

Empoli relegated as Genoa stay up

Atalanta & Inter get CL spots on wild final day

MILAN, May 27, (AP) — Inter Milan survived a dramatic end to their Serie A campaign on Sunday to secure a Champions League spot for next season, while Atalanta will make their debut in Europe's top club competition.

Leading 2-1 in the 89th minute against an Empoli team fighting relegation, Inter's defense was in disarray as Danilo D'Ambrosio knocked an Empoli cross against his own crossbar, and soon after Inter goalkeeper Samir Handanovic was forced into a vital save.

When Empoli's goalkeeper went up for a corner and Inter counterattacked, Marcelo Brozovic scored from the halfway line into an empty net and Inter seemed secure. But more drama was to come as the video assistant referee ruled the goal out because Empoli's keeper was fouled as he hurried back to his goal and had Keita Balde — the scorer of Inter's first goal — sent off.

Empoli charged forward again, forcing Handanovic to save a header in the eighth minute of injury time but Inter held on for a 2-1 win — with the second goal from Radja Nainggolan — to secure Champions League football for a second straight year.

Four teams had been fighting for the last two Italian Champions League spots. All won their games as Atalanta



Balde AC Milan

took third and Inter fourth, but none had it easy. Atalanta went a goal down to Sassuolo early on but fought back to win 3-1 after Sassuolo had Domenico Berardi sent off for his part in a brawl.

Fluttered in and out of fourth position throughout the evening thanks to goals elsewhere and their struggles with SPAL in a 3-2 win sealed by two goals from Franck Kessie. However, Inter's tenacity and Atalanta's comeback meant that Milan had to settle for fifth — a point behind Inter and Atalanta — and the Europa League.

Roma finished in sixth. It had started the day an outside contender and stayed that way despite an 89th-minute goal from Diego Perotti securing a 2-1 win over Parma. That marked the 616th and last appearance in a Roma shirt for midfielder Daniele de Rossi, who leaves the club after 18 seasons.

Next season Roma will be out of the Champions League for the first time since 2013-14, while Milan's wait to return to the Champions League enters a sixth season.

SOCCER

Further back, Torino beat Lazio 3-1 to secure seventh.

Massimiliano Allegri's reign as Juventus coach finished with a 2-0 loss to Sampdoria, an uncharacteristically flat ending for a coach who oversaw near-total domination of Serie A.

That was the fourth game in a row without a win for Juventus, which have seen a slump in form since they sealed their eighth consecutive Italian title last month.

Sampdoria held Juventus at bay before Gregoire Defrel scored in the 84th minute off a neat one-two with Manolo Gabbiadini. Gianluca Caprari curled a free-kick into the net in added time.

Allegri is leaving at the end of the season, a year before his contract ends, and no successor has been appointed.

Juventus finished with 90 points and an 11-point lead over second-place Napoli.

Empoli's desperate fight against Inter wasn't enough to stay in Serie A, as Genoa stayed up on their superior head-to-head record after earning a valuable point in a 0-0 draw with Fiorentina.

Empoli joined Frosinone and Chievo, who were both already relegated.

Brescia and Lecce have secured promotion from Serie B for next season, with the third promoted team to be decided in playoffs.

No experience needed, Japan opt for WC youth

NARASHINO, Japan, May 27, (AP) — Jun Endo turned 19 a few days ago and is headed to her first Women's World Cup.

The Japan forward has lots of company. Sixteen others on the 23-player roster are also going for the first time.

"I think age doesn't matter when it comes to playing football," Endo said, speaking Japanese at the team's training camp on the outskirts of Tokyo.

"I know that I don't have much experience yet, but I think I'm good at learning quickly. Because I'm younger than other players, I'll work harder. I just try to keep running."

Few people believe Japan will win the World Cup, which opens on June 7 in France. That honor falls to favorites like France, England, Germany and the United States, with a few outsiders like Canada, Spain and Italy starting to be considered.

But beware of Japan, a team known at home as "Nadeshiko," the name of a small flower that is meant to symbolize the ideal Japanese woman.

The country won the World Cup in 2011 and were runners-up in 2015 — both times against the Americans. The coach this time is Asako Takakura, who has taken over from the highly successful Norio Sasaki. Takakura went to the World Cup twice as a player and is the first woman in charge, a fact she does not seem to dwell on.

But some see it as a breakthrough in a country that has few women in corporate board rooms or in the top ranks of government. It also comes as players are pushing FIFA, the governing body of soccer, to upgrade the profile of the women's game.



Tigres captain Guido Pizarro lifts the trophy after defeating Leon in the the final Mexico league championship soccer match in Leon, Mexico on May 26. (AP)

Chelsea challenge Arsenal for European glory

Sarri on shaky ground, Kante a doubt for Europa League final

BAKU, May 27, (RTRS) — When Chelsea meet Arsenal in the Europa League final on the shores of the Caspian Sea on Wednesday, it might be coach Maurizio Sarri's last match in charge despite what appears as a solid first year at Stamford Bridge.

Under the Italian, Chelsea have qualified for the Champions League next season and reached the final of the domestic League Cup before losing in a penalty shootout against Manchester City.

By contrast Arsenal, under Unai Emery in his first season in London, missed out on the four Champions League spots on offer in the Premier League after a late slump in form.

The Gunners must now beat their city rivals in the Olympic Stadium in Azerbaijan's capital Baku to squeeze into Europe's premier competition.

Yet it is Sarri who seems to be on the shakier ground, not least because of Chelsea's record of hiring and firing managers — a dozen, including interim coaches, have come and gone since Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich bought the club in 2003.

Arsenal, by contrast, gave former manager Arsene Wenger 22 years in the job before he made way for Emery.

Furthermore, Chelsea's third-place in the Premier league table might look impressive, but they finished 25 points behind runners-up Liverpool and were thankful that Tottenham Hotspur and Manchester United, along with Arsenal, stumbled badly.

Some Chelsea fans have been very direct in their criticisms of Sarri's tactics and have made it clear to the club's hierarchy who they would

prefer in the dugout next season by chanting the name of former midfielder hero Frank Lampard.

In his first season as a coach, Lampard has steered Derby County to Monday's second-tier playoff final against Aston Villa for a place in the Premier League.

Sarri, who has been linked with the vacant coach's position at Juventus, acknowledged the uncertainty surrounding his future in the run-up to the trip to Baku.

"I have to speak with my club after the final. I want to know if they are happy with me or not," he said.

"I think we had a good season with a lot of problems, of course. We lost two or three matches very badly but we had a good season in the end."

Arsenal vs Chelsea beln SPORTS 1HD, 11HD

22:00 local (Wednesday)

Sarri appeared to be on the ropes in February when Chelsea were thrashed 6-0 in the Premier League by Manchester City, not long after a 4-0 drubbing by Bournemouth.

But Chelsea stabilised while Arsenal went on a miserable run of form late in the season, costing them the chance of leap-frogging bitter rivals Spurs into fourth place.

Arsenal's strike force of Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang and Alexandre Lacazette will fancy their chances against Chelsea's often shaky defence, which will be missing the injured Toni Rudiger.

Defensive midfielder N'Golo Kante is a doubt for Wednesday's Europa League final against Arsenal in Baku after sustaining a knee injury in training over the weekend, according to British media reports.

Wondolowski scores 149th and 150th MLS goals

Shanghai hand Beijing first loss of season

HONG KONG, May 27, (Agencies) — Beijing Guoan's winning start to the Chinese Super League was brought to an end by defending champions Shanghai SIPG, who reduced the gap at the top of the standings to two points with a 2-1 win over the leaders.

Midfielder Cai Huikang headed home 12 minutes from time to earn Vitor Pereira's side victory as Beijing lost for the first time in the 11 games since the start of the season.

Former Chelsea star Oscar had given SIPG the lead when he side-stepped the defence to score 28 minutes into the game, but Yu Dabao's header had pulled Beijing level just before the hour mark only for Cai to give his side the win.

"Everyone will be disappointed but we have to learn from this situation," said Beijing coach Roger Schmidt.

"We never thought we would go through the entire season unbeaten. It has not been easy for our players to win over the last 10 games.

"It is very difficult to win the Chinese Super League and today the players did not let me down. They were always trying to find a way to level the scores when we were behind."

Beijing's defeat means seven-time champions Guangzhou Evergrande also closed the gap at the top as the battle for the title shapes into a three-way fight.

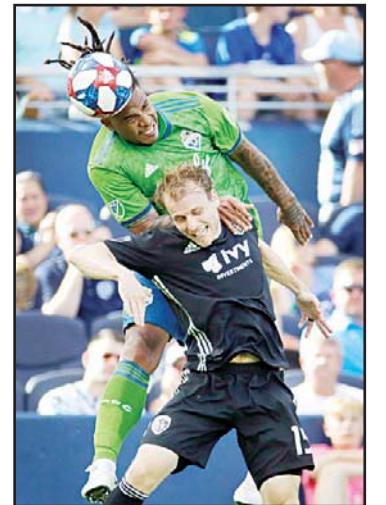
China international Wei Shihao struck to allow Fabio Cannavaro's side to pick up a 1-0 win against Shenzhen FC that moves them to within five points of the top and keeps them five ahead of fourth-placed Shandong Luneng.

Shandong had goals from Marouane Fellaini, Gil and Hao Junmin to thank for their 3-1 over Guangzhou R&F, taking them clear of Jiangsu Suning who slipped to a 3-2 defeat against Hebei CFCC. Chongqing Lifan were held 0-0 by Henan Jianye.

SOCCER

Former Napoli midfielder Marek Hamsik scored his first goal since moving to China as Dalian Yifang claimed their second win in a row, beating struggling Shanghai Shenhua 1-0 and leaving Quique Sanchez Flores' side just above the relegation zone.

Beijing Renhe moved off the bottom after Makhete Diop put his side ahead before an own goal by Zheng Kaimou ensured they were able to pick up a 2-1 win over Tianjin Teda. Tianjin Tianhai, meanwhile, dropped into 16th and last place following their 2-1 loss against Wuhan Zall.



Seattle Sounders defender Roman Torres (top), and Sporting Kansas City defender Seth Sinovic battle for control of the ball during the first half of an MLS soccer match on May 26 in Kansas City, Kan. (AP)

Chris Wondolowski scored his 149th and 150th MLS goals in the San Jose Earthquakes' 2-1 victory over Toronto FC.

The MLS career goals leader scored both from close range.

Wondolowski got a yard's separation from Drew Moor and deftly redirected in Cristian Espinoza's cross in the 37th minute to tie it at 1-1. The go-ahead goal in the 81st minute was a virtual replay, with Espinoza finding Wondolowski in space.

The San Jose striker has six goals in two games. He scored all four goals in a 4-1 victory over Chicago last weekend to surpass Landon Donovan's league record of 145 goals and up his career total to 148.

Richie Laryea opened the scoring for Toronto (5-6-2) in the 28th minute.

San Jose (5-6-2) won for the first time in six road games this season.

Johnny Russell had a hat trick and Sporting Kansas City beat Seattle to snap a seven-game winless streak.

Sporting Kansas City (3-4-5) won for the first time since March 30. Raúl Ruidiaz and Kelvin Leerdam scored for Seattle (7-2-5).

An early goal from Pedrinho was enough to give Corinthians a 1-0 win over city rivals Sao Paulo at the Corinthians arena.

Pedrinho got the only goal of the game after six minutes when his shot from the edge of the box was deflected past the Sao Paulo goalkeeper.

The three points lifts Corinthians over their opponents and into third place in the Serie A table.

Another Sao Paulo club, current champions Palmeiras, lead the league by four points from Atletico Mineiro.



Roma's Edin Dzeko (top right), heads the ball past Parma's Simone Iacoponi during the Italian Serie A soccer match between Roma and Parma at the Olympic Stadium in Rome on May 26. (AP)