



Valencia goalkeeper Vicente Guaita (C) makes a save during their Primera Liga encounter against Real Madrid at Bernabeu on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

Guaita denies Real victory

AP, Barcelona



Real Madrid's bid for its first Spanish league title in four seasons received another setback Sunday after the leaders slipped to a 0-0 home draw with Valencia.

Madrid's third draw in five matches had cut its commanding 10-point lead over defending champions Barcelona to four with seven rounds to play.

Barcelona piled the pressure on with a ninth consecutive league victory on Saturday, and Madrid failed to respond as Valencia came close to scoring with two shots that hit the goal-frame in a high-tempo thrilling match that shouldn't have ended scoreless. Valencia goalkeeper Vicente Guaita ensured the good result for the visitors with a series of superb saves late on, including denying Angel Di Maria deep into stoppage time.

The result also stopped Madrid one game short of setting a club record of scoring in 42 straight games.

Elsewhere, Levante beat Atletico Madrid 2-0 to move into fourth place, Athletic Bilbao edged out Sevilla 1-0 through Fernando Llorente's second-half header, and Mallorca drew 0-0 with Granada.

Even though Valencia entered the match 30 points behind Madrid in the table, the team lived up to its third-place standing by putting up a spirited fight despite having top-scorer Roberto Soldado limited to the final 15 minutes due to physical problems.

Cristiano Ronaldo had the first scoring opportunity eight minutes in when he let loose a blistering long-range blast that rattled the woodwork.

Valencia also showed bite early on as defender Ricardo Costa headed against the post with Casillas flat on the ground after having parried Tino Costa's long-range strike in the 25th.

RESULTS

Levante 2 (Valdo 1, Kone 9)
Atletico Madrid 0
Real Mallorca 0 Granada 0
Athletic Bilbao 1
(Llorente 47) Sevilla 0
Real Madrid 0 Valencia 0

Blame it on pitch

AFP, Moscow

Russian big spenders Anzhi Makhachkala's star Cameroon striker Samuel Eto'o has blamed the poor state of the country's pitches for a goal drought that has seen him fail to score in the last five games.

Eto'o, who signed for Anzhi last year from Inter Milan in a reported \$27.9-million deal, last hit the back of the net with a penalty on November 27 and his last goal in open play dates back to November 5.

"For me the most important thing is that we play on good pitches. Then the goals will come," Eto'o was quoted as saying by the Sport Express daily after Sunday's goalless draw with CSKA.

Title fight heats up

AFP, Madrid



A midweek programme brings no respite to the battle for La Liga, as Barcelona entertain Getafe on Tuesday while leaders Real Madrid make the short trip to city rivals Atletico on Wednesday.

With seven games remaining and a trip to the Camp Nou later this month, Madrid cannot afford any more slip-ups after a 10-point gap over their rivals has been reduced to four in less than a month.

In that period Madrid have won just two out of five, drawing three matches, while Barca have been victorious in their last nine league outings.

The Catalans came from behind to beat Zaragoza 4-1 on Saturday while 24 hours later Madrid were ineffective in attack as they drew 0-0 at home to Valencia.

Barca midfielder Thiago Alcantara was quick to send out a message to Madrid after

Saturday's hard fought victory.

"Madrid will have to sweat blood to win this league," he said, as the two sides move closer to their April 21 showdown.

Barca's opponents Getafe, who sit 10th and only one point from a Europa League place, were the first of only two teams to defeat them this season.

That 1-0 defeat in November has only been followed by a 3-2 loss at Osasuna in February, as Barca have scored a club record 161 goals in 54 matches in all competitions.

They will be without Cesc Fabregas on Tuesday after he picked up his fifth yellow card against Zaragoza, while Gerard Pique and Dani Alves are both doubts with muscular problems.

Atletico Madrid will look to do Barca a favour in Wednesday's "Madrideno" derby.

Real stretched their unbeaten streak against Atletico to 22 matches in November with a 4-1 home victory and Atletico have not managed to beat their great rivals this century.

El Clasico moved forward

THE GUARDIAN

Barcelona's game with Real Madrid at Camp Nou has been brought forward by a day to 21 April.

El Clasico, which will take place between the two legs of the Champions League semifinals, has been moved from Sunday to Saturday.

Barcelona travel to Stamford Bridge to face Chelsea in the first leg of their last-four meeting three days earlier on Wednesday 18 April, with the return fixture on Tuesday 24 April.

Madrid face Bayern in the other semifinal on 17 and 25 April.

A statement on Madrid's website read: "Real Madrid will face Barcelona at the Nou Camp on Saturday, April 21 at 2000 in the 35th round of the season."

Milan aim to rebound

AFP, Rome



Massimiliano Allegri was remaining calm after a disastrous week that saw his side crash out of the Champions League and fall off the summit of Serie A.

But the AC Milan coach says he is now looking for a reaction from his players as they face seven matches to try to secure the only piece of silverware still available to them: the league title.

On Saturday Milan lost the league leadership as they were stunned 2-1 at home by struggling Fiorentina, who had been in freefall.

That came a week after a 1-1 draw at Catania with the 3-1 defeat at the Camp Nou and Champions League elimination at the hands of Barcelona sandwiched in between.

Having led Juventus by four points 10 days ago, the champions are now a point behind.

"There are still 21 points up for grabs and from a character and physical point of view

we hope to bounce back immediately and play a great match against Chievo on Tuesday," said Allegri.

"We lost but we have to remain calm. No-one expected this blip, not even us, but now we need character.

"In the remaining games we can still get a full house (21 points) so we have to keep working calmly, and in fact with even more fire. There's still a long way to go, we can win it."

Juventus, on the other hand, have put together a run of four straight wins, having previously been struggling.

They had been well ahead of Milan but six draws in seven games saw their lead disappear and turn into a deficit.

But they have found their stride at just the right time, scoring 12 goals in their last four wins, conceding none and beating the likes of Inter Milan and Napoli.

They're unbeaten in 35 games in league and cup this season and coach Antonio Conte is urging his players to keep the pedal to the metal in the final month of the season.

FIXTURES

(all 1845 GMT):

Tuesday

Chievo v AC Milan

Wednesday

Catania v Lecce, Fiorentina v

Palermo, Genoa v Cesena, Inter Milan

v Siena, Juventus v Lazio, Napoli v

Atalanta, Parma v Novara,

Roma v Udinese

Thursday

Bologna v Cagliari.

'Balotelli's season over'

AFP, London



Mario Balotelli after the striker was sent off in a 1-0 defeat at Arsenal that all but ended his side's Premier League title hopes.

Sunday's loss left City, bidding to be crowned champions of England for the first time since 1968, eight points behind leaders Manchester United with just six games left to play after the title-holders beat Queens Park Rangers 2-0 at Old Trafford earlier in the day.

As if seeing City go down to Mikel Arteta's 87th minute goal wasn't bad enough, there was still time for Mancini to witness Balotelli being sent off for a second bookable offence at the Emirates Stadium.

And for Mancini, his fellow Italian's latest transgression appeared to be the final straw as he revealed the striker would not feature again this season.

However, a City spokesman said that was because he expected the Football Association to take severe disciplinary action against the controversial 21-year-old, who is now facing a minimum three-game ban.

Asked how long he could tolerate Balotelli's behaviour, Mancini said: "I am finished. We have six games and he will not play in the next six games."

Pressed on whether he would try to sell Balotelli at the end of the season, Mancini said: "Probably -- but I don't know. It depends, because Balotelli is a fantastic player.

"I can continue to play with Mario on the pitch. Every time, we risk one sent off, like today (Sunday). But he can score also in the last minute."

Balotelli was lucky to be on the pitch when he was eventually dismissed after



PHOTO: AFP

Manchester City striker Mario Balotelli (L) is shown the red card by referee Martin Atkinson during their Premier League clash against Arsenal at the Emirates Stadium on Sunday.

referee Martin Atkinson and his linesmen somehow failed to witness his first-half knee-high tackle on Alex Song.

Mancini, reflecting on Balotelli's challenge on Song, said: "From the bench I didn't see the first tackle but it was a bad tackle (after seeing the TV replay)."

Balotelli, asked if FA chiefs should look at the tackle on Song, Mancini said "I hope so", admitting the forward deserved a lengthy ban.

He added: "I defend him always because Mario is a good guy, but if he doesn't change in the future he can lose all his talent."

"If he doesn't understand this, after two years I can't do anything. I hope for him that he can improve, that he can understand that he can't continue like this, for his future, for his talent. I'm very sorry for him for this."

Before kick-off Mancini said City had to beat Arsenal to maintain their title challenge, telling Sky Sports: "Today for us is like a final, otherwise eight points is too much."

Afterwards Mancini, asked if City's title bid was over, replied: "No, it's not mathematically (over), but it's clear now that it's very difficult."

"We have a game in three days (at home to West Brom on Wednesday) and we will try to win. Never say never in football."

He added: "In life until it's over you should do your best. In the end if we don't win it's probably because they (United) did better than us."

"It's clearly difficult (to lift the players) but we play in three days and this is good. We are a professional team, with professional players. It's important we start to win and finish the championship well."

আপনি জানেন কি?

সর্বোচ্চ মুনাফা

নিরাপদ বিনিয়োগ

মাসিক/ত্রৈমাসিক ভিত্তিতে

মুনাফা উত্তোলনের সুযোগ।

সুতরাং আর বিলম্ব নয়,

আজই জাতীয় স্বধ্বংসপত্রে বিনিয়োগ করুন।

জাতীয় স্বধ্বংসপত্রের স্বীকৃতসমূহ হচ্ছেঃ-

- ০১। পরিবার স্বধ্বংসপত্র (৫-বছর মেয়াদী); মুনাফার হারঃ ১৩.৪৫%। ১৮ বছর বা তদুর্ধ্ব বয়সের যে কোন বাংলাদেশী মহিলা একক নামে এ স্বধ্বংসপত্র ত্রয় করতে পারবেন।
- ০২। পেনশনার স্বধ্বংসপত্র (৫-বছর মেয়াদী); মুনাফার হারঃ ১৩.১৯%। অবসরপ্রাপ্ত সরকারি, আধা-সরকারি, স্বায়ত্তশাসিত, আধা-স্বায়ত্তশাসিত প্রতিষ্ঠানের সামরিক ও বেসামরিক কর্মকর্তা-কর্মচারীগণ একক নামে এ স্বধ্বংসপত্র ত্রয় করতে পারবেন।
- ০৩। ৫-বছর মেয়াদী বাংলাদেশ স্বধ্বংসপত্র; মুনাফার হারঃ ১৩.১৯%। সকল শ্রেণী ও পেশার বাংলাদেশী নাগরিক একক অথবা যুগ্ম নামে এবং স্বীকৃত ভবিষ্য তহবিল ও কর অবকাশপ্রাপ্ত প্রতিষ্ঠানসমূহ এ স্বধ্বংসপত্র ত্রয় করতে পারবেন।
- ০৪। ৩-মাস অন্তর মুনাফাভিত্তিক স্বধ্বংসপত্র (৩-বছর মেয়াদী); মুনাফার হারঃ ১২.৫৯%। যে কোন বাংলাদেশী নাগরিক একক অথবা যুগ্ম নামে এ স্বধ্বংসপত্র ত্রয় করতে পারবেন।
- ০৫। ডাকঘর স্বধ্বংসপত্র ব্যাংক মেয়াদী হিসাব (৩-বছর মেয়াদী); মুনাফার হারঃ ১৩.২৪%। যে কোন বাংলাদেশী নাগরিক একক অথবা যুগ্ম নামে এ স্বধ্বংসপত্র ত্রয় করতে পারবেন।

আপনাদের সেবায়



জাতীয় স্বধ্বংসপত্র পরিদপ্তর

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Live from 4:30pm
Delhi v Chennai
Live from 8:30pm

ESPN
Sportscenter India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm
English Premiership
Blackburn v Liverpool
Live from 1:00am (Wednesday)

TEN Sports
Serie A
Chievo v AC Milan
Live from 12:45am (Wednesday)

TEN Action
La Liga
Barcelona v Getafe
Live from 1:00am (Wednesday)

Day's Event
Bangladesh Premier League
Sk Russell v Farshadganj
Time: 4:00pm
Venue: Bangabandhu
National Stadium