

Barca rest Pique, Busquets

AFP, Madrid

Barcelona will travel to struggling Real Betis on Sunday evening without Gerard Pique or Sergio Busquets after they were left out of coach Gerardo Martino's 18-man squad.

Pique has been struggling with a groin strain in recent weeks and was also left out of Vicente del Bosque's Spain squad for the friendlies against Equatorial Guinea and South Africa later this month to allow him to recover.

Busquets will however go on international duty with the world champions and Martino explained that, with that in mind, it was better to hand him a rest and a rare starting opportunity to Alex Song.

"Sergio has played eight consecutive games, two with the national team and six with Barca," he said.

"The evaluation of Song is always very good. The response he has given in the three or four games he has played has been very positive."

Victory over AC Milan in midweek continued Barca's near perfect start to the season as they ensured their place in the last 16 of the Champions League.

The Catalans also lead La Liga, having dropped just two points in 12 games, and ahead of a two-week international break Martino doesn't want any slip ups against a Betis side that currently sit in the relegation zone.

"Betis are dangerous because they are a good team. It doesn't matter what position they are in. Anyone who watched them play against Real Madrid in the first game of the season knows they are a good side."

Calf injury sidelines Silva

REUTERS

Manchester City playmaker David Silva could be out of action for up to a month with a calf injury, manager Manuel Pellegrini said on Friday.

The Spain international, who had already missed a month of this season with a thigh injury before returning in early October, came off midway through the second half in Tuesday's 5-2 victory over CSKA Moscow in the Champions League.

"Boss confirms @21LVA (Silva) could be out for up to a month with a calf problem," the club said on its official Twitter feed.

C'Ron on the treble Hazard saves blushes

AFP, Madrid



Cristiano Ronaldo scored his third hat-trick of the season and Gareth Bale provided another assist as Real Madrid continued their impressive form with a 5-1 win over Real Sociedad on Saturday.

Ronaldo opened the scoring from Karim Benzema's pass on 12 minutes before returning the favour for the Frenchman to slot home six minutes later.

The Portuguese added the third from the penalty spot before Bale played in Sami Khedira to make it 4-0 after just 36 minutes.

Antoine Griezmann restored some pride for the visitors with his sixth goal in his last three league games after the break.

But Ronaldo rounded off the scoring with a sensational free-kick to take his tally for the season to 24 goals in just 17 games.

Victory moves Real to within two points of neighbours Atletico Madrid and three of leaders Barcelona with the top two both in action on Sunday.

Ronaldo, Bale and Benzema started together up front for the fourth consecutive game after combining for 12 goals and eight assists in the previous three.

And it didn't take the hosts long to get into their stride as Ronaldo fired a dipping long-range effort off the top of the crossbar after just eight minutes.

The Portuguese did then open the scoring four minutes later when he controlled Benzema's clever low cross inside the area before smashing the ball past the helpless

Claudio Bravo.

Bale then teed up Ronaldo for another fiercely struck effort that Bravo captured at the second attempt.

And Ronaldo turned provider moments later as his cut-back from the by-line picked out Benzema inside the box and he stroked home his eighth goal of the season.

It was 3-0 before the half-hour mark as Markel Bergara was harshly penalised for handling Ronaldo's fiercely struck effort and the former Manchester United man stepped up to double his tally for the afternoon.

Bale then passed up his first big opportunity when he side-footed wide after being played in by the impressive Luka Modric.

However, the Welshman made amends nine minutes before the break when he provided his fifth assist in four games by playing in Khedira to fire home from the edge of the area.

Bale's hunt for a goal of his own continued just before the break as he headed Alvaro Arbeloa's cross wide.

With the game already won, Real's intensity dropped a little after the interval and Griezmann thought he should have won a penalty on the hour mark as he looked to have been clipped as he rounded Diego Lopez.

Just 60 seconds later, though, the Frenchman did notch a consolation with a lovely chipped finish over Lopez from Carlos Vela's pass.

Griezmann could even have had a second moments later when he prodded just wide of the far post. Typically, however, Ronaldo was to have the final say as he rattled home a wonderful 25-yard free-kick 14 minutes from time to seal his 23rd hat-trick for Madrid.

AFP, London



A fiercely disputed 96th-minute Eden Hazard penalty saw Chelsea snatch a 2-2 draw with West Bromwich Albion on

Saturday to preserve Jose Mourinho's unbeaten home record in league games.

The Chelsea manager was heading for his first home defeat in 66 matches when Steven Reid was contentiously adjudged to have fouled Ramires and Hazard held his nerve amid angry West Brom protests to roll home an equaliser.

Samuel Eto'o had put the hosts in front, but West Brom hit back through Shane Long and Stephane Sessegnon to take Chelsea to the brink of a second consecutive league defeat following last weekend's 2-0 loss at Newcastle United.

Despite Hazard's equaliser, the Europa League champions slipped to fourth place, four points below leaders Arsenal, who could move even further clear if they win at Manchester United on Sunday.

Mourinho had restored Hazard to his starting XI after the Belgian attacking midfielder was dropped for the mid-week win over Schalke following his late return from an authorised trip to France.

The 22-year-old seemed eager to

RESULTS

Aston Villa 2 (Bacuna 76, Kozak 84) **Cardiff 0** Chelsea 2 (Eto'o 45, Hazard 90-pen) **West Brom 2** (Long 61, Sessegnon 68)

Liverpool 4 (Amorebieta 23-og, Skrtel 26, Suarez 36, 54) **Fulham 0** **Southampton 4** (Schneiderlin 16, Lambert 30-pen, Lallana 37, Davis 88) **Hull 1** (Sagbo 55) **Crystal Palace 0** v **Everton 0**

atone and was the catalyst for his side's opener on the stroke of half-time, with a low shot that was pushed out by West Brom goalkeeper Boaz Myhill, only for Eto'o to poke the rebound home.

Chelsea led for only 16 minutes, however, with Long outjumping John Terry and Frank Lampard to head home an equaliser after Petr Cech had pushed Gareth McAuley's powerful header into the air.

Things got worse for Chelsea in the 68th minute and Cech bore a sizeable degree of culpability, allowing a tame shot from Sessegnon to squirm beneath him.

West Brom manager Steve Clarke, Mourinho's former assistant, looked destined to enjoy a famous victory over his former mentor, only for referee Andre Marriner to point to the spot after Ramires threw himself against Reid and went down, to the anger and

disbelief of the visiting players.

Liverpool capitalised on Chelsea's slip-up by crushing Fulham 4-0 at Anfield to climb to second place, two points below Arsenal.

Manager Brendan Rodgers reacted to his side's 2-0 defeat at Arsenal by jettisoning his experiment with a three-man defence and the changes seemed to have a positive effect as the hosts romped to victory.

An own goal from Fernando Amorebieta, a Martin Skrtel header and a Luis Suarez effort put Liverpool 3-0 up inside 36 minutes, with Suarez adding a second goal in the 54th minute to take his tally of league goals to eight.

New England call-up Adam Lallana impressed in front of watching national coach Roy Hodgson as surprise package Southampton climbed to third in the table with a 4-1 win at home to Hull City.

Lallana has been called into the England squad alongside uncapped team-mate Jay Rodriguez, but it was another of Southampton's England internationals, Rickie Lambert, who tipped the game in the home side's favour.

It was from a Lambert knock-down that Morgan Schneiderlin headed Southampton into a 16th-minute lead and the 31-year-old striker made it 2-0 with an emphatic penalty after Lallana was felled by Steve Harper.

Jose bemoans schedule

AFP, London

Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho has accused the compilers of the Premier League's fixture list of putting his team at a disadvantage.

His complaint stems from the fact that Chelsea are the only English team to have played in the Champions League this week who face a league fixture on Saturday, when they welcome West Bromwich Albion to Stamford Bridge.

In contrast, Arsenal, Manchester United and Manchester City are all in action on Sunday, and Mourinho believes those in charge of the league schedule are having fun at Chelsea's expense.

"I think they laugh. They know what they can do and laugh, because I can do nothing," said the Portuguese, whose side won 3-0 at home to Schalke in the Champions League on Wednesday.

"The people who decide the fixtures, I don't know who they are, but what I know is that they think we're special and give us the right fixtures. We're the only ones who play Wednesday and Saturday.

"I feel our match is very special because from every English team involved in European competitions, especially the ones involved in Champions League matches, we're the only team that play Saturday."

Reveillere joins Napoli

REUTERS, Paris

France fullback Anthony Reveillere has joined Napoli as a free agent, the player and Serie A club said on Friday.

Reveillere, 33, who left Olympique Lyonnais in June but failed to find a new club in the close season, has signed until the end of the campaign, local media reported.

"I'm very happy to be a Napoli player," Reveillere wrote on his Twitter feed, replying to a welcome tweet from the Naples club's owner Aurelio De Laurentiis.

Reveillere, who likes to attack, has 20 caps and collected five Ligue 1 titles and two French Cups during 10 seasons at Lyon. He has also has played 77 times in the Champions League.

Blatter insistent on winter World Cup

AFP, Abu Dhabi



FIFA president Sepp Blatter confirmed on Friday that he would favour playing the controversial 2022 Qatar World Cup in

November and December.

"We are starting the consultations to bring it to the winter time. It can only be done in November-December, not January-February," Blatter told reporters in Abu Dhabi, where he will attend this weekend's under-17 World Cup final between Nigeria and Mexico.

Meanwhile, the head of world football said he would also be prepared to listen to Qatar's response to accusations of abuse of workers.

Qatar has come under fire over the treatment of migrant workers who are employed to build the massive infrastructure needed for the tournament.

"A clock has a ding-dong", Blatter said.

"I have listened to the ding from lots of journalists... and critics, and I am going there (to Qatar) to listen to the dong."

The prospect of moving the 2022 World Cup from its traditional June and July slot to January-February has angered winter sports federations because of a possible clash with that year's Winter Olympics.

Winter sports federations and broadcasters argue that a high-profile football event clashing with their own seasons would dent television audiences and revenues.

But putting the staging of the World Cup back to the end of the year would appease them, while also meaning that the tournament would interfere with the 2022-23 football season rather than 2021-22.

The world of football is already split, with critics saying the climate issue could hardly have escaped FIFA's notice when Qatar initially bid for the hosting of the tournament.

Marcelo out of Brazil friendlies

REUTERS, Sao Paulo

Real Madrid's Brazil left back Marcelo will miss this month's international friendlies against Honduras and Chile with a knee injury, the Brazilian Football Confederation said on Friday.

Marcelo was injured in training with his club earlier on Friday and Spanish media said he would be sidelined for two weeks.

"Following examinations and scans carried out today (Friday) on our player Marcelo at Sanitas-La Moraleja hospital, he has been diagnosed with traumatic arthritis in the left knee," Madrid said on their website.

Brazil have not called up a replacement and Paris Saint Germain's Maxwell is set to fill in at left back.

Bayern set new record

AFP, Berlin



European champions Bayern Munich set a new record for the longest unbeaten run in Bundesliga history with a 3-0 victory at home to Augsburg on Saturday.

Bayern have now gone 37 league matches since their last defeat, at Bayer Leverkusen in October 2012, breaking Hamburg's previous record of 36 set in January, 1983.

The Champions League holders opened the scoring at Munich's Allianz Arena when Germany centre-back Jerome Boateng headed home from a corner after just five minutes.

France winger Franck Ribery then smashed home a direct free-kick on 42 minutes before Germany's Thomas Mueller netted a penalty in the fifth minute of injury time.

Bayern, who now have 31 wins in their last 37 Bundesliga matches, were without Germany's Bastian Schweinsteiger, who will miss the forthcoming internationals against Italy and England with an ankle injury.

It was Bayern's second milestone of the week after they equalled Barcelona's record from the 2002/03 season of nine consecutive Champions League wins with a 1-0 at Viktoria Pilsen.

Breaking records is nothing remarkable

RESULTS

Bayern Munich 3 (J. Boateng 5, Ribery 42, Mueller 90+5-pen) **Augsburg 0**

Schalke 04 3 (K-P. Boateng 64, 85, Farfan 90+1) **Werder Bremen 1** (F. Kroos 22)

Bayer Leverkusen 5 (Son 9, 16, 55, Kiessling 72, Castro 89) **Hamburg 3** (Beister 23, Lasogga 49, 74)

VfL Wolfsburg 2 (Rodriguez 56, Olic 69) **Borussia Dortmund 1** (Reus 45+2)

Hoffenheim 2 (Salihovic 70-pen, 81) **Hertha Berlin 3** (Ben-Hatira 13, Ramos 53-pen, 84)

for Bayern these days having set or equalled 25 league records under Pep Guardiola's predecessor Jupp Heynckes last season.

More importantly, Bayern extended their lead at the top of the table to four points as second-placed Borussia Dortmund went down 2-1 at VfL Wolfsburg.

It was Dortmund's second defeat of the week after losing to 1-0 at home to Arsenal in the Champions League.

After Germany winger Marco Reus put Dortmund ahead with a thunderbolt of a free kick on the stroke of half-time, Wolves hit back to pick up their fourth straight victory to leave them fourth.