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Sports at its best!

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Owen...

Owen admits in the past he might have stayed on and then endured a spell on the sidelines, but is relieved he was able to spot the danger signs.

"I'm back in full training from tomorrow," Owen told At The Races on Monday. "The older you get the more you get to learn your body."

"Probably a few years ago I would have carried on playing and pulled something and been out for a couple of months or a few weeks at least."

"I felt something coming. If I'd continued or done another sprint then I think I would have pulled my groin."

"So I came off just before it happened and instead of three or four weeks it's three or four days. So that's something you get with experience."

Meanwhile, Owen, who has 89 caps and 40 goals for England, has not given up hope of making Fabio Capello's 23-man squad for the 2010 World Cup in South Africa.

The Three Lions have already qualified for the finals and, while Owen remains down the pecking order, his spirit are in tact.

"We'll see about that," he replied when asked about featuring in next summer's finals.

"Every aim for an English footballer is to go to the World Cup and get in that squad."

"I've got six or seven months to do as well as possible for Manchester United and hopefully (Fabio Capello) will be watching."



Cesc commits...

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Asked whether he kissed his badge to show how much he loves the club, he said: "Yes, because there is always some speculation that I don't like to hear."

"I am committed to this club 100 per cent, it is my seventh season here."

"It is hard to hear people saying I am not committed enough or something. It was a good time to show I love this club."

"We did not do well in the first 10 to 15 minutes and were a bit shaky defensively. But after the goal we did well and it was a good game."

Asked about his own display, he added: "I am happy with all the team's performance."

"We can do better - it is just one more game in the race for the title."

Fabregas's Spain team-mate Xavi has spoken of his desire for the 22-year-old to move back to Camp Nou, but Arsenal fans will be pleased with the reaction of their skipper.



Ronaldinho rescues Milan as Juve crash

Juventus missed the chance to reclaim top spot as they were surprisingly beaten 2-0 by Palermo. Edinson Cavani put the hosts in front after 37 minutes and Fabio Simeone made it two five minutes later as the Bianconeri slumped to their third league loss of the season.

Juve's shock defeat meant Sampdoria joined Inter Milan at the top of the table despite being held to a 1-1 draw by Parma. Giampaolo Pazzini fired Samp in front midway through the first half, but the lead was cancelled out soon after by Daniele Galloppa.

Fiorentina stay two points behind Sampdoria after being held to a goalless draw by Lazio. The Viola came into the game full of confidence following their convincing defeat of Liverpool in the UEFA Champions League in midweek but, despite dominating for long spells, they were unable to claim the win.

AC Milan's uninspiring start to the season continued as they picked up only a point from their trip to struggling Atalanta. Leonardo's team needed an 83rd-minute goal from Ronaldinho to earn them a 1-1 draw against a team who played more than 50 minutes of the contest with ten men.

Former Lecce striker Simone Tiribocchi put Atalanta ahead, but six minutes before half-time they were reduced to ten men when Ivan Radovanovic picked up a second yellow card for a foul on Alexandre Pato.

Genoa returned to winning ways after a three-game drought with a 3-1 victory at Bologna. Houssine Kharja and Giuseppe Sculli gave the visitors a 2-0 lead at the interval, but they lost Giandomenico Mesto to a red card early in the second half and the home team responded. Marco Di Vaio pulled a goal back from the penalty spot in the 85th minute, but Alberto Zapater sealed the win in the last minute.

Francesco Totti struck twice as Roma came from behind to beat Napoli 2-1. The Roma captain scored his first in the 37th minute to cancel out Ezequiel

Lavezzi's opener. Totti then grabbed the winner shortly after the hour mark.

Cagliari's search for a first home victory in Serie A this season goes on after they lost 2-1 to Chievo. Alessandro Matri put the Sardinian side in front in the 38th minute, but Michele Marcolini equalised three minutes later. Marcolini struck again in the 70th minute to hand Chievo all three points.

Siena failed to make the most of a golden opportunity to claim their first home win of the season as they were held to a goalless draw by basement boys Livorno.



Benitez: We can still win it

Liverpool boss Rafa Benitez believes his side can still challenge for the title despite going down 2-0 at Chelsea to suffer their third defeat of the season.



Heartland, Mazembe on course

DR Congo's TP Mazembe and Heartland of Nigeria look well on course to contest this year's African Champions League final.

Al Hilal of Sudan were thrashed 5-2 by visiting TP Mazembe in Omdurman, while in the Nigerian derby Heartland easily beat Kano Pillars 4-0.

In Sudan Hilal began the game as favourites and showed they meant business when Demba Barry opened the scoring for the hosts in the second minute.

But a mere three minutes later, Basisila Lusadisu made it 1-1 for the visitors.

The game was then suspended for 20 minutes as floodlights failed due to a power cut.

After the resumption, Haycem Mustapha converted a penalty to put Al Hilal 2-1 up halfway through the first half.

In a repeat of the opening minutes of the game, TP Mazembe struck back five minutes later through Mulota Kabangu to make the game 2-2.

Dioko Kaliyutuka made in three for Mazembe in the 62nd minute.

And ten minutes from time, Kabangu scored his second goal of the evening from the penalty spot.

For good measure, Lusadisu scored in the dying moments of the game to give Mazembe an emphatic 5-2 away victory.

Mazembe will host Al Hilal in the return leg in Lubumbashi on 18 October.

There was another eventful semi-final in Owerri where Nigeria's Heartland thrashed their domestic rivals Kano Pillars 4-0.

All four goals came in a lively first half, with Emeka Nwana and Uche Agba both scoring braces in front of a capacity crowd at the Dan Anyiam Stadium in Owerri.

Nwana opened the scoring in the 14th minute, Agba made it 2-0 just four minutes later.

Nwana and Agba scored again for Heartland in the run-up to half-time to sap the spirit of Kano Pillars.

The second half had none of the excitement of the first 45 minutes, with Kano Pillars seeming to have given up.

It will be Kano's turn to host Heartland in the return leg in just a week's time on 10 October.

The date has been brought forward because Kano Pillars' stadium will be used in the Under-17 World Cup which begins on 24 October.

Super Sevilla end Real Madrid's unbeaten run

Sevilla ended Real Madrid's unbeaten start to the La Liga season with a 2-1 victory on Sunday which underlined the Spanish title race will be a three-horse race.

The result leaves Barcelona, who beat Almeria 1-0 on Saturday, at the top with 18 points from six games, with Real and Sevilla sharing second place on 15 points.

Real came to the Estadio Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan with a perfect record from five league games, but missing leading scorer Cristiano Ronaldo, who has an ankle injury.

His absence was keenly felt as they offered little in attack and were under pressure in defense from the outset as Sevilla created a string of first half chances.

It was came as no surprise when Fernando Navarro crossed to the far post for the diminutive Jesus Navas to get in ahead of Marcelo and head past Iker Casillas on 33 minutes.

Sevilla might have been further ahead at half-time as their Brazilian striker Luis Fabiano wasted several good opportunities, the best as he headed wide from an excellent position after a cross by Navas.

Casillas was also in inspired form and made one breathtaking save just before the interval as he kept out Renato's point-blank effort from a Diego Perotti cross.

The second half began in similar fashion and Negredo set up Perotti for a certain score only for Casillas to charge across his line to save.

Three minutes into the half and Sevilla were made to pay for their wasteful finishing as Pepe rose high to head home Guti's free kick.

Sevilla continued to carve out the better openings and scored a deserved 66th minute winner as a totally unmarked Renato headed home Adriano's cross after a header had been cleared.

Sevilla continued to look the better side but had their hearts in their mouths on the final whistle after Sergio Ramos fired into the sidenetting after being set up by Kaka.

It is Sevilla's best start to the Spanish season since 1942.

In other action on Sunday, Nikola Zigic came off the bench to earn Valencia a 1-0 win at Racing Santander.

Zigic had just come on when he intercepted a back-pass by Racing defender Pablo Pinillos before rounding Antonio Tono to score.

Zigic came on for Spanish international striker David Villa, who limped off with a hamstring strain and looks doubtful for upcoming World Cup qualifiers next week.

Essien hails crucial win

Michael Essien has told newsmen how important Chelsea's win over Liverpool was.

The Ghana star played a pivotal role in the 2-0 win at Stamford Bridge on Sunday.

And Essien thinks taking three points against Liverpool was essential for Chelsea's title hopes.

Difficult.

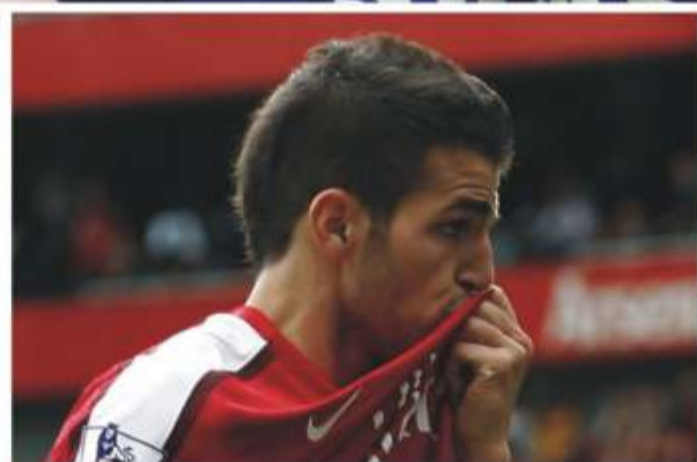
"A game against Liverpool is always difficult, they are one of the main title contenders so it is good to win against them," he told newsmen.

"To take three points from them is very good.

"The game was hard but taking three points was a must because Manchester United lost two points at home on Saturday night.

"It is a good day for us and that will give us confidence for the rest of the title run-in.

"Last season we did not do well against them so it is good to let them know we mean business this season."



Cesc commits future to Arsenal

Arsenal captain Cesc Fabregas has committed his future to the club after his team's 6-2 win over Blackburn.

The Gunners ran riot at the Emirates Stadium after twice falling behind to Sam Allardyce's Rovers, and Fabregas was at the heart of every attacking move.

He picked up four assists and bagged an excellent goal to cap off a sterling performance, and he was quick to pledge allegiance to his current side, with speculation linking him with a return to Barcelona.

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Owen to return to training

Michael Owen will return to full training with Manchester United on today after missing their weekend draw with Sunderland.

Owen tweaked his groin in last week's game with Wolfsburg, although he sensibly departed the pitch before doing himself serious harm.

As it transpires, Owen's quick thinking meant he only had a short recovery time and, after missing match with the Black Cats, is now virtually good to go.

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Portsmouth boss fury at tax probe

Harry Redknapp insists he has been totally up front over his taxes amid reports he is set to be questioned by the Inland Revenue once more.

Police and Inland Revenue officials have been investigating the deal that saw Peter Crouch leave Portsmouth for Aston Villa for £5million in 2002 for two years.

The ongoing investigation has come under spotlight once more with rumours over Redknapp's future at Tottenham called into question as a result.

The former Portsmouth boss is believed to have been paid a fee by then Pompey chairman Milan Mandaric for his role in the Crouch deal but Redknapp states that everything was above board.

"This is about a discrepancy of around £10,000 in income tax," he told The Sun.

"I've paid £10million in income tax in the past 10 years and this is what it's come down to.

"It's in dispute whether the money is owed anyway and I've been totally up front with everyone about this. I'm sick of it."

Portsmouth chief executive Peter Storrie, who was also questioned over the transfer, backs Redknapp and hopes the saga comes to a quick conclusion.

"We have done nothing but help what was a police inquiry now it seems to have moved to the revenue," he told Sky Sports News.

"It's been two years of our life. It's been two years this has gone on and we just want it to be brought to a conclusion and we just want to completely clear our names once and for all.

"It's got to as far as we are concerned there is nothing that we can be held responsible for so therefore it has to be brought to an end it just cant ruin peoples lives for much longer."