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Juventus in 7th heaven

AFP, Milan



Juventus trounced Parma 7-0 at the Juventus Stadium yesterday, with 3 players scoring braces. Fernando Llorente opened the scoring in the 23rd minute, before adding another in the 36th minute. Carlos Tevez and 71st minute substitute Alvaro Morata also scored braces with Stephan Lichtsteiner adding a goal.

Juventus now have 28 points, securing a 6 point lead over AS Roma at the top of the table. Parma however, dropped to the bottom of the table with only 6 points from eleven games. Roma will have the opportunity to close the gap at the top when they take on Torino later in the day.

In Milan, AC Milan drew against high-flying Sampdoria 2-2.

El Shaarawy had missed most of last season due to injury problems and falling down the club's pecking order following the signings of Mario Balotelli and Japan forward Keisuke Honda.

But under the watchful eye of Italy coach Antonio Conte, the 22-year-old gave the visitors an early lead with a fine strike from the edge of the area.

Stefano Okaka hit a leveller on the stroke of half-time and after Eder gave Sinisa Mihajlovic's side a 51st minute lead Menez beat Sergio Romero from the spot after a Djamel Mesbah handball.

Sampdoria's fifth draw allowed them to replace Lazio in third to sit five points adrift of leaders Juventus ahead of the champions' home game against Parma on Sunday.

Milan remain in seventh spot, eight points behind Juve but only two ahead of city rivals Inter, who host Verona on Sunday.

The prospect of dropping further down the table likely spurred the Rossoneri at what was a difficult venue to pick up points but El Shaarawy allayed fears with a fine strike in the ninth minute.

Milan looked to have done enough for a half-time lead but were stunned when Okaka powered into the box to beat defender Daniele Bonera to Gabbiadini's cross to bundle past Lopez.

Okaka had a hand in Samp's second goal six minutes after the restart when he rose to meet a corner from the right. The ball came back off the post and Eder was quickest to the rebound as Milan vainly protested offside.

The visitors began pressing for the leveller and were handed a lifeline minutes later when Mesbah handled Menez's pass and the French international stepped up to roll the ball past Romero.

Milan also saw Bonera sent off for a second bookable offence five minutes from the whistle when he blocked Okaka's run as the Italian powered towards the area.

RESULTS

Sassuolo 0 Atalanta 0
Sampdoria 2 (Okaka 45+1, Eder 51) AC Milan 2 (El Shaarawy 9, Menez 65)
Cagliari 1 (Farias 16) Genoa 1 (Rossetini 53-og)
Chievo 2 (Pellissier 48, 90) Cesena 1 (Djuric 88)
Empoli 2 (Barba 52, Maccarone 55) Lazio 1 (Djordjevic 66)
Juventus 7 (Llorente 23, 36, Lichtsteiner 29, Tevez 49, 58, Morata 76, 88) Parma 0



Back with a bang: Real Madrid forward Gareth Bale (L) celebrates his first goal after returning from injury with Pepe (R) as Real beat Rayo Vallecano at the Santiago Bernabeu yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Five-star Real retain pole position

AFP, Madrid



Gareth Bale scored on his return to the Real Madrid starting line-up for the first time in a month as the European champions beat Rayo Vallecano 5-1 on Saturday, securing a

two point lead over Barcelona at the top of La Liga.

Bale took just nine minutes to make his mark as he slid in to turn home Toni Kroos's low cross before Sergio Ramos's fortunate looping effort doubled Madrid's lead.

An awful attempted backpass from James Rodriguez gave Rayo hope just before half-time as Alberto Bueno reduced the arrears, but Kroos restored the hosts' two-goal advantage with his first goal for the club.

Karim Benzema added a dubi-

ous fourth despite being clearly in an offside position before Cristiano Ronaldo registered his 23rd goal of the season thanks to some generous goalkeeping from Cristian Alvarez.

Real boss Carlo Ancelotti reserved special praise for the impact Kroos is having in his first season in the Spanish capital.

"Kroos was the best player on the pitch. He scored for the first time and he has surprised me for how consistently he is performing at a very high level."

A pelvic muscle injury had kept Bale on the sidelines for five games prior to his return as a second-half substitute against Liverpool in midweek, and there were positive signs for Welsh boss Chris Coleman as he looked back to his best ahead of his country's Euro 2016 qualifiers against Belgium and Israel.

Bale was on hand to prod home the opener from close range after a

neat one-two between Kroos and Ronaldo.

Ronaldo then uncharacteristically blazed over from inside the area and Alvarez did well to turn a curling effort from Rodriguez wide.

However, from the resulting corner Ramos made it 2-0 when the ball fortunately ricocheted off his thigh into the top corner.

Rayo were gifted a reward for their neat possession football two minutes before the break, though, as Rodriguez passed the ball straight to Leo Baptista and the on-loan Atletico Madrid striker squared for Bueno to slot into an empty net.

Baptista thought he had brought Rayo level 10 minutes into the second period, but the goal was ruled out for a marginal offside call and within seconds Madrid had put the game to bed.

Ronaldo cut the ball back for Kroos 25 yards from goal and the German World Cup winner bent

RESULTS

Sevilla 1 (Vitto 31) Levante 1 (Casadesus 80)
Getafe 0 Elche 0
Real Madrid 5 (Bale 9, Ramos 40, Kroos 55, Benzema 59, Ronaldo 83) Rayo Vallecano 1 (Bueno 44)
Malaga 2 (Juanmi 52, Amrabat 89) Eibar 1 (Arruabarrena 42)

home his first goal for the club with a low precise finish.

Four minutes later it was 4-1 as Benzema turned home Ronaldo's miscued shot and this time the goal did stand despite the Frenchman being clearly in an offside position.

Bale was denied a sensational second of the night when Alvarez turned his thunderous volley onto the bar, but the 'keeper undid his good work when he allowed Ronaldo's weak effort through his body to round off a 13th consecutive victory in all competitions for Madrid.

Dortmund hit bottom

AFP, Berlin

Borussia Dortmund went bottom of the Bundesliga for the first time in seven years on Saturday with Jurgen Klopp's team now desperate to avoid a sixth straight league defeat.

Dortmund won the Bundesliga in 2011 and 2012 and were runners up in 2013 and 2014.

Klopp's side dropped to 18th in the German table when Werder Bremen beat VfB Stuttgart 2-0 on Saturday, a result that lifted them off the bottom.

Now rock-bottom Dortmund face a home game with high-flying Borussia Moenchengladbach, who are third, on Sunday.

The last time that 2013 Champions League finalists Dortmund found themselves bottom of the Bundesliga was August 2007, before Klopp came.

Dortmund's dire domestic form is sharply contrasted by their European campaign having already qualified for the last 16 in the Champions League with two games to spare after four consecutive wins.

Beckham's son joins Gunners

INTERNET

David Beckham's son Brooklyn Beckham looks set for stardom, having signed a one year deal with Arsenal FC, reportedly snubbing offers from Manchester United and Chelsea.

The 15-year-old has impressed Gunners coaches so much that the club have offered him a short-term contract.

David Beckham's eldest son has been training with Arsenal, who are already plotting an improved longer-term deal if he 'continues to shine' with his performances in the coming year.

Aguero bails out Man City

AFP, London



Sergio Aguero spared Manchester City another embarrassing defeat as the Argentine striker's late equaliser salvaged a 2-2 draw against QPR on Saturday.

Aguero netted his second goal of a dramatic encounter with just three minutes left at rain-lashed Loftus Road, but this was another alarmingly sloppy display from the struggling Premier League champions.

Manuel Pellegrini's team were well below their best again just three days after suffering a shock home defeat against CSKA Moscow that left them in danger of elimination from the Champions League.

Charlie Austin had given QPR a

deserved early lead and it needed an Aguero equaliser tinged with controversy to level the score before half-time.

A Martin Demichelis own goal in the closing stages put second bottom QPR back in front, but Aguero remains the one bright spot in a difficult campaign for City and he came to their rescue in the final moments.

Aguero's heroics couldn't hide the latest in a growing list of underwhelming City displays and they need to improve quickly to catch leaders Chelsea, who are now eight points clear of their title rivals.

Newcastle United's impressive revival continued as they climbed into seventh place in the English Premier League table with a 2-0 win away to West Bromwich Albion on Sunday.

Goals from Ayoze Perez and Fabricio Coloccini at The Hawthorns saw north-east side Newcastle, who struggled at the start of the season, extend their unbeaten league run to five straight games -- a sequence that now includes four successive victories.

Elsewhere, Stoke City also moved up into the top half of the table with a 2-1 victory away to Tottenham Hotspur that ended the north London club's run of three straight wins in all competitions.

Former Barcelona star Bojan Krkic scored his first Premier League goal in fine style to give Stoke a sixth-minute lead at White Hart Lane when he cut inside from the left wing and ran at the retreating Spurs back four before unleashing a hard, low shot into the corner.

Stoke were 2-0 up in the 33rd

RESULTS

QPR 2 (Austin 21, Demichelis 76-og) Manchester City 2 (Aguero 32, 83)
Sunderland 1 (Larsson 67) Everton 1 (Baines 76-pen) Tottenham 1 (Chadli 77) Stoke 2 (Bojan 6, Walters 33)

minute when, after a poor clearance by Spurs's Danny Rose, Mame Diouf burst into the area and squared the ball to Jonathan Walters, who finished with his left foot.

Tottenham pulled a goal back in the 77th minute when Nacer Chadli met Rose's cross with a powerful finish.

Sunday's other early kick-off match in the English top flight saw Sunderland and Everton share the points in a 1-1 draw at the Stadium of Light.

Openers power Pakistan

AFP, Abu Dhabi



Opener Ahmed Shehzad hit a brilliant hundred to steer Pakistan to 269-1 at close on the opening day of the first Test against New Zealand in Abu Dhabi on Sunday.

Shehzad was 126 not out for his third Test hundred -- all made this year -- but fellow opener Mohammad Hafeez missed his by four runs as New Zealand's pace-cum spin attack toiled hard on an unresponsive pitch at Sheikh Zayed Stadium.

Azhar Ali was unbeaten on 46, having added 91 for the unbroken second wicket stand with Shehzad.

In all Shehzad hit 14 boundaries during his 290-ball stay and even a second new ball after 80 overs did not waver his con-

centration.

Hafeez and Shehzad put on Pakistan's best stand of 178 against New Zealand in all Tests, beating the 172-run partnership between Rameez Raja and Shoaib Mohammad in the Karachi Test in 1990.

Hafeez though failed to reach his sixth hundred when he gave a return catch to Corey Anderson. He hit ten boundaries during his 212-minute stay at the crease.

New Zealand were unlucky in the first session as they missed two good chances.

SCORES IN BRIEF

PAKISTAN: First innings 269 for 1 in 90 overs (Shehzad 126 not out, Hafeez 96, Azhar 46 not out; Anderson 1-31)

NEW ZEALAND: McCullum, Latham, Williamson, Taylor, Anderson, Watling, Neesham, Craig, Southee, Boult, Sodhi.



Manchester City's Sergio Aguero evades two QPR defenders before scoring his second goal at Loftus Road on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

Drab day in ISL

GOAL.COM

FC Goa and Mumbai City played out a goalless draw at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium leaving the home side at the bottom of the table in the Indian Super League (ISL). Both sides created chances but failed to get off the mark as Mumbai moved up the table to fourth with the point.

Anelka had a chance to put his side into the lead in the 69th minute but saw his free-kick being punched away by Seda.

In the 83rd minute, Anelka played on Subash who had tons of space to run into but his cross towards the far post to Ralte was poor.

Kerala Blasters and Delhi Dynamos failed to capitalize on the chances that came their way and as a consequence, the game ended in a 0-0 draw at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, Kochi.

In the 53rd minute, Del Piero flicked on for Robert who seeing James off his line, decided to lob but his effort was way off the mark.

Around the hour mark, Del Piero had a chance to weave his magic from the set-piece but his free-kick went straight into the hands of James.

Kerala were lucky not to be down to ten men as Del Piero's cross found Bruno Arias cut inside and saw his shot blocked by Cedric Hengbart using his hands.

The game ended with the same score line as the two teams' position on the Indian Super League (ISL) standings remained unchanged.

Sociedad job for Moyes?

AFP, Madrid

Former Manchester United manager David Moyes is set to make a return to football with La Liga strugglers Real Sociedad, various Spanish media sources reported on Sunday.

Moyes was sacked in April after less than a season in charge of United.

The Basques have been looking for a new boss since Jagoba Arrasate was sacked last weekend after just one win in their opening 10 league games.

Reports suggest that an official announcement will not be made until after Sociedad's clash at home to La Liga champions Atletico Madrid on Sunday evening with coaches Asier Santana and Imanol Alguacil taking temporary charge of the side.