

SATURDAY S PREMIERSHIP HEADLINE MAKERS

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Manchester United's Gary Neville (red shirt) holds off Leeds United's Robbie Keane in Saturday's 1-1 draw at Elland Road.

Courtesy Empics

- **In a day of relatively few goals, Manchester United remained firmly in control of the Premiership title race despite being held to a draw by Leeds United. In contrast, their neighbours and rivals Manchester lost again at home and slipped deeper into relegation trouble. Elsewhere, there were wins for Arsenal, Leicester City, Derby County and Southampton, while the games at Everton, Coventry and Middlesbrough ended in draws.**
- Manchester United escaped with a draw at Elland Road that keeps them 14 points clear at the top of the Premiership. But they were forced to soak up constant pressure from a determined Leeds team, survived a

penalty and were fortunate to see a 90th minute own goal by **Wes Brown** controversially ruled out by a linesman.

Territorially, Leeds dominated the first half, enjoying most of the possession but failing to create any real chances to press home the advantage. Then, on the stroke of half-time, **Fabien Barthez** fouled **Ian Harte** in the penalty area. Barthez, lucky to receive only a yellow card, redeemed himself by saving Harte's spot-kick. It looked a costly miss for Leeds when, in the 63rd minute, **Paul Scholes** put **Ole Gunnar Solskjaer** clear and the Norwegian's shot was parried but not held by **Nigel Martyn**. The Leeds goalkeeper's mistake allowed **Lee Chadwick** a second-half substitute for **Nicky Butt** to pass the ball unchallenged into the net.

It was a big blow for Leeds, but to their credit they kept on pressurising the visitors. With seven minutes remaining, they got the break they deserved. **Danny Mills** made impressive progress down the right wing before whipping in a great centre which **Lee Bowyer** flicked on for **Mark Viduka** to head powerfully past Barthez.

Leeds then went looking for the winner and thought they'd found it when Bowyer's cross was turned into his own net by Brown. But a linesman judged that a Leeds forward had strayed offside and referee **Graham Barber** disallowed the goal. Leeds manager **David O Leary** felt his team deserved to win. The offside was a shocking decision, and I don't know how Fabien Barthez was still on the pitch to save the penalty.

- Arsenal responded to last week's 6-1 thrashing by Manchester United in the best possible way, clinically brushing aside an under-strength West Ham United side at Old Trafford. The match was a personal triumph for the Gunners' French striker **Sylvain Wiltord**, who scored a first-half hat-trick – his first for Arsenal – in the 3-0 victory.

In contrast to their performance at Old Trafford, Arsenal's defence looked formidable – and it was no coincidence that inspirational captain **Tony Adams** was back in the thick of things, along with **Lee Dixon**.

The Gunners took their foot off the accelerator in the second-half, perhaps saving their energy for Tuesday's Champions League clash against Spartak Moscow, but West Ham never looked like getting back into the game. The result leaves Arsenal unchallenged in second place, eight points ahead of Liverpool and Leicester – but 14 points behind Manchester United.

- Leicester City pulled off the day's most impressive win by beating League Cup winners Liverpool 2-0 at Filbert Street. Goals from **Adi Akinbiyi** on 51 minutes and **Muzzy Izzet** in injury time sealed the victory for **Peter Taylor's** team, who joined Liverpool on 45 points in joint third place. Despite going well in three cup competitions, Liverpool have now won just one of their last five Premiership games. Leicester, who entertain Second Division Wycombe Wanderers next Saturday in an FA Cup quarter-final, have won three of their last four after going five without a win.
- Derby County pulled closer to safety by beating Tottenham Hotspur 2-1 at Pride Park. The Rams' hero was Belgian striker **Branko Strupar**. He scored two first-half goals – one a penalty – to ease manager **Jim Smith's** concerns. **Taribo West** gave Spurs a glimmer of hope by heading into his own goal in the second-half, but it was not enough to give **George Graham** a first win under Tottenham's new owners ENIC. Spurs have lost their last two games after going unbeaten in the previous nine. But Derby are now unbeaten in four.
- **David Unsworth** scored at both ends as Everton salvaged a late point at home to Newcastle United. Unsworth put the ball past his own goalkeeper to give the Magpies a second-half lead after **Alan Shearer** had put Everton's defence under pressure with skill and persistence from the left wing. However, the centre-back went from villain to hero when he converted a penalty just minutes from the end after **Kevin Campbell** had been fouled in the area. The draw leaves Everton deep in the relegation zone, with just two wins from their last 14 games. Newcastle, without a win in four games, have failed to keep a clean sheet in the Premiership since 30th September.
- Southampton extended their unbeaten run in the Premiership to six games – during which they have conceded no goals – by beating Manchester City 1-0 at Maine Road. The crucial goal was scored by Romanian **Dan Petrescu** with a spectacular volley that left City goalkeeper **Nicky Weaver** helpless. **Joe Royle's** men again had the better of the game, but couldn't find a way past **Paul Jones** and his defence, in which **Dean Richards** was outstanding. After having beaten Newcastle last week at St James' Park, City's home form again let them down. They have now lost nine times in the League at Maine Road – a major reason for the plight they find themselves in near the foot of the table.

- Coventry City earned a precious point from a 0-0 home draw with Chelsea, who have yet to win away from home this season. Despite the lack of goals, there were chances galore particularly for Coventry in an entertaining game.
- A dour encounter at the Riverside Stadium between Middlesbrough and Charlton Athletic ended in a goalless draw. Both sides were guilty of wasting chances, but while Charlton will be happy with their point, Middlesbrough will be ruing their failure to collect all three. Although Boro have lost just once in twelve games under coach **Terry Venables**, a more telling statistic is that they have not won in their last six.
- *Playing Sunday: Ipswich Town v Bradford City*
- *Playing Monday: Sunderland v Aston Villa*



Robert Pires (left) congratulates Sylvain Wiltord (right) on scoring the first goal of his hat-trick against West Ham United.
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