



Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi (R) tries to dribble past Valencia defender Marius Stankevicius during their Primera Liga encounter at the Mestalla on Wednesday.

Barca edge Valencia

AFP, Madrid



LFP

Argentine sensation Lionel Messi scored his 27th league goal of the season as champions Barcelona defeated Valencia 1-0 at the Mestalla stadium on Wednesday to move ten points clear of rivals Real Madrid at the Spanish first

division summit.

Messi netted a 76th minute winner as Barcelona continued their unbeaten away run and put Real under extra pressure to win at home to Malaga on Thursday.

Ballon D'Or winner Messi had missed several chances in the first half but came good 14 minutes from time slotting in a cross from Adriano to clinch a vital win.

It handed coach Pep Guardiola his first ever victory at the Mestalla, which had been the only top-flight venue where he had failed to secure three points.

For third-placed Valencia it was a first league defeat since early December of last year and Villarreal are now just one point behind them in fourth.

It was an emotional first return to the Mestalla for Spanish World Cup star David Villa, who spent five years at the club before joining Barcelona for 40 million euros in the summer, and the forward was given a warm reception from the home fans.

Spanish international playmaker Xavi returned to the Barca starting line-up after recovering from his calf injury to join Javier Mascherano and Sergi Busquets in midfield.

Valencia decided to play with Juan Mata, normally a winger, leading the line and the hosts started at a high tempo to try and dis-

rupt Barcelona's possession game.

Eric Abidal and Dani Alves were both forced to make crucial clearances for Barcelona early on before the champions found their rhythm.

In the ninth minute Messi went clean through on goal but the Argentine fluffed a chance he usually buries on autopilot.

Messi had three chances to score but missed them all with goalkeeper Vicente Guaita, third choice at the beginning of the season, standing tall.

Valencia thought they had scored in the 20th minute but Jordi Alba's goal was ruled out for offside.

Just after the half hour mark Messi squandered another gooscoring opportunity when his lob landed on the roof of the net with only Guaita to beat.

Villa and full back Adriano both went close before the interval but Barcelona went into the break frustrated at the 0-0 scoreline.

Substitute Roberto Soldado volleyed just wide in the 51st minute for Valencia's best chance of the match and Pablo Hernandez then curled

inches wide of the post minutes later to give Barcelona a warning.

The decisive goal came on 76 minutes with Brazilian Adriano cutting the ball across goal for Messi to arrive on cue to guide in with his trusty left foot.

Earlier Villarreal ended a run of four league games without a win with a 1-0 home victory over promoted Hercules.

Italian international forward Giuseppe Rossi scored his 13th league goal of the season on 21 minutes to seal Villarreal's 11th home win of the campaign as they got back to winning ways after collecting two points from the last 12.

RESULTS

Real Zaragoza 2 (Jarosik 48, Uche 55)	Athletic Bilbao 1 (Llorente 18)
Getafe 1 (Manu del Moral 3)	Atletico Madrid 1 (Elias 81)
Villarreal 1 (Rossi 21)	Hercules 0
Osasuna 0	Deportivo La Coruna 0
Real Sociedad 1 (Zurutuza 53)	Levante 1 (Del Horno 77)

Ctg Abahani, Feni play out draw

SPORTS REPORTER

Chittagong Abahani played out a 1-1 draw against Feni Soccer Club in the lone fixture of the Grameenphone Bangladesh League at the Cox's Bazar Stadium yesterday.

Towhidul Islam Siddique struck the equaliser two minutes into second-half stoppage time to deny visitors Feni Soccer Club, who were put ahead through a 47th-minute strike from Towhidul Alam.

It was their third draw for the Sky Blues of Chittagong since their second draw against city rival Chittagong Mohammedan in the fifth round encounter.

The draw, however, could not change their position as they are bottom of the 12-team table with three points while Feni Soccer stay just one step ahead of them with five points from 10 matches.

Serena recovers from op

AFP, Los Angeles

Serena Williams, a former world number one and 13-time Grand Slam singles champion, is well and was recovering at home Wednesday after emergency surgery Monday to remove a blood clot from her lungs.

Williams suffered a pulmonary embolism last week and a second health scare that required her to undergo an emergency operation at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles on Monday, said Williams representative Nicole Chabot.

Top five WC

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beat Pakistan by three wickets in a rain-marred match to send the former champions crashing out of the World Cup at Sabina Park, Jamaica. Niall O'Brien hit a career best 72 from 107 balls.

2007 - Bangladesh beat favourites India by five wickets in their opening match at the Queen's Park Oval, Trinidad. Fast bowler Mashrafe Mortaza grabbed four wickets as India were bowled out for 191. Tamim Iqbal then smashed a rapidfire 51 to script a famous win for the minnows.

2011 - Ireland beat title contenders England by three wickets in Bangalore. England looked to be cruising after accumulating 327 in their innings and reducing Ireland to 111-5 but Kevin O'Brien turned the match on its head with the fastest-ever World Cup century off 50 balls.

Felix's sweet revenge

Football

AFP, Berlin

Another piece of silverware slipped from Bayern Munich's grasp on Wednesday as the holders were dumped out of the German Cup after a 1-0 semifinal home defeat to Schalke 04, coached by former Bayern boss Felix Magath.

A first-half goal from Schalke's veteran Spaniard Raul means the Royal Blues will face second-division MSV Duisburg in the final at Berlin's Olympic Stadium on May 21.

This is Bayern's second straight home defeat and pressure is mounting on their coach Louis van Gaal with signs demanding 'Van Gaal out!' seen around the stadium.

The picture is now much bleaker exactly a week after the joy of Munich's 1-0 win at Inter Milan in the Champions League as Bayern are virtually out of the league race and now out of the cup.

Last Saturday's 3-1 defeat also at home to

Bundesliga leaders Borussia Dortmund has left Bayern 16 points off the pace with 10 games left and effectively out of the title race.

"Schalke improved their hand with the early 1-0 lead, then they closed up shop in defence," said disappointed Bayern captain Philipp Lahm.

"We just couldn't find a solution."

"When we won't be German champions and cup winners, that is not a good season for Bayern."

This was sweet revenge for Magath who was sacked by Bayern in February 2007, despite leading Munich to the league and cup double in the previous two seasons.

Raul added to Bayern's woes with his 15th goal of the season with a header in the 15th minute as it stayed 1-0 at the break.

Bayern poured on the pressure after the break with Dutch winger Arjen Robben just failing to connect with a Franck Ribery cross, while Schalke's Germany goalkeeper Manuel Neuer denied Bastian Schweinsteiger with a header.

Higuain starts workout

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid striker Gonzalo Higuain returned to the pitch on Wednesday for the first time since he underwent back surgery in January to fix a slipped disc, the Spanish club said.

"(Higuain) began a new stage in his recovery process this morning. The striker worked out on the pitch today for the first time since his surgery and did ball work," Real said in a statement.

"Higuain will be subjected to diagnostic tests in the coming weeks before starting the stage in which he will gradually rejoin the squad."

Doctors who carried out the surgery at Chicago's Northwestern Memorial Hospital said at the time that it would take between 3-4 months for Higuain to return to competitive action and up to a year before he is fully recovered.

The 23-year-old Argentine international, who normally starts in attack for Real alongside Cristiano Ronaldo, has been unable to play since the end of November because of the injury.

Higuain scored 27 league goals for Real last season, making him La Liga's second-most prolific scorer behind fellow Argentine Lionel Messi of Barcelona.

He joined Real in January 2007 from Argentine side River Plate.

Security drill in Ctg

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg



Players are in the field and the match gets underway with the first delivery bowled. Just then a large explosion happens in the eastern gallery of the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in the port city.

The clouds of smoke and blaze make the spectators and players frightened. The terrorist attack has injured four cricket fans.

But the terrorists could do nothing more as the law enforcers and armed forces reacted quickly. The joint team members rapidly moved to the ground. Police and Special Forces cordoned off the players and the umpires. Fire fighters doused the flame within two minutes and rescued the injured.

The Air Force helicopter landed at Women's Krira Complex ground adjacent to the stadium. The armed commandoes and Special Forces entered the ground one after another through the passageway and rescued the players.

Meanwhile the army tanks and other commandoes entered the VIP and VVIP gallery gate. The joint forces took control of the whole ground and the gallery within 10 to 15 minutes.

This was the scene at the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium on Thursday during a dummy rehearsal for protecting the players, higher officials of ICC and BCB, VIP- VVIPs and above all the audience.

A total of 1500 members of joint forces participated in the dummy operation.

After the security drill CMP Commissioner Abul Kasem told journalists that the safety management rehearsal was completed for the World Cup matches to be held on March 11 and 14 at the ground.

"3,500 members of law enforcers will control the whole security system during the matches in the port city," he added.

The Commissioner said, "Situation inside the gallery and different boxes will be under close watch and monitoring through 58 CC cameras and the outside condition will be observed through other cameras from venue operation centre."

Afridi saves Pak blushes

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over, leaving the task of building the innings to Misbah and Umar Akmal.

Rao broke the Misbah-Umar stand, when he trapped Umar lbw in the 35th over and three overs later had Misbah caught by wicket-keeper Ashish Bagai to leave Pakistan struggling at 165-6.

Umar hit four boundaries and a six during his 68-ball knock.

Hard-hitting batsmen Shahid Afridi (20) and Abdul Razzaq (eight) also fell cheaply.

Pakistan, who won their first two matches against Kenya and Sri Lanka, left out injured left-arm spinner Abdul Rehman and rested pacer Shoaib Akhtar to bring in off-spinner Saeed Ajmal and Wahab Riaz.

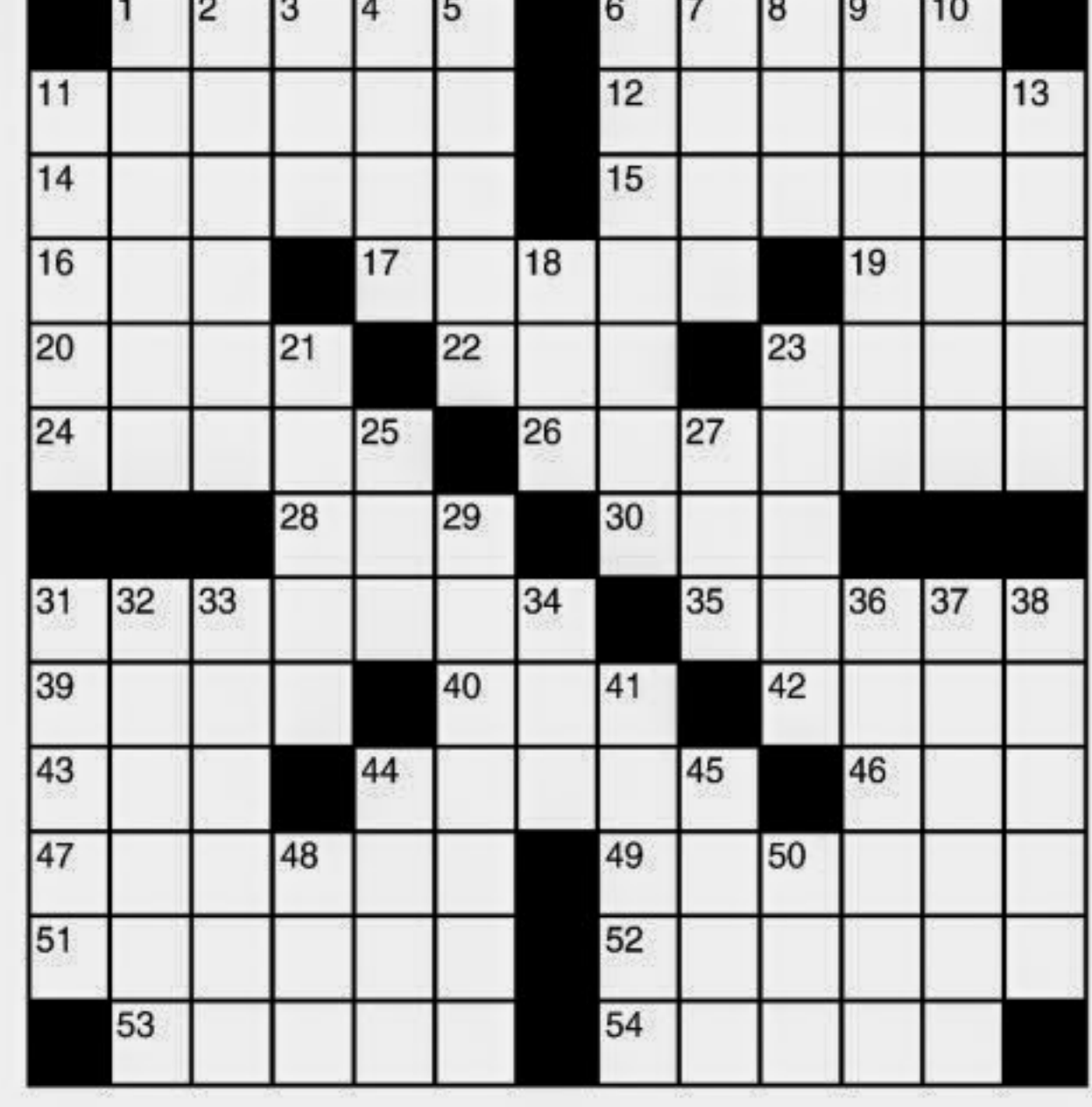
Canada were forced to leave out veteran opener John Davison after he suffered a leg injury.

SCOREBOARD	Hansra 6 1 23 2
Scoreboard of Pakistan	CANADA
innings in the World Cup	Gunasekera lbw b Gul 8
Group A match against	Kumar b Razzaq 2
Canada at R Premadasa	Surkari lbw b Ajmal 27
Stadium on Thursday:	Bagai lbw b Afridi 16
PAKISTAN	Hansra b Afridi 43
Hafeez lbw b Osinde 11	Cheema b Afridi 4
Shahzad c Gordon b Baidwan 12	Gordon c Riaz b Afridi 9
KAkmal c Kumar b Cheema 16	Baidwan b Afridi 0
Younis Khan lbw b Baidwan 6	Chohan not out 5
Misbahul c Bagai b Rao 37	Rao run out 1
U Akmal lbw b Rao 48	Osinde b Riaz 0
Afridi c Kumar b Cheema 20	Extras: (lb-4 w-19) 23
Razzaq lbw b Hansra 8	Total: (All out in 42.5 overs) 138
Gul not out 2	Fall of wickets: 1-16, 2-42, 3-
Riaz c Rao b Hansra 0	55, 4-67, 5-140, 6-165, 7-181,
Ajmal b Baidwan 0	8-181, 9-181, 10-184.
Extras: (b-4, lb-3, nb-1, w-16)	Bowler O M R W
24	Total: (All out in 43 overs) 184
Fall of wickets: 1-16, 2-42, 3-	Bowler O M R W
55, 4-67, 5-140, 6-165, 7-181,	Chohan 3.3 0 10 0
8-181, 9-181, 10-184.	Osinde 7 1 25 1
Bowler O M R W	Riaz 5.5 0 23 1
Ajmal 8 0 31 1	Hafeez 5 0 21 0
Chohan 3.3 0 10 0	Result: Pakistan won by 46
Osinde 7 1 25 1	runs.
Riaz 5.5 0 23 1	Man-of-the-match: Shahid
Hafeez 5 0 21 0	Afridi.
Result: Pakistan won by 46	
runs.	
Man-of-the-match: Shahid	
Afridi.	

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	40 Diving supply bird	42 Teen's woe	43 Multi-purpose truck	44 Oppositive farmer	46 Expert Reporter	47 Its airport force	49 Noted actor/show-stopper	51 Hypnotic state	52 Edema	53 Church council	54 Have an effect	55 Less lenient	56 Wrestling surface	57 Improve, as wine	58 Please	59 Beginning	60 On the briny													
DOWN	1 Panoramic	2 "1984"	3 Fleur-de—	4 Grand story	5 Filet mignon, e.g.	6 Bach's "Pilgrimage," e.g.	7 Vicinity	8 Uncivilized	9 Get	10 Fair	11 Sleep soundly?	13 Stage direction	18 In medias —	21 Female vampire	23 Concert venue	25 Playground game	27 Swelled head	29 Expressed gratitude	31 Intimidate	32 Glyceride and acetate	33 Elbow room	34 Historic boy king	36 Rascally sorts	37 Sheathe	38 Wee	41 Sorts	44 Not pizzicato	45 Withered	48 Novelist Radcliffe	50 Triumphed

Solution time: 27 mins.



CRYPTOQUIP

T C U D F R V L B K G C T Z F U D T F O
Q D V K C K H G G M C Q T B F C
O T E N F W E H T G - U W T L L E N Y F Z T R F C
H R G T B B F Y - V - L H E T H R ?

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: LONGTIME POP SINGER WHO JUST LOVES A CERTAIN SOUTH AMERICAN REPUBLIC: BOLIVIA NEWTON-JOHN.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: C equals S