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## Bale out of Liverpool clash?

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti has said he will evaluate the fitness of Gareth Bale ahead of his side's Champions League trip to Liverpool on Wednesday.

The Welshman was an unused substitute in Madrid's 5-0 win at Levante on Saturday after returning to the Spanish capital with a gluteal muscle injury picked up in playing for his country last week.

And with the first El Clasico of the season at home to Barcelona to come next weekend, Ancelotti insisted he would be taking no risks with Bale's fitness for the game at Anfield.

"He had a problem in his glute. He wasn't comfortable so we preferred to not risk it for this game and we will evaluate it in the next few days. He wasn't left out due to rotation," said the Italian.

Ancelotti was also without French duo Karim Benzema and Raphael Varane in Valencia due to a fever, whilst Sergio Ramos continues to be sidelined by a calf injury. Modric also limped off, but is set to return according to the coach.

## Villa strikes again

AFP, Sydney

Spanish star David Villa rescued a 1-1 draw for Melbourne City with his second goal in two Australian A-League games on Sunday.

The World Cup winner struck a fabulous equaliser from the edge of the box in the 87th minute to share the points with the Newcastle Jets.

"He needs only a little moment," City's Dutch coach John van't Schip said of Villa.



Liverpool players celebrate their 3-2 victory after the end of yesterday's game, as two QPR defenders are left with their heads down. QPR conceded 2 own goals in the game, leading to their downfall. PHOTO: AFP

# Late drama lifts Liverpool

AFP, London

Liverpool's Raheem Sterling ended a difficult week on a high as the teenager inspired his side's dramatic 3-2 win over QPR in an incredible finish featuring three goals in stoppage-time at Loftus Road on Sunday.

The 19-year-old's commitment to his country and passion for the sport were questioned recently, but Sterling made a point to the critics as he played the entire 90 minutes at Loftus Road and produced two key contributions to seal the points for Brendan Rodgers' men.

With Hodgson watching from the stands, Sterling, who began his career as a QPR trainee, won a free-kick which led to Hoops defender Richard Dunne turning into the net for Liverpool's second half opener.

That set the stage for an astonishing finale as Eduardo Vargas equalised with three minutes left, only for Philippe Coutinho to restore Liverpool's lead in the 90th minute.

Vargas levelled again in stoppage-time, but Liverpool still emerged with three points thanks to Sterling, whose

cross was deflected into his own net by QPR defender Steven Caulker with virtually the last kick of the match.

Not for the first time this season, Liverpool were well below their best for long periods, but somehow they were able to secure a morale-boosting victory.

Liverpool's notoriously creaky defence remained in danger of crumbling and there was a moment of mayhem in the visitors' area when Martin Skrtel's poor clearance let in Zamora down the right.

Fer should have punished goalkeeper Simon Mignolet's failure to collect Zamora's cross, but his header hit the bar before Sandro's attempt to force in the rebound was hacked clear by Johnson.

Rodgers' side were faring no better in front of goal and Mario Balotelli's lethargic performance was summed up when he somehow blazed over an open goal from close range after Adam Lallana's shot was pushed into the Italian's path by QPR goalkeeper Alex McCarthy's fine save.

Sterling had been the catalyst for that Liverpool break and the teenager played a key role again when the Reds took the lead in the 67th minute.

Battling for possession on the right flank, Sterling won a free-kick which he cleverly took quickly while QPR were still regrouping.

With QPR suddenly exposed, Johnson took Sterling's pass and whipped over a low cross that Dunne miscued into his own net as he tried to clear.

Vargas made Liverpool with an 87th minute equaliser as the substitute smashed in a goal.

After looking lethargic in attack for so long, Liverpool were suddenly provoked into life and Coutinho looked to have won it when he finished a flowing move between Sterling and Steven Gerrard with a fine low strike in the 90th minute.

Yet remarkably there was even more drama to come in stoppage-time as Vargas flicked in a near post header that crept past Mignolet and just over the line.

QPR barely had time to celebrate their apparent escape before Liverpool provided the final twist. Coutinho's pass set Sterling away down the left edge of the QPR area and he sent in a cross which was deflected past the wrong-footed McCarthy to give Liverpool a win.

# Roma move within 1 point of Juventus

AFP, Rome



later.

Chievo had scored just once on six previous visits to the Stadio Olimpico and barely mustered a shot on goal all night as Roma went about their business with consummate ease.

Roma took the lead after only four minutes when Mattia Destro dived to head Miralem Pjanic's corner past Francesco Bardi and Adem Ljajic doubled the hosts' lead in fine style on 26 minutes after some good work by Totti.

Roma wrapped up the points in the 32nd minute when Totti slammed a spot-kick past Bardi after Daniele De Rossi had been hauled down on the edge of the six-yard box by Dainelli as the pair tangled at a corner.

Leaders Juventus saw their 13-game winning streak come to an end in a 1-1 draw

## RESULTS

Fiorentina 0 Lazio 2 (Djordjevic 35, Lulic 90+2)  
Atalanta 1 (Boakye 90) Parma 0  
Cagliari 2 (Avelar 59-pen, Sau 77) Sampdoria 2 (Gabbiani 28, Obiang 38)  
Verona 1 (Lopez 87) Milan 3 (Marques 21-og, Honda 27, 56)  
Palermo 2 (Dybala 33, Gonzalez 90+1) Cesena 1 (Rodriguez 61-pen)

away to rock-bottom Sassuolo on Saturday as title rivals Roma closed to within one point of the Serie A lead.

Juventus looked like securing a win after Paul Pogba levelled Simone Zaza's 13th minute strike but Massimiliano Allegri's visitors struggled to find a way through a determined home defence. Juventus remain top, dropping their first points this season.

Milan travelled to the Bentegodi stadium looking for their second successive win and they got just that as Keisuke Honda scored a brace to lift Milan 3-1 against Verona and to put himself at the top of the goal scoring charts.

# Kolkata held at home

GOAL

Ten men Atletico de Kolkata were held to a 1-1 draw by Delhi Dynamos on Sunday at the Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata. Jofre Mateu successfully converted his penalty to put Kolkata into the lead, however Elias scored a gem of a goal to restore parity.

After some early exchanges, the first opportunity of the match came the travellers' way. Having received the ball from the right flank, Alessandro Del Piero, the skipper of the side, showed glimpses of his skills inside the box, but went down too easily after a tackle by Josemi. The referee booked the Italian for simulation, but it looked like a harsh decision since there was contact and it was arguably a penalty.

Delhi had some bad luck as Shylo Malswamtuanga's shot from outside the box after receiving a routine pass from Del Piero bounced off the post and went out for a goal-kick.

The hosts, however, didn't have to wait much to draw the first blood, as Wim Raymaekers pulled Fikru down by his shirt after the latter received a through ball from Jofre Mateu. The referee pointed to the spot and Mateu sent Vout on the wrong side to put the ball into the net.

Dynamos equalised by scoring their first goal this season in the 74th minute, when Pavel Elias unleashed a top quality effort from 25 yards out after Atletico's clearance landed at his feet.

The match also saw Del Piero involved in a brawl after his challenge on Denzil Franco irked the Atletico players and mayhem broke out, only to be stopped by the referee.

Atletico were down to ten men in the 89th minute as Rakesh Masih earned his second yellow in seven minutes, this time for an unnecessary challenge on Del Piero and Santosh Kumar had no hesitation in giving him the marching orders.

Atletico de Kolkata faced lost their first points of the season, winning their opening two games and Delhi should be pleased with the result.

In the day's other game, NorthEast United FC managed to comeback after being a goal down to share the spoils with FC Goa as the two sides played out a 1-1 draw at the Indira Gandhi Athletic Stadium in Guwahati.

Gregory Arnolin scored his second goal in as many matches to put his side in an advantageous position only for the referee to award a controversial penalty which saw Koke convert from the spot to equalize in the first half.

The match ended with the scores level and both teams will be disappointed with the result, especially FC Goa, as they are yet to win a game in the tournament.



Lionel Messi celebrates his goal against Eibar with his teammates. Messi scored one goal and played a part in two more. PHOTO: AFP

# Koeman in shock

AFP, Southampton



Southampton manager Ronald Koeman said he was "in shock" after his side continued their outstanding start to the season with an 8-0 thrashing of Sunderland at St Mary's.

Koeman has done fantastically with this victory leaving Southampton third in the table, with only champions Manchester City and leaders Chelsea above them in the standings.

Graziano Pelle's double, as well as goals from Jack Cork, Dusan Tadic, Victor Wanyama and Sadio Mane, plus two Sunderland own-goals, saw Southampton to their biggest-ever victory in English top-flight football.

"I'm very pleased. Still a little bit in shock. That 8-0 is not a normal result," said 51-year-old Koeman.

"I was surprised after 20 minutes about the score. 2-0 up and we didn't start the game well. Sunderland were dominating and we had problems. Lucky by the first one, the own goal, gave us a little bit more confi-

dence and we woke up after that.

"I'm very proud about the second half. We had 17 players out in the international break and if you show ambition until the last second it is great. That was important. We played great football, we scored great goals and it was a great afternoon."

Meanwhile Sunderland manager Gus Poyet was left contemplating one of his worst days in football.

"Where do I start? First, it was the most embarrassing (moment) I've had on a football pitch without any doubt," he said.

"I feel sorry for the supporters," he added of the more than 2,500 Sunderland fans who made the long journey down from the north-east.

"It's going to be a difficult week. The players who are on the pitch next week are going to do something about it. I don't think I want to watch that again. Sometimes I make clips. I wouldn't have time to make as many clips as I need. Maybe the players will watch it. Maybe it will be good therapy for them to watch themselves."

# Barca, Atletico secure wins

AFP, Madrid



After a frustrating opening 45 minutes, Barca finally went in front when Xavi Hernandez dinked home his first goal of the season from Lionel Messi's slide rule pass on the hour mark.

Neymar then volleyed home to double the hosts' advantage before the Brazilian teed up Messi to drive home the third and take the Argentine to within one goal of equalling Telmo Zarra as the all-time leading scorer in La Liga.

Messi was looking to celebrate the 10th anniversary of his Barca debut this week by breaking the record, but he was frustrated by Eibar's massed ranks of well-organised defenders during the opening 45 minutes.

Looking to catch up with Barcelona, Atletico Madrid moved back to within five points of the leaders with a 2-0 win over Espanyol on Sunday thanks to goals from Tiago and Mario Suarez.

Tiago opened the scoring with a wonderful looping header into the far corner from Gabi's cross two minutes before half-time to settle the hosts' nerves.

The Portuguese midfielder then limped off early in the second-half, making him a doubt for Atletico's Champions League game against Malmo in midweek.

However, his replacement Suarez had the easy task of tapping home the second from Jose Gimenez's header 20 minutes from time.

Victory takes Atletico back into the top four, but Sevilla can reclaim fourth spot with a win over Elche later on Sunday, whilst Valencia can also close the gap on Barca to two points when they travel to Deportivo la Coruna.

The home side continued to enjoy the majority of the play, though, and made the breakthrough just before half-time when Gabi's cross to the far post was looped back across goal and over the helpless Casilla from Tiago.

Espanyol had claims for a penalty waved away 25 minutes from time when Cristian Stuani tumbled under pressure from Gimenez in the box, but within 60 seconds it was Casillas who was forced into action as he repelled Mario Mandzukic's low drive.

Atletico made the game safe on 70 minutes as Espanyol struggled to defend a corner and Gimenez's header across goal was tapped home by Suarez for his first goal in two years.

# Wenger rues lack of focus

AFP, London

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger has said his players do not currently possess the ruthlessness to challenge Chelsea and Manchester City for the Premier League title.

The Gunners were held to a 2-2 draw at home to Hull City on Saturday and required a stoppage-time equaliser from England forward Danny Welbeck to avoid losing the game.

That result left them 11 points behind leaders Chelsea and six behind reigning champions Manchester City, with Southampton, West Ham and Manchester United also now above them in the table.

Wenger made it clear he felt Hull should have been beaten, and that a lack of focus by experienced players was the main reason why Arsenal failed to win.

"Of course I cannot say it's not a concern," the veteran French boss said. "It's a big concern because the other teams win their games and we don't."

"It was a disappointing afternoon because we had 80 percent possession and got one point. We had absolutely to win this game and were unlucky. We came out of the dressing room with a lack of focus and gave them (Hull) the lead straight away," Wenger added.

"The first goal is for the referee," Wenger added. "The second one is for us and I told the players that. They had two shots on goal in the whole game," said Wenger.