

File photo shows Alex Ferguson (c) celebrates with the team winning the English Premiership league.



Ferguson Eyes 10th Premier League Title

After rallying to beat Arsenal 2-1 at Old Trafford on Sunday, Manchester United players embraced each other and pumped their fists in celebration. They already have the look of champions.

The Red Devils could make it official by the time they return to Old Trafford against West Ham on May 5 after extending their Premier League lead to five points, after Chelsea's tie with Wigan on Monday, AP wrote.

"If we win the next two games we will win the league--as simple as that," United manager Alex Ferguson said.

"We've got over a nervous day. That was a big, big game--and we've come through it."

Ferguson said it was tough to watch. "They were the better team in the first half," said Ferguson, who has already led United to nine league titles. "I thought we were a bit nervous, our passing was poor. I couldn't wait to get to halftime. There was al-

ways going to be a part for Carlos Tevez and Anderson to play, and when Arsenal scored it forced my hand. And we were fantastic after that."

Arsenal was rewarded for dominating the first half when Emmanuel Adebayor exploited a defensive lapse to bundle the ball over the line in the 48th minute. But six minutes later, William Gallas handled in the box and Cristiano Ronaldo converted from the penalty spot.

"We have not many times been a goal down at home, but we came back," center back Rio Ferdinand said.

"We showed pure grit and determination and a great team ethic."

"We were maybe fortunate with the penalty, but in the second half we looked more like scoring."

Owen Hargreaves then scored with a curling free kick in the 72nd minute, reducing the

specialist Ronaldo to the role of witness, as Arsenal's faint title hopes were finally extinguished.

"That was a good distance for me, so I didn't ask him," Hargreaves said of Ronaldo. "Arsenal was the better team in the first half, but we had chances too. We needed to tighten up and we did."

Manchester United is close to its 17th English league title--within one of Liverpool's record.

United is at Blackburn on Saturday and then travel to Chelsea on April 26, but the Blues play twice this week--also at Everton on Thursday.

Chelsea and United will have first-leg matches in the Champions League semifinals before then.

"If we win every game, I think we will win the title," Chelsea manager Avram Grant said. "But it's not easy to win all the games."

Federer Will Test New Coach

Roger Federer, stuck in a slump, said he will work with Coach Jose Higuera at the Estoril Open in Portugal this week.

"I am excited as I have asked Jose Higuera, one of the most respected and accomplished coaches in the world of tennis, to join me," the top-ranked player said on his website Monday.

"We are going to spend the week together to see if we could make a good team."

According to BBC, Federer begins the European clay-court season at Estoril having failed to reach a final in four tournaments this year.

Higuera is a clay-court specialist who coached a teenage Michael Chang to the 1989 French Open title. The Spaniard reached two semifinals at Roland Garros as a player and also has coached Americans Jim Courier, Pete Sampras and Robby Ginepri.

"It is a test period, but it is not just something for the clay-court season," Federer's agent, Tony Godstick, told AP.

"Roger is not looking to hire coaches just for specific surfaces. This is something he is testing out to replace the arrangement he had with Tony Roche."

Federer has worked without a coach since splitting with Roche last May.

African Stars Line Up for Charity

African football stars including Didier Drogba and Samuel Eto'o will be among a star-studded lineout taking part in a charity match in aid of children from the continent on May 13.

The game is being organized by Sevilla's Malian striker Frederic Kanoute in conjunction with the United Nations children's, UNICEF, in the Sanchez Pizjuan Stadium, FIFA said.

"The main aim is to obtain funds to fight against infant mortality in Africa and work with Kanoute to develop the 'children's city' in Bamako (Mali)," the club said in a statement.

Kanoute added: "My African friends and the best players from the continent will be present, like Chelsea striker Drogba, Arsenal's Togolese star Emmanuel Adebayor, Barcelona Eto'o, Chelsea's Ghanaian midfielder Michael Essien, everyone responded well, they wanted to come," added the 2007 African Footballer of the Year.

The match will also pay tribute to Sevilla defender Antonio Puerta, who died last year at the age of 22 years after suffering a heart attack on the pitch.

Greene Rejects Drug Claims

Double Olympic champion Maurice Greene has vehemently denied a report linking him to performance-enhancing drugs.

According to The New York Times, Greene was named by former discus

thrower Angel Guillermo Heredia as having been supplied with banned substances.

But speaking to the Daily Telegraph, the 33-year-old American said: "This is a bad situation. My name has come up in something and it is not true."

"My stance has always been that there's no place in our sport for drug users."

The world governing body for track and field athletics, the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), has also thrown its support behind Greene.

He is now a goodwill ambassador for the Monaco-based organization, which said it ran all the necessary checks before using the retired sprinter.

"None of this is new," said spokesman Nick Davies. "There is no action to take against Maurice."

"With every ambassador we do an immediate check with the doping department. In this case they said 'no, we don't have anything'."

News in Brief

Iran Volleyball Teams

In Egypt Tourney

Iranian men's and women's sitting volleyball teams are preparing for the first World Organization Volleyball for the Disabled (WOVD) Intercontinental Cup, which will be held from April 22 to 30 in Ismailia, Egypt, MNA reported.

The nine-day competition will be held three months prior to the Beijing Paralympics. The Iranian men's team will compete in Group B along with Egypt, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Iraq while the women's team has been placed in Group B with the US, Slovenia, and Lithuania.

The men's team will play Kazakhstan on opening day and the women's team is scheduled to start the tourney with a game against Slovenia.

Women's Basketball

Shines in West Asia

Iranian women's basketball team made its debut at the West Asian Basketball Championship, which is currently underway in the Syrian city of Aleppo. The Iranian team defeated the Syria B team in its first official overseas event, MNA wrote.

The Iranian women clinched a narrow 66-64 victory against the hosts. The competition ends on Friday.

Olympic Torch in Oman

Thousands cheered and some danced with traditional daggers along the Olympic torch's path through Oman's capital Monday, a festive greeting that contrasted with disrupting protests elsewhere on the flame's global journey.

According to AFP, under tight security, about 80 torchbearers ferried the flame down into the heart of this hilly Persian Gulf sultanate's capital, passing under historic stone arches and alongside the old soak, before winding along the edge of the Persian Gulf coast against the backdrop of spectacular mountains.

The rare carnival-like atmosphere in tightly controlled Oman was a welcome respite for Olympic organizers seeking to avoid protests over China's human rights record that marked torch stops Paris, London and San Francisco.

Officials said they expected a smooth relay of the flame on the brief Middle Eastern leg of its 20-nation tour, adding that any attempt to disrupt the parade would be dealt with severely.

Romario Out of Official Football

Former Brazil striker Romario announced his retirement on Monday at 42, ending a career in which he won the World Cup, was involved in numerous controversies and claimed to have scored more than 1,000 goals.

"Officially I'm not playing any more. I've stopped," Romario said at a DVD launch. "My time is up. Everything has been a lot of fun."

Romario played for Brazil at the 1990 and 1994 World Cups, scoring five goals to help Brazil win the latter tournament. He made 73 appearances for his country between 1987 and 2005, scoring 56 goals, Reuters reported.

He had four stints with Vasco da Gama, where he started and finished his career, and also played for Flamengo and Fluminense in Brazil, Barcelona, PSV Eindhoven and Valencia.

Romario also had spells with Al Sadd in Qatar, Miami FC in the United States and Adelaide United in Australia.

"These last 20 years for me have been very positive," said Romario, regarded as one of the game's top goal poachers. "To be honest, I'm stopping because I don't see myself in any shape to continue playing."

"I haven't played since November, I've put on three or four kilos since then and, at this age, and it's difficult to get back to fitness."

1 Killed in Serbia Soccer Violence

One person was shot dead and several were injured during a brawl between rival Serbian soccer fans, police said Tuesday.

The clash, set in advance between Partizan Belgrade and Vojvodina Novi Sad fans, happened late Monday in a village near this northern Serbian town of Novi Sad, AP wrote.

Police said that a Partizan fan fired a gun and killed a Vojvodina supporter. Several people were injured in the brawl, including one seriously.

The clash followed violent street fights in Novi Sad before Sunday's Vojvodina-Partizan first league match. One fan was seriously injured after being stabbed with a knife during the brawl and dozens were arrested.

Fan riots are common in Serbia between organized hooligan gangs.

Roger Federer



Didier Drogba



Maurice Greene

