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Wenger: We're back in race

Arsene Wenger believes Arsenal are now firmly back in the Premier League title race following the 2-1 victory away to Liverpool.

A second-half comeback at Anfield on Sunday was capped by Andrey Arshavin's thumping winner to move the Gunners six points behind leaders Chelsea and with a game in hand.

Yet just a fortnight ago, Arsenal were written off as title challengers after a 3-0 home loss to Chelsea left Wenger's side trailing their London rivals by 11 points.

Wenger admits it was vital that the Gunners secured three points at Liverpool, particularly after losing to both Chelsea and Manchester United already this season.

The Frenchman feels his team are now back in the hunt for the title and expects several clubs to mount a challenge to become champions this season.

"A fear of winning the big games after losing to Chelsea and United was a factor in the first half," said Wenger.

"We brought that into the game, but once we had nothing to lose in the second half, we controlled the game.

"We were a bit lucky with our first goal, but the fear was in the Liverpool camp in the second half. It was an outstanding second goal and from then on Liverpool's pace dropped. Afterwards we were not under any real threat.

"For us, it gets us back into it. Mathematically we're in a good position again, especially with our game in hand.

"We knew with what happened with the results yesterday (Saturday), that we needed to win here. We did so and that's something very positive. Now it is down to consistency.

"Whoever wins this league is going to be the one capable of being really consistent and no-one has done that yet.

"But I don't think it is a three-horse race, because there are the likes of Villa, Tottenham and Manchester City in there too."



Ghana angry with Fulham

The Ghanaian Football Association (GFA) has expressed anger for comments made by the manager of Fulham.

Roy Hodgson says he expects midfielder John Pantsil to feature in Fulham's game on the 28th of December.

"It's a bit disrespectful of the African nations to write to the English clubs asking their players to be released on the 27th when they know that we all have matches on the 28th."

But the GFA say Pantsil must be released.

Fulham play English Premiership leaders Chelsea on that day and Hodgson said Pantsil will play in that game.

"I expect Pantsil to be playing for us on 28 and he will unless FIFA intervene and insist he goes," he said.

"It's probably just a little bit of oversight on their part and I don't expect for one minute for Ghana

to insist that John Pantsil meets up with them on 27th."

The GFA has replied to Hodgson, branding his behaviour as unprofessional.

"He cannot just go and say that. I am surprised that a man of his standing is taking this stance," a GFA spokesman said.

"Mr Hodgson does not determine what the law is. He doesn't have the power to breach the law."

Fifa rules state that clubs must release their players 14 days before the start of any recognised international tournament.

Football's world governing body can dock Fulham any points they pick up against Chelsea if Pantsil plays in the game.

Another player who could be at the centre of a club versus country row is Algeria's Madjid Bougherra.

His club side Rangers is trying to persuade Algeria to allow him to play in the game against Celtic on January 3.



Carragher's character call

Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher has called on the side to show some character to bounce back from their latest setback.

The Reds slumped to their sixth defeat in the Premier League after going down 2-1 to Arsenal at Anfield on Sunday.

The latest defeat leaves Liverpool in seventh spot, five points behind fourth-placed Aston Villa in the race to finish in the top four.

Carragher admits the Arsenal defeat was hard to take and concedes the side should be doing better than they are at present.

"We started off well in the first half and should have had a penalty but you have to give credit to Arsenal, they're a top side," Carragher told the club's official website.

"The manner of the goals we conceded were unfortunate but

other than them scoring, I can't remember them having too much else, which is why it's so hard to take.

"We've just got to dust ourselves down now and move to Wednesday. For the quality of the players and the stature of the club, we should be doing better.

"Statistics can change quickly and we have got to do that. It's tough at the moment but part of playing for Liverpool is having big character.

"That's what we need now. Between now and May it is going to be a grind at times but we have got to stick together, get through it and, as I'm doing, pray to God that at the end of the season there will be something worthwhile for what we've gone through."

Carragher admits Wednesday's game at home to Wigan is a must-win encounter if they are to get their campaign back on track and he knows the team need to start improving quickly.

Uganda Cranes retain Cecafta cup

Defending Cecafta champions Uganda have retained their regional title after defeating Rwanda 2-0 in the final of the Cecafta Cup in Nairobi.

Dan Wagaluka opened the score with a long range effort just before half-time.

Emmanuel Okwi scrambled the ball in from close range to give Uganda their 11th Cecafta trophy.

Their Scottish coach Bobby Williamson said it was a hard fought encounter.

"The second goal knocked the stuffing out of the Rwandans" he said.

"We've played better to be honest but in finals sometimes the occasion becomes a bit too much for some players and I felt that with a few of our guys, we've had to work hard to be successful".

"I'm very pleased, I've got a good bunch of professionals to work with.

"They're a great squad and we've been together in hotels for the last two weeks and I didn't have a moment's concern, and I can't say that about some teams I've managed in the past" he said.

"This means everything to Ugandans" he said.

"It's a big footballing nation, and it would be helpful if they were encouraged to watch more Ugandan football rather than the English Premiership".

Less than 5,000 fans turned out to watch the regional final which has suffered from poor attendance since the exit of Kenya's Harambee Stars in the quarter-finals.

They were defeated by Uganda in a repeat of last year's final.

Earlier Zanzibar defeated mainland Tanzania 1-nil to finish third in the regional competition.

Drogba grabs brace for Chelsea

League leaders Chelsea twice let a one-goal lead slip as Everton clinched a deserved point at Stamford Bridge.

Everton took a fortuitous lead when a goalbound effort struck the post and deflected in off keeper Petr Cech.

Neat finishes from Didier Drogba and Nicolas Anelka turned the tables in Chelsea's favour before substitute Yakubu levelled from close range.

Drogba volleyed the home side ahead again but Louis Saha's deflected header rewarded the visitors for their effort.

Chelsea have now gone four games without a win and while this cannot be considered a major blip, it will add credence to those tempering their early season assertion that the Blues were destined for Premier League glory.

While Carlo Ancelotti's side showed plenty of attacking edge, they also demonstrated a fallibility in defence that could, unless addressed, seriously undermine their title challenge.

All three of Everton's goals were preventable, and it will be of particular concern to Ancelotti that two of them resulted from set-pieces; something of an Achilles heel for the Blues.

While Chelsea's failings will dominate the post-match assessment, Everton's role in the match should not be ignored.