

# Borussia extend lead

AFP, Berlin



Borussia Dortmund opened up a 15-point lead at the top of the Bundesliga on Friday night with a 1-0 home win against Cologne to take another step closer to the German league title.

Poland striker Robert Lewandowski's 44th-minute strike proved to be enough to give Dortmund their 19th win of the season from 25 games.

With nine matches left to play, Jurgen Klopp's team are cruising towards their first league title since 2002 and a Champions League place next season.

"This was probably one of the most deserved 1-0 wins of all times," said Klopp after his side laid siege to the Cologne goal in the second-half.

"The boys created so many chances over the 90 minutes.

"The fact that things worked out this way is unbelievable.

"The team is continuing to take these little steps (towards the title).

"Robert Lewandowski is a great lad, I am sincerely pleased for him that he scored the winner, that is another feather in his cap."

Second-placed Leverkusen have a chance to close the gap when they host Wolfsburg on Saturday evening, while defending champions Bayern Munich,

fourth, badly need a win at third-placed Hanover after back-to-back defeats.

Dortmund's Lewandowski opened the scoring when he chested down the ball from a long pass and slammed it into the bottom far corner just before the half-time break to put his team in control.

Despite missing last week with a knee injury, Dortmund goalkeeper Roman Weidenfeller produced several good saves, especially in the first-half, to keep Cologne out.

Dortmund's reserve goalkeeper, Australian Mitchell Langerak who produced a stellar performance in Munich last week in the 3-1 win over defending champions Bayern, was relegated back to the bench.

Cologne's ex-Bayern goalkeeper Michael Rensing had a busy second-half as he denied Lewandowski, only for Dortmund striker Lucas Barrios to then hit the cross-bar -- for the eighth time this season -- with less than 15 minutes left.

Bayern begin their recovery after the shock of Wednesday's 1-0 defeat at home to Schalke, in the semifinal of the German Cup, at Hanover on Saturday after last weekend's league defeat at home to Dortmund.

Coach Louis van Gaal has acknowledged a third straight defeat may cost him his job -- less than a fortnight after his team won at holders Inter Milan in the Champions League.



Borussia Dortmund striker Robert Lewandowski (L) shrugs off Cologne midfielder Kevin Pezzoni during their Bundesliga encounter in Dortmund on Friday.

# Abahani back on top

SPORTS REPORTER

The title race for this season's professional football league is heating up as Abahani, the defending champions and Muktijoddha Sangsad are giving each other a hard time at the top of the table.

Abahani moved back to the top of the Grameenphone Bangladesh League points table yesterday with a 2-0 victory over fourth-placed Sheikh Russel KC at the Bishreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium.

Skipper Pranotosh Kumar gave Abahani the lead on the 31st minute when he produced an excellent footwork to go past his marker and placed the ball on the far post.

Striker Shakhawat Hossain Rony sealed the match five minutes after the restart when he collected the ball from Ghanaian midfielder Yusuf Aminu before placing it over the keeper on the top of the net for his fourth goal of the campaign.

With this result, Abahani move to the top with 23 points from ten matches while Sheikh Russel stay at fourth with 18. Muktijoddha are one point behind Abahani in second having played one game less.

In today's matches, star-studded Sheikh Jamal will face off with giants Mohammedan at the Bishreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium while strugglers Arambagh and Farashganj will meet earlier at the same venue.

# A royal diplomacy

Football

AFP, London

England's failed 2018 football World Cup bid tried to use Prince Andrew's relationship with the Qatari royal family to secure a voting alliance, a report said Saturday.

It came as several newspapers rounded on Queen Elizabeth II's second son over his business links.

The British Broadcasting Corporation claimed a freedom of information request it submitted showed that diplomats and the Football Association (FA), the game's governing body in England, had worked on a strategy for Qatar's support.

Andrew, 51, the Duke of York, has served as Britain's special representative for international trade and investment since 2001 and has significant influence and contacts worldwide.

Correspondence from British diplomats in Qatar made it clear that securing the support of the Gulf state's emir would be crucial to England's chances of landing the 2018 tournament, the BBC said.

Its report said a plan was discussed to use royal influence -- Andrew in particular -- to

secure a voting alliance.

One email from a Foreign Office official said: "The advice from the ambassador in Doha is that, subject to anything that happened at that meeting, we should ask the duke to be kind enough to speak to the emir on the phone as soon as is convenient... in order to seek his support for the England bid."

It is not known if any meeting or phone call took place, the BBC said.

Andrew's office has said no lobbying took place. The FA has declined to comment.

Another email showed concerns over the eventual winning Russian bid for the 2018 tournament.

"It is the Russians who have been signalled to us consistently by the Qataris as the main threat to England," it read.

England was eliminated in the first round in December, gaining only two votes, including its own.

Prime Minister David Cameron, Prince William, the FA president and Andrew's nephew, plus former England captain David Beckham had all flown to FIFA's headquarters in Zurich in a last-ditch bid to garner support.

The 2018 tournament went to Russia, with the 2022 event heading to Qatar.



Chelsea defender David Luiz (R) awaits the start of the NBA basketball game between the New Jersey Nets and the Toronto Raptors at the O2 Arena in London on Friday.

# Tamed Tigers

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men as they now have to win at least two out of their three remaining group matches to have a chance of a quarterfinal berth.

Following the England game on March 11 and the Netherlands clash on March 14 the Tigers will return to Dhaka to play their last Group B match against South Africa on March 19 at Mirpur.

Like millions of cricket fans in the country, the high-ups of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) were also shell shocked by the humiliating defeat at the hands of West Indies team but they stated that they have full confidence and faith on the team.

But the game's governing body in the country was left in a spot of bother through the actions of bowling coach Ian Pont, who made some comments to one of the most well-known online cricket portal as well as providing them with a picture of the stoning incident from yesterday. His actions supposedly raised many eyebrows.

# MS tells fans

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"You have to control your emotions."

Bangladesh's supporters reacted angrily after seeing their side dismissed for just 58 by the West Indies in a World Cup match the visitors won by nine wickets.

"When we win a game I don't go around beating my fans, saying that you bashed my house in 2007," Dhoni said, referring to the attack on his home by fans after India were knocked out in the first round in the Caribbean.

"You have to back the players when they are not doing well. When you are winning, everybody is with you."

"Fans of cricket should be with you when you are not doing well. Those are

the real fans. Other fans just follow the wins of the team and whenever the teams are winning they are big fans of cricket."

International Cricket Council chief executive Haroon Lorgat condemned the attack on the West Indies team bus but said there were no immediate plans to move games, describing it as a "minor incident".

Angry fans also attacked the house of Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan after his team's defeat, police said in Dhaka.

Shakib's mother and sister were inside the three-storey house in the western district town of Magura when several motorcycle riders stopped and threw

stones at the house on Friday evening, local police chief Proloy Chishim said.

# The Group

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Smith said de Villiers had overcome a minor back injury.

Previous campaigns have often seen the Proteas accused of choking but, with the exception of all-rounder Jacques Kallis, few of the current squad have much in the way of a lengthy World Cup history behind them.

Significantly, an attack once over-reliant on fast bowling has been boosted by the inclusion of Pakistan-born leg-spinner Imran Tahir and he could have an important role to play on a Chidambaram pitch set to take turn.

# Wenger defends Toure

REUTERS, London

Manchester City defender Kolo Toure's failed drugs test was a result of him using his wife's weight-loss product, his former manager at Arsenal Arsene Wenger said on Friday.

Toure was suspended by his club on Thursday after testing positive for a "specified substance" in an A-sample.

The World Anti-Doping Association said that a "specified substance" is something where there could be a "credible non-doping explanation" for its presence.

City have not said what Toure tested positive for.

Wenger, speaking in his regular pre-match news conference, said he believed it was a case of the player forgetting to check if he could take something.

"He wants to control his weight a little bit because that's where he has some problems and he took the product of his wife," Wenger said.

"I just think it is a mistake by forgetting (to ask), 'Can I take that?'

"It is a complete surprise because I had Kolo Toure here for years. I brought him here. He is a boy who has a clean life, very honest-living, always at home, a family man, and I do not suspect him at all to have taken drugs to enhance his performances."

# MU aim to rebound

AFP, Manchester



Sir Alex Ferguson has told his Manchester United players that they must show the character of champions and bounce back against Liverpool on Sunday.

The Premier League leaders have endured a rotten few days after throwing away the lead to lose 2-1 at Chelsea before Ferguson was charged on Thursday by the Football Association for improper conduct.

It is hardly the ideal preparation for one of United's biggest games of the season as they look to surpass Liverpool in terms of domestic title success.

Currently locked with Liverpool on the most number of English top-flight titles won - 18 apiece - United would dearly love to take a huge step towards overtaking their bitter rivals by winning at Anfield on Sunday.

United start the weekend four points clear of nearest rivals Arsenal although Arsene Wenger's side will reduce the gap to a just single point should they defeat Sunderland on Saturday.

"At this club, you have to recover," said Ferguson, who is demanding an immediate response following the events at Chelsea, where United finished with 10 men after Nemanja Vidic was sent

off in the dying stages.

"That result has put us back but we have to recover for Sunday's game against Liverpool."

Midfielder Michael Carrick, who has just penned a new three-year contract, echoed his manager's thoughts.

"We have to forget it and move on," said Carrick. "It's a huge game on Sunday and we'll be ready for it."

"We can move on quickly. We have to. We're used to doing that and we're usually good at it. Hopefully we can bounce back again."

With Vidic suspended and Rio Ferdinand (calf) and Jonny Evans (ankle) both injured, Ferguson has something of a defensive crisis on his hands.

The United manager has confirmed that West Brown will partner Chris Smalling in the centre of defence while Patrice Evra failed to finish the game at Chelsea because of a knee problem.

"I don't think it is very serious, and anyway I'm a warrior," said the French left-back.

Liverpool manager Kenny Dalglish suffered defeat at the hands of United in his first game back in charge of the club two months ago, Ryan Giggs' second minute penalty eliminating the Merseyside club from the FA Cup.

Since then Dalglish has restored a winning mentality at Anfield although his side go into this game on the back of a 3-1 reverse at West Ham.

"Every game's very important for this football club but Liverpool versus Manchester United is a game that a lot of people look forward to," said Dalglish, who could include £35 million signing Andy Carroll if the striker can prove he has recovered from a thigh injury which has delayed his debut.

"But you get the same rewards for it regarding points, although maybe a bit more credit and you might get a few more inches in the newspaper columns if you get a positive result."

"Everybody plays football to play at the highest level they possibly can and the games between Liverpool and Manchester United are what you term as the highest category of game you can get."

# Keep your

FROM PAGE 16  
People will rightly point out that it is a very young team and to get carried away is not the greatest crime. But it is up to coach Jamie Siddons and the team management to keep them grounded. All is not lost yet, three games are still left to play.

Australian great Ian Chappell once said, "You tend to learn more from defeats than victories." The nation will hope that a harsh lesson is learnt and the lie given to the hype before next Friday.

# CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 "What's up, —?"

4 Recede

7 Prison

11 Eastern potentate

13 Aviate

14 Nevada city

15 Suitor

16 Spotted, as Tweety would say

17 Show off the muscles

18 Uppity ones

20 Fifty percent

22 Hearing organ

24 Dannon product

28 Overwhelms

32 Shinto gateway

33 — Domini

34 Two, in Tijuana

36 Hobbling

37 Stern

39 "Blazing —"

41 Frankfurter

43 "Charlotte's —"

44 Swindle

46 Consequence

50 Green gem

53 Anger

55 "Once — a time"

56 Winged

57 Poorly lit

58 California length

59 Crooner

60 It's between ar and tee

61 Baseball hat

2 Portent

3 "Arrivederci"

4 Sala-mander

5 Mediocore

6 Side road

7 "Jurassic Park" actor

8 Every iota

9 Eisenhower

10 Bagel topping

12 Cartoonist known for overly intricate devices

19 Bando of baseball

21 Parcel of land

23 Crimson

25 Kazakh river

26 Frost

27 Cravats

28 Hit hard

29 Aware of insect

31 "Mayday!"

35 Woodcutter's tool

38 Japanese pond fish

40 Society newcomer

42 Coast along

45 Singer Kristoffer-son

47 Grand story

48 Carbonated drink

49 Quick cut

50 Poke

51 "The Greatest"

52 "The Da Vinci Code" author

54 Type squares

Solution time: 24 mins.

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# CRYPTOQUIP

X FOR HX EZ O QGJEOLKZ  
QGJQIZFA OLJTY ORAJRZ'N  
JTYZG ZOG. AJT SXHIY NOA  
X'S OR OTGXFKZ JGOFKZ.

Saturday's Cryptquip: IS THE COMPULSIVE TRIMMING WHO USUALLY SWIPES FINGERNAIL-TRIMMING DEVICES A CLIPPED-O-MANIAC?

Today's Cryptquip Clue: S equals M