

SPORTS

Deulofeu hat trick fires Watford to 5-1 win at Cardiff

Newcastle plunge Huddersfield closer to the drop

LONDON, Feb 23, (RTRS): Newcastle United's 2-0 win over 10-man Huddersfield Town on Saturday eased their Premier League safety fears and sent the Terriers hurtling ever faster towards relegation to the Championship.

The top-flight's basement club looked lost again as soon as captain Tommy Smith was given a 20th-minute red card and second-half goals from Salomon Rondon and Ayoze Perez sent them spinning to a 13th defeat in their last 14 league matches.

A fourth straight league loss for Huddersfield's new manager Jan Siewert left them stranded six points behind Fulham and 14 adrift of 17th-placed Cardiff City as Newcastle, with a third straight home win under

Rafa Benitez, moved up to 14th.

Miguel Almiron, making his first start for Newcastle after his club record 20 million-pound (\$26.1 million) move from Atlanta United, received a standing



Perez

ovation at St James' Park when he came off after tormenting Huddersfield's defence for 80 minutes.

After chipping over Jonas Lössl and hitting the post, only for Rondon to strike the same upright moments later, the livewire Paraguayan was brought down by Smith's lunging, over-the-top challenge which earned him a straight red card.

SOCCER

Only their finishing – they hit the woodwork four times and were denied by brilliant saves from Lössl – let them down as Newcastle dominated.

A minute after the break, Rondon broke the deadlock with a low strike before laying on the 52nd-minute clincher from Spaniard Perez.

Cardiff City 1, Watford 5

Spaniard Gerard Deulofeu bagged a hat trick as Watford hammered lowly Cardiff City 5-1 to move up to seventh place.

Deulofeu put Javi Gracia's side ahead in the 18th minute with a well-placed finish after a mistake from Cardiff defender Bruno Manga.

Cardiff should have had a penalty when Daryl Janmaat's rash challenge brought down Josh Murphy but Watford ran away with the game after the break.

Deulofeu made it 2-0 with a clinical finish, rounding Cardiff keeper Neil Etheridge after a swift break in the 61st minute.

The former Barcelona and Everton winger completed his hat trick after more poor defending from Neil Warnock's side – Harry Arta gave the ball away in midfield and Deulofeu's calm finish gave him Watford's first top-flight hat trick since Mark Falco in 1986.

Deulofeu then turned creator, bursting into the box and unselfishly teeing up Troy Deeney for a simple tap-in as Watford romped into a four-goal advantage.

Cardiff, who are 17th and could fall back into the bottom three after this weekend's games, pulled a goal back through defender Sol Bamba, who bundled the ball in following a scramble at a corner.

But Watford added further punishment with Deeney's second in stoppage time after good work from Will

Bayern pip Hertha, join Dortmund at top

Moenchengladbach lose further ground in title race with home loss

BERLIN, Feb 23, (RTRS): Champions Bayern Munich needed a second-half goal from defender Javi Martinez to edge past visitors Hertha Berlin 1-0 on Saturday and join leaders Borussia Dortmund at the top of the Bundesliga.

The Bavarians, seven points behind Dortmund a few weeks ago, have now won 10 of their last 11 league games to draw level on 51 points but Bayern stay second on goal difference

and Dortmund could reclaim the outright lead on Sunday if they avoid defeat when they host an in-form Bayer Leverkusen.

Bayern, who drew 0-0 at Liverpool earlier this week in their Champions League round-of-16 first leg, were in complete control but lacked clinical finishing as Hertha waited to counter-attack.

"Today we won a difficult game and it was all about the victory," said Bayern coach Niko Kovac.

"We had problems in the first half and at the end of the day it was a set piece that decided this game. We had also worked very hard in Liverpool in midweek and the lads now deserve two days' rest. Overall I am satisfied with the performance."

Bayern's Joshua Kimmich almost scored an own goal when he attempted to clear a Davie Selke effort on the line only to mis-hit the ball, which luckily rolled wide, in the 57th.

Five minutes after Hertha's biggest chance, however, Spaniard Martinez headed the hosts in front from a James Rodriguez corner to settle their nerves.

Hertha were left with 10 men when Karim Rekik lost his temper and hit striker Robert Lewandowski in the 84th minute following a challenge outside the Hertha box.

There was also bad news for Bayern, with winger Kingsley Coman, recently recovered from an ankle injury, being taken off with a suspected thigh injury nine minutes after coming on in the 58th.

"We will have to wait for further checks to see about Kingsley Coman," said Kovac. "I hope it is not too bad."

Third-placed Borussia Moenchengladbach lost further ground in the title race with a 3-0 home loss to VfL Wolfsburg, their third straight game without a win that left them stuck on 43 points.

Schalke 04 slumped to a 3-0 defeat against Mainz 05, days after their spirited performance in a 3-2 defeat to Manchester City in the Champions League, to remain in



Manchester City's Steph Houghton lifts the trophy after her side won the the FA Women's Continental League Cup Final against Arsenal, at Bramall Lane in Sheffield, England, Feb 23. (AP)

Hughes.

"It was a very good performance," said Watford boss Gracia.

"To win here is not easy. To win like we did today was outstanding. I am very proud of all my players," added the Spanish manager.

"We found the spaces and scored different goals – in counter-attack and in possession games," he added. Cardiff manager Neil Warnock said his players had been fuming over the denied penalty when they came in 1-0 down at the break.

"We got mauled in the end. It looks bad in the paper. I have never seen the players like that at half-time," he said.

"Everyone was talking about the penalty that hasn't been given. Nobody can understand it. Decisions like that change the game. I can't understand why it wasn't given, it's a blatant penalty."

"It's no excuse for conceding five but everyone in the game knows it changes things. If you can't give decisions like that at this level you shouldn't be refereeing."

West Ham 3, Fulham 1

Fulham fell deeper into relegation trouble with a 3-1 Premier League defeat by West Ham United at Lon-

don Stadium.

Claudio Ranieri's 19th-placed side made the ideal start, grabbing the lead in the third minute with former Liverpool forward Ryan Babel scoring from close range after he had earlier missed a golden chance.

There was controversy about West Ham's equalizer when Mexican striker Javier Hernandez stooped to

head in from close range but replays suggested the ball went in off his arm.

Issa Diop's first Premier League goal, with a header five minutes before the break, put West Ham in charge and while Fulham produced some decent football after the break, they rarely threatened.

Marko Arnautovic and Manuel

Lanzini made their returns for West Ham as substitutes.

But it was not until stoppage time that the Hammers made sure of the win as Michail Antonio powerfully headed home a cross from Arnautovic.

Not surprisingly, Ranieri was upset about West Ham's equalizer.

"We created very good chances and it was a pity that the referee didn't see the handball. VAR is very important for next season," said the Italian.

"But we never give up. We concentrate now for the next match. It's important to recover very soon the energy and psychologically as well."

"I change so many times, five at the back, four, to try to find a solution. But when the other teams have more quality and more experience it's very tough. We continue to try to find the solution," he said.

West Ham manager Manuel Pellegrini admitted that Hernandez's goal should have been ruled out.

"From my position I couldn't see the handball, I have seen it since and it is handball. Nobody saw it very clearly at the time, there was not too many complaints. I don't think that the goal decided the game," he said.



Newcastle United's Salomon Rondon with a diving header against Huddersfield Town during their English Premier League soccer match at St James' Park in Newcastle, England on Feb 23. (AP)

Atalanta's European hopes hit

Impressive Milan close gap on Inter

MILAN, Feb 23, (Agencies): AC Milan continued their impressive run of form as second-half goals gave them a 3-0 win over Empoli in Serie A.

Gennaro Gattuso's fourth-placed side are now unbeaten in their last eight league matches and the latest victory moved them within a point of third-placed Inter Milan.

Polish striker Krzysztof Piatek, who has made an explosive start to his time at the club, put Milan in front at the San Siro with his seventh goal in five games since joining from Genoa in January.

Piatek, who had been too isolated in the first half, reacted well four minutes after the interval to slide the ball home after a neat passing move from the Rossoneri.

Two minutes later Franck Kessie doubled the lead for Milan with a deft chip after a fine run and through ball from Spanish winger Samu Castillejo.

The lively Castillejo added the third, meeting a low cross from Andrea Conti with an angled side-foot finish.

It could have been four for Milan when Fabio Borini had the ball in the net but the effort was disallowed for offside following a VAR review.

Serie A leaders Juventus visit Bologna on Sunday while second-placed Napoli travel to Parma.

Inter will hope to regain their four-point advantage over Milan when they play at Fiorentina on Sunday.

Atalanta lost ground in the race for a Champions League spot after a 2-0 defeat at Torino.

Goals either side of the break from Armando Izzo and Iago Falque consigned Atalanta to its second successive loss and left it seven points behind AC Milan, which currently occupies fourth place and the final Champions League qualifying berth.

Fifth-placed Roma can cut the gap to Milan to one point with a win at Frosinone later. Milan won 3-0 against Empoli on Friday.

Torino, which have European ambitions of their own, moved level on points with Atalanta and Lazio following another superb defensive display. It was their fifth successive match without conceding.

Torino broke the deadlock three minutes before half-time. A corner ricocheted around the box and, although Atalanta goalkeeper Etrit Berisha made a save, the ball came to Izzo and he finished it off from close range.

The home side doubled their tally less than a minute after the interval as Soualiho Meite put in a cross from the left for Iago Falque to drill into the bottom right corner.



Munich's Serge Gnabry (left), and Hertha's Karim Rekik challenge for the ball during a German Bundesliga soccer match between Bayern Munich and Hertha BSC Berlin in Munich, Germany on Feb 23. (AP)

British Soccer Results/Standings

LONDON, Feb 23, (RTRS): British soccer results on Saturday.

| English Premier League | | |
|------------------------|---|-------------|
| Burnley | 2 | Tottenham 1 |
| Bournemouth | 1 | Wolves 0 |
| Newcastle | 2 | H'field 1 |
| Cardiff | 1 | Watford 5 |
| WHU | 3 | Fulham 1 |
| Leicester | 1 | Palace 4 |

| Championship | | |
|--------------|---|-------------|
| Birmingham | 2 | Blackburn 2 |
| Brentford | 5 | Hull 1 |
| Leeds | 2 | Bolton 1 |
| M'boro | 2 | QPR 0 |
| Millwall | 1 | Preston 3 |
| Norwich | 3 | Bristol 2 |
| Reading | 1 | Rotherham 1 |
| Sheff Wed | 3 | Swansea 1 |
| Stoke | 1 | Villa 1 |
| Wigan | 1 | Ipswich 1 |
| WBA | 0 | Sheff Utd 1 |

| Scottish Premiership | | |
|----------------------|---|--------------|
| Hearts | 1 | St Mirren 0 |
| Livingston | 1 | Kilmarnock 1 |
| St Johnstone | 0 | Aberdeen 2 |

British Soccer Standings

| English Premier League | | | | | | |
|------------------------|----|----|---|----|----|----|
| | P | W | D | L | GF | GA |
| Man City | 27 | 21 | 2 | 4 | 74 | 20 |
| Liverpool | 26 | 20 | 5 | 1 | 59 | 15 |
| Tottenham | 27 | 20 | 0 | 7 | 55 | 27 |
| Man Utd | 26 | 15 | 6 | 5 | 52 | 35 |
| Arsenal | 26 | 15 | 5 | 6 | 53 | 37 |
| Chelsea | 26 | 15 | 5 | 6 | 45 | 29 |
| Watford | 27 | 11 | 7 | 9 | 39 | 35 |
| Wolves | 27 | 11 | 7 | 9 | 35 | 34 |
| WHU | 27 | 10 | 6 | 11 | 35 | 40 |
| B'mouth | 27 | 10 | 4 | 13 | 38 | 48 |
| Everton | 27 | 9 | 6 | 12 | 36 | 39 |
| Leicester | 27 | 9 | 5 | 13 | 32 | 38 |
| Palace | 27 | 8 | 6 | 13 | 31 | 35 |
| Burnley | 27 | 8 | 6 | 13 | 31 | 48 |
| Newcastle | 27 | 7 | 7 | 13 | 24 | 34 |
| Brighton | 26 | 7 | 6 | 13 | 28 | 39 |
| Cardiff | 27 | 7 | 4 | 16 | 25 | 52 |

| | | | | | | |
|---------|----|---|---|----|----|----|
| Saints | 26 | 5 | 9 | 12 | 28 | 44 |
| Fulham | 27 | 4 | 5 | 18 | 26 | 61 |
| H'field | 27 | 2 | 5 | 20 | 14 | 50 |

| Championship | | | | | | |
|--------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| | P | W | D | L | GF | GA |
| Norwich | 34 | 19 | 9 | 6 | 68 | 44 |
| Sheff Utd | 34 | 18 | 7 | 8 | 59 | 34 |
| Leeds | 33 | 19 | 7 | 7 | 55 | 37 |
| WBA | 34 | 17 | 9 | 8 | 67 | 43 |
| Boro | 33 | 15 | 12 | 6 | 38 | 24 |
| Bristol | 32 | 15 | 8 | 9 | 42 | 33 |
| Derby | 32 | 14 | 9 | 9 | 43 | 37 |
| Birmingham | 33 | 11 | 14 | 8 | 51 | 42 |
| Nott Forest | 33 | 11 | 14 | 8 | 46 | 38 |
| Preston | 34 | 12 | 11 | 11 | 53 | 48 |
| Villa | 34 | 10 | 15 | 9 | 57 | 45 |
| Swansea | 33 | 12 | 8 | 13 | 43 | 42 |
| Hull | 33 | 12 | 8 | 13 | 46 | 44 |
| Blackburn | 34 | 11 | 11 | 12 | 45 | 52 |
| Sheff Wed | 33 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 39 | 48 |
| Brentford | 32 | 11 | 10 | 11 | 55 | 44 |
| Stoke | 34 | 9 | 14 | 11 | 35 | 42 |
| QPR | 33 | 11 | 6 | 16 | 41 | 52 |
| Wigan | 33 | 9 | 8 | 16 | 33 | 47 |
| Millwall | 33 | 8 | 10 | 15 | 36 | 48 |
| Reading | 34 | 6 | 12 | 16 | 35 | 50 |
| Rotherham | 34 | 5 | 15 | 14 | 34 | 50 |
| Bolton | 34 | 6 | 8 | 20 | 22 | 53 |
| Ipswich | 34 | 3 | 12 | 19 | 26 | 57 |

| Scottish Premiership | | | | | | |
|----------------------|----|----|---|----|----|----|
| | P | W | D | L | GF | GA |
| Celtic | 26 | 19 | 3 | 4 | 60 | 14 |
| Rangers | 26 | 15 | 7 | 4 | 55 | 20 |
| Aberdeen | 27 | 15 | 5 | 7 | 45 | 31 |
| Kilmarnock | 27 | 13 | 7 | 7 | 37 | 27 |
| Hearts | 27 | 13 | 5 | 9 | 33 | 32 |
| Hibernian | 27 | 10 | 8 | 9 | 40 | 30 |
| St Johnstone | 27 | 11 | 5 | 11 | 27 | 34 |
| Motherwell | 26 | 11 | 3 | 12 | 29 | 35 |
| Livingston | 27 | 9 | 7 | 11 | 28 | 34 |
| Dundee FC | 27 | 4 | 6 | 17 | 24 | 56 |
| Hamilton | 26 | 5 | 3 | 18 | 17 | 53 |
| St Mirren | 27 | 3 | 5 | 19 | 20 | 55 |

Note: Standings read as played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against and points.