

23.04.2013 10:12:20 Manchester United wrapped up a 20th league title in convincing style after Robin van Persie's first-half hat-trick sank Aston Villa. The Dutch striker has been United's stellar striker for much of the season before labouring of late after two goals in his previous seven Premier League appearances. But the ??24m summer signing returned to form in spectacular fashion to secure the silverware with four games to spare. Defeat for Manchester City at Tottenham on Sunday meant that United knew before kick-off that victory would be enough for them to cross the line. Despite an improved second-half showing by Villa, now three points above the relegation zone with four games remaining, that outcome never seriously looked in doubt. United boss Sir Alex Ferguson has now won the Premier League 13 times but the manner and margin of this triumph, a year after seeing the title wrenched from his grasp by City with the last kick of the season, should give him as much satisfaction as his first success. His side were already 13 points clear before kick-off, and there was an air of expectation bordering on euphoria at Old Trafford. If there were any nerves too, they went out of the window when Van Persie opened the scoring after 83 seconds. A move started by Wayne Rooney ended with Ryan Giggs knocking Antonio Valencia's cross into the path of the Dutchman, who converted from two yards out. It was an ominous start for a defence looking as vulnerable as Villa's, and more chances swiftly followed. The visitors escaped when Van Persie headed over and Rafael fired against the post but a second goal was not far away. Villa had just started to gain a foothold in the match, with Christian Benteke firing just over after a quick break, when United struck again in devastating fashion after 13 minutes. This time it was the home side on the counter-attack, and Rooney's searching ball found Van Persie running to meet it on the edge of the area to smash an unstoppable left-footed volley past Brad Guzan. It was a world-class strike worthy of putting the seal on a title that has been in United's grasp since early February, when they first moved 12 points clear, but he and United did not stop there. Giggs ran on to Shinji Kagawa's pass and had a chance to let fly himself, but instead set up Van Persie, who steadied himself before firing high into the roof of the net. His 31-minute hat-trick not only put the win and the title beyond doubt, it also moved the summer signing to 24 league goals - one above Liverpool's Luis Suarez as the Premier League's leading scorer. At that stage Villa's prime concern was damage limitation, especially because goal difference could yet play a part in their fight for survival, but to their credit they regrouped for the second half. It took a goal-line clearance from Van Persie to stop Andreas Weimann from pulling a goal back and David De Gea was called into action to keep out Benteke's low shot. United's players could be forgiven for having their minds on the parade to come at the final whistle, and even with the encouragement of Ferguson on the touchline, they failed to hit the heights they had managed before half-time. Villa went close again when Weimann curled an effort wide from the right of the box and, even when United did respond, Kagawa wasted an easy chance to make it 4-0 when he fired over with the goal gaping. The spirit shown by Paul Lambert's side bodes well for their battle against the drop. But it only succeeded in taking the edge off the celebrations from the home fans in the stands during the second half. They made up for it at the final whistle when the ground let out a collective roar of delight. Ferguson embraced his players as they completed a lap of honour - one they will repeat on 12 May after their game against Swansea when they will be handed the Premier League trophy.

23.04.2013 10:12:20 Results of ResultWriter 'Write as Text' [2] 10.html:

23.04.2013 10:12:20 West Ham's clinical victory over Wigan appeared to end any lingering worries they had about relegation but caused further anxiety for the Latics.

The irrepressible Shaun Maloney had an effort stopped by Jussi Jaaskelainen before Matt

Jarvis was fortunate to find the bottom corner from his cross. Wigan had a host of chances after the break with James McArthur closest. Kevin Nolan's late volley then came against the run of play, keeping Wigan in the Premier League's bottom three. Andy Carroll fired wide with a late effort after latching onto a long ball from the back, for what would have been a truly unrepresentative scoreline. But Wigan will feel frustrated by their inability to make their second-half dominance count, wasting a chance to close in on relegation rivals Aston Villa who play Manchester United on Monday. Villa sit three points above Wigan, but with Stoke and Sunderland both winning, it was a poor day for Latics boss Roberto Martinez who last weekend watched his side secure a place in the FA Cup final. Thoughts about that occasion must now be put to one side as the Spaniard aims to secure his team's Premier League safety, starting with the visit of Tottenham next Saturday. His position is far different from West Ham boss Sam Allardyce, whose team are now five league games unbeaten and sit 11 points above the relegation zone with four games left. In what turned out to be a reflection of the game, Wigan enjoyed a dominant spell of possession in the first 20 minutes. Maloney began brightly and had the visitors' best chance to open the scoring when he was slipped through the middle by Callum McManaman, but Jaaskelainen was quick to come off his line and save the Scot's effort. West Ham appeared content to remain compact rather than chase the ball and before the goal they were limited in their attacking forays. In contrast to Wigan's short-sharp passing, Carroll was eager to profit from any set-pieces and he went into the book early on for what looked like a petty reaction to Gary Caldwell's attentions. That was soon forgotten, though, when the Hammers took the lead as Jarvis advanced down the left, cut back, and his cross carried all the way into the bottom corner as Mohamed Diame attempted to poke it in against his former club. The goal gave the hosts an instant boost and Carroll increased his influence while Nolan had a penalty appeal waved away by referee Neil Swarbrick. Wigan recovered after the break when Martinez's decision to replace McManaman with McArthur allowed Jordi Gomez to play further forward and the Spanish midfielder tested Jaaskelainen. Efforts from Emmerson Boyce, McArthur and Jean Beausejour were all then saved by West Ham's Finnish goalkeeper, with another to deny McArthur following Maloney's cut-back the best of the bunch. Maloney was a menace in the second half and Allardyce's team struggled to get out of their own half, much to the home supporters' frustration. But they were soon singing their famous 'I'm forever blowing bubbles' song when from a long-free-kick, Carroll chested the ball down, hooked it over his head and Nolan stole in to volley his 100th career goal. West Ham boss Sam Allardyce: "While it wasn't the best performance, the bottom line is, if you score your goals and take your chances, you win football matches. "Their possession was better than ours but the chances they had they either missed or Jussi Jaaskelainen saved them. We knew Wigan would push forward which left them defensively weakened and we exposed them."