

SATURDAY 5 PREMIERSHIP HEADLINE MAKERS

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Manchester United's Ole Gunnar Solskjær celebrates the opening goal against Leicester City with captain-for-the-day Denis Irwin, on his 500th appearance for United.

- **Coventry City's relegation worries intensified as Tottenham beat them comfortably in a display that betrayed no loss of confidence after the sacking of manager George Graham. Manchester City could only manage a point at Bradford, allowing Middlesbrough who beat Newcastle United away to pull four points ahead of them. Sunderland, Leeds United and Ipswich Town three clubs with European aspirations all won away from home, while Manchester United marched relentlessly on with another win that takes them 17 points clear at the top of the Premiership.**
- Goals from **Steffen Iversen, Les Ferdinand** and **Sergei Rebrov** gave Spurs a straightforward victory over Coventry, who have now failed to win any of their last 10 games. The Tottenham team was prepared by director of football and one-time manager **David Pleat**, who made no changes from the eleven picked by **Graham** against West Ham United in the FA Cup. Ironically Rebrov Graham's biggest signing for the club finally appears to have settled, and has now scored 12 goals, including three in the last two games. The win gave Spurs fans something other

than the managerial vacancy at White Hart Lane to talk about. Coventry are now seven points adrift of 17th placed Middlesbrough, and looking increasingly desperate.

- Middlesbrough themselves achieved an excellent win at St James Park, where Newcastle fell 2-0 behind to goals from **Alen Boksic**. **Carl Cort**, back from long-term injury, marked his return with a tremendous volleyed goal to reduce the deficit. Then Newcastle had a great chance to level matters when they were awarded a late penalty after Cort was fouled in the area. However, **Nolberto Solano**'s spot-kick bounced down off the crossbar, and Boro—who had **Phil Stamp** sent off to finish with ten men—secured their first away win since September.
- The relegation dog-fight at Valley Parade saw Bradford City and Manchester City draw 2-2—a result that did neither club much good. In an open, attacking and highly entertaining if error-strewn match, Manchester took the lead through **Gerard Weikens**, then survived several Bradford chances before **Robbie Blake** equalised with a fierce drive from outside the penalty area. Further Bradford pressure saw **Ashley Ward** net his first goal for the club, and **Benito Carbone** might have extended the lead before Manchester City levelled through **Shaun Goater**. Bradford were denied two penalties, both for fouls on Ward (who was wrongly given a yellow card for the second incident), but Manchester finished strongly. However, both sides will probably be playing First Division football next season.
- Sunderland produced a superb second-half performance to inflict only a second home defeat on Chelsea. The Londoners took the lead through a **Marcel Desailly** header, but man-of-the-match **Don Hutchison** got Sunderland's equaliser with a deft flick. **Eidur Gudjohnsen** restored Chelsea's advantage and they could have gone in further ahead at half-time. However, after the break Sunderland found the organisation and penetration to match their passion. Hutchison made it 2-2 with a header from an acute angle, then turned provider for **Gavin McCann**. **Kevin Phillips**, back from suspension, got Sunderland's fourth when capitalising on one of a string of errors by Chelsea's goalkeeper **Carlo Cudicini**. It was an emphatic return to form by Sunderland, who had won none of their previous six games but have now reclaimed fourth place and remain in contention for a Champions League place.
- **Mark Viduka** scored for Leeds United at the Valley just 11 seconds after the kick-off—the second fastest Premiership goal ever. However, Charlton Athletic equalised when England goalkeeper **Nigel Martyn** misjudged a high cross and **Shaun Bartlett** put the ball into the net. In the second-half a surging run from deep by **Harry Kewell** saw the Australian set up an inviting chance for **Alan Smith**. The young striker took it in style with a first time shot. The 2-1 victory means Leeds,

unbeaten in eight, have won four of their last five away games and are now just two points behind third placed Ipswich Town.

- Ipswich secured a valuable away victory at Upton Park, beating West Ham United 1-0. The game was largely devoid of talking points, but was decided by one pivotal incident. When **Stuart Pearce** fouled **Marcus Stewart**, TV cameras showed that it should have been a penalty. Instead, however, Ipswich were awarded a direct free-kick on the edge of the area. The argument became academic when **Martin Reuser** skilfully bent the ball around the wall and into the net. The Hammers, knocked out of the FA Cup last week-end, have now won just one of their last ten Premiership games, scoring a meagre five goals in the process.
- With almost everyone speculating that **Glenn Hoddle** will become the next manager of Tottenham Hotspur, his current team Southampton secured their fifth consecutive victory and in doing so set a new club record of keeping seven successive clean sheets. **Jo Tessem** scored the only goal of the game against Everton. Hoddle – who has a clause in his contract allowing him to be released if Spurs make him an offer, subject to Saints receiving £800,000 compensation – has now steered the South coast club into eighth place. They are due to move to a new stadium next season, so the future looks bright – assuming they can hang on to their manager.
- **Sir Alex Ferguson** made Irishman **Denis Irwin** captain of Manchester United for St Patrick's Day in recognition of his becoming only the sixth player in United's history to make 500 or more appearances for the club. Irwin was able to celebrate a victory as United beat Leicester City 2-0 at Old Trafford with late goals from **Dwight Yorke** and **Mikael Silvestre**. It was Silvestre's first goal for United, who now have 70 points. They need a further 11 from eight remaining games to claim their third successive Premiership title – and their seventh in nine seasons.

Playing on Sunday:

Aston Villa v Arsenal

Liverpool v Derby County



Nolberto Solano (black & white striped shirt) misses his chance to equalise from the penalty spot for Newcastle United against Middlesbrough.

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