

Lewy risks Clasico absence with injury

AFP, BARCELONA

Barcelona striker Robert Lewandowski could miss the first Clasico of the season against Real Madrid on October 28 after spraining his ankle in Wednesday's Champions League win over Porto.

Lewandowski came off in the first half and faces up to a month out, according to reports in Spain. Substitute Ferran Torres scored to give Barcelona a hard-fought 1-0 win at Porto.

Barcelona gave no indication how long the Poland international would be sidelined, but said he "will be out of action until the injury heals."

He will be unavailable for Sunday's trip to Granada in La Liga, and faces a race against time to return against Madrid at the end of the month.

He is also expected to be ruled out of Poland's Euro 2024 qualifiers against the Faroe Islands and Moldova.

Lewandowski was hurt in a challenge with Porto defender David Carmo, and joins Pedri, Frenkie de Jong and Raphinha on the treatment table at Barcelona. The 35-year-old has scored six times in 10 games for Barcelona this season, with five of those goals coming in the league.



Newcastle United defender Dan Burn celebrates with his teammates after scoring his team's second goal during their 4-1 victory over French giants PSG in the Champions League at St James' Park on Wednesday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

GUARDIOLA delighted with Alvarez's huge impact



AGENCIES

Holders Manchester City struck twice in the final minutes through Julian Alvarez and Jeremy Doku to beat hosts RB Leipzig 3-1 on Wednesday and rebound from successive domestic defeats to take control of Champions League Group G with maximum points.

Alvarez curled his shot from the edge of the box into the top corner in the 84th minute and then set up Doku in stoppage time for their third goal as City, who had lost to Newcastle United in the EFL Cup before their league loss to Wolverhampton Wanderers on Saturday, moved up to six points from two games in top spot.

Coach Pep Guardiola hailed the huge impact from Julian Alvarez.

The City boss said he has no doubts about his quality after playing his part in last season's treble as well as helping Argentina to the World Cup in a remarkable individual season.

But with the good form of John Stones, Rodrigo, Kevin De Bruyne and former captain Ilkay Gundogan in midfield last season, Alvarez has been patient for his opportunity.

And he has been in outstanding form this season with five goals and four assists already and made a big contribution as a 79th minute substitute in Germany.

"When a player is a world champion with Argentina and plays in the starting XI for Argentina, it's because he is a good player," Guardiola said.

"Last season he arrived in a moment when we had John, Rodri, Kevin, Gundo and it was working well and he didn't get many minutes but he never complained and look what happened now.

"When you have this positivity and go there, make three runs, two or three crosses, make an outstanding goal again - it's not the first time he scored this type of goal.

"In 10, 15 minutes the impact was huge. To have these players on the bench with this mentality is really important."

Enrique's tiki-taka exposed

REUTERS, PARIS

While Paris St Germain have had a clear playing style this season, the French champions looked completely lost when it came to dealing with Newcastle United's high-intensity pressing in their 4-1 defeat at St James' Park on Wednesday.

The result left PSG with three points from two games in the Champions League Group F, and with questions to answer about their character and lack of a 'Plan B'.

PSG started with an extremely offensive system - Manuel Ugarte and Warren Zaire-Emery the only two proper midfielders behind the attacking quartet of Kylian Mbappe, Goncalo Ramos, Ousmane Dembele and Randall Kolo Muani.

They could not handle Newcastle's fury and were quickly overwhelmed.

"They put us in difficulty in the midfield, yes, where we were outnumbered. It was not easy," said defender Lucas Hernandez, who scored PSG's goal in the second half.

PSG returned to the dressing room trailing 2-0, having only threatened through Dembele early on and clearly needing more control in midfield.



While the situation should have prompted Enrique to make adjustments at halftime it was the same 11 who started the second half, and PSG conceded another goal in the 50th minute.

PSG enjoyed almost 70% possession but were unable to create dangerous opportunities and made several big errors, with Marquinhos' woeful clearance leading to Miguel Almiron's opener.

"I am responsible for this result," Enrique said, without giving a fuller explanation.

While he praised the players' attitude, the front four failed to press while Ugarte was never in the mix in the midfield, with only Zaire-Emery rising to the occasion.

"I don't know where the problems are but we are going to look into it to improve," Zaire-Emery said.

PSG's next Champions League fixture is against AC Milan at the Parc des Princes and Hernandez said they had to "learn from our mistakes".

"We're all aware of our role to play," he added. "And it's up to us to show it on the pitch, not in front of the cameras and microphones."

Kabaddi's Asiad run ends with win

SPORTS REPORTER FROM HANGZHOU

Bangladesh's men's kabaddi team ended another fruitless Asian Games campaign with a 45-29 victory against Thailand in their last Pool A match on Thursday at Xiaoshan Guali Sports Centre.

Bangladesh finished third following two wins in four matches, behind Pool winners India and group runners up Chinese Taipei who advanced to the semifinals.

Nu May finishes last

Nu May Marma of Bangladesh finished eighth out of eight competitors in the women's kata event at the Linping Sports Centre Gymnasium yesterday.

Nu got 36.30 points, falling 3.5 points short of Indonesian Krisda Putri Aprilia, who sealed the fourth and final position to advance to the semifinals.

Meanwhile, a stomach upset prevented Mohammad Hasan Khan from participating in the men's kata event, according to officials.

Cricketers brace for India clash

During the 2014 Incheon Asian Games, Bangladesh had to quit from the semifinal after a coin toss decided their outcome against Sri Lanka. Nine years later, the 2010

gold medallists find themselves in the last four stage as they take on Asiad debutants India today.

The match is scheduled to start at 7:00am (Bangladesh time) at Zhejiang University of Technology Pingfeng Cricket Field, where eight players underwent around ninety minutes of training session while the others were given rest to recover following a nerve-racking two-run win over Malaysia.

Opener Mahmudul Hasan Joy believes that win helped them to assess the wicket and hoped that his side will not repeat a top-order batting collapse.

"The wicket is a bit slow and a turning one. Tomorrow it may be different... but we will play accordingly," said Joy, adding that there are several players from the 2020 U-19 World Cup-winning squad who are confident to perform well against India.

India, meanwhile, had a more than two-hour training at the same ground. Asked whether Bangladesh could pose the hardest challenge, India captain Rituraj Gaikwad said, "I think every team competing in the tournament are difficult team to face because T20 cricket is such a format where any team can win on a given day.

"You saw Malaysia gave a tough fight to Bangladesh and Nepal and Hong Kong did the same to us and Pakistan, respectively."

Tharushi to receive Rs. 10 mln from SLC

AFP, Colombo

Teenager Tharushi Karunarathna, Sri Lanka's only gold medallist so far at the Hangzhou Asian Games, received a congratulatory telephone call from the country's president and cash from the cricket board.

After the 18-year-old won the women's 800m on Wednesday in Hangzhou, President Ranil Wickremesinghe telephoned the runner to convey the nation's gratitude.

"President Wickremesinghe expressed the pride felt by the nation for her extraordinary success on the international stage and conveyed his best wishes for her future endeavours in sports," his office said in a statement.



Sri Lanka's cricket board, the richest sporting body in the country, said it was gifting her 10 million rupees (\$31,000).

Karunarathna's gold was Sri Lanka's first in athletics at the Asian Games since 2002, when they won two.

2030 WORLD CUP Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay get automatic places

AFP, LAUSANNE

Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay will all be given automatic qualifying spots for the 2030 World Cup for hosting the three opening games of the tournament, FIFA confirmed on Thursday.

World football's governing body announced on Wednesday that Morocco, Portugal and Spain will jointly host the 2030 showpiece but the opening games will be played in Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay to celebrate the tournament's centenary.

In its original announcement, FIFA only confirmed that Morocco, Portugal and Spain would automatically qualify, but on Thursday it confirmed that the three South American nations would also be spared qualifying.

It means that in a tournament that will have already expanded from 32 teams to 48 teams for the 2026 finals, "three of the six places" attributed to the South American zone in 2030 will be taken, a FIFA spokesman said.

A South American team will also have the chance to qualify in a playoff with a team from another continent.



The guaranteed berth for 2030 is especially good news for Paraguay which has failed to qualify for the last three World Cups.

Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay were originally candidates alongside Chile to host the tournament but eventually stood aside in return for the right to host the first three matches and celebrations for the centenary of the World Cup, which was first played in Uruguay's capital Montevideo in 1930.

Alcaraz feels 'ready' for Shanghai

AFP, SHANGHAI



Shanghai Masters top seed Carlos Alcaraz said Thursday he was ready for the tournament and would change what he did wrong in Beijing, where he crashed out of the China Open this week.

The world number two said he had been "out of my mind" during his semi-final match against Jannik Sinner in the Chinese capital, which the Italian won 7-6 (7/4), 6-1.

Asked on Thursday how he would avoid cracking under pressure again in Shanghai, where he is the favourite in Novak Djokovic's absence, the 20-year-old said he had to "do my homework".

"I have just one day to practise and then the tournament is going to start, but... I feel ready, and I'll change what I did wrong in Beijing," he told reporters at a press conference.

Sinner went on to claim the China Open title, and could well end up facing Alcaraz again in Shanghai. "I wasn't surprised at all," the Spaniard said of Sinner's win. "I know the capacity of Jannik. I know his level. He's one of the best in the world right now and he can beat anyone."

It is Alcaraz's first time at the Shanghai Masters, with the event called off for the last three years because of the Covid-19 pandemic.



Messi called up for qualifiers despite injury

AFP, BUENOS AIRES

Argentina have called up Lionel Messi for their upcoming South American World Cup qualifiers despite him being on the injured list at his club Inter Miami.

Messi missed Inter's 4-1 defeat to Chicago on Wednesday as he continues to struggle with his fitness - he has played just 37 minutes for the club since September 3.

The 36-year-old has missed Inter's last three games and five of their last six.

Argentina host Paraguay on October 12 and then travel to play Peru five days later in CONMEBOL qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup.

Messi's Miami team-mate, 21-year-old winger Facundo Farias, has been called up to the national team squad for the first time.