

Back-to-back 1-1 draws to Leicester and West Ham enabled City to edge ahead on goal difference before Liverpool reclaimed top spot with a 3-0 win over Bournemouth on Saturday as they chase a first league title since 1990.

But, Robertson said, the German manager is unflustered, despite seeing their lead disappear. "He has been calm and the backroom staff have been a different class," said the Scotland captain. "They are the team behind the

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ANDY ROBERTSON
LIVERPOOL DEFENDER

team and they are the ones who keep us going and positive.

"When people say he is nervous or we are nervous it couldn't be further from the truth. He's probably been more 'smiley'. He is just trying to get us going and it's obviously worked.

"In terms of the players, we've not seen any difference in any of the staff and that feeds into the players and we've not changed. Whether we draw, win or lose it doesn't change."

The performance against Bournemouth, who have now lost nine away matches in succession and have suffered 13 defeats in the past 18 matches in all competitions, showed a return to the high-energy pressing game and clinical counter-attacking that has been so successful for Liverpool.

Liverpool fly to Marbella on Monday for warm-weather training with their season firmly back on track.

"I don't think it's a message to any other team or anything," said 24-year-old Robertson. "It's maybe a message to our fans and everyone connected to the club that we're here. We fought for everything and got the result that we needed."

কামনা
এবং
কবিরের ভিটা-মাটি
- হায়দার বসুনিয়া

এবারের ২১শে বই মেলায় বিশেষ আকর্ষণ
হায়দার বসুনিয়া ও শাহাজাদা বসুনিয়া'র দু'টি করে

চার'টি বই এখন একুশের বই মেলায় বিশ্ব সাহিত্য ভবন স্টল নং ৫০৪-৫০৭ এ পাওয়া যাচ্ছে

A CRUEL FATHER
Shahazada Basunia

THE CREDIT CARDS
- by Shahazada Basunia