

Sports

Bayern Munich win at Mainz to trim Dortmund's lead

Wolfsburg ends a seven-game winless run with a 3-0 romp

BERLIN: Bayern Munich cut Borussia Dortmund's lead at the top of the Bundesliga table to just two points yesterday with a 2-1 away win at Mainz, thanks to Thiago Alcantara's winning goal. While goals by Leon Goretzka and Thiago sealed the three points for Bayern, Dortmund have only themselves to blame for conceding a 91st-minute penalty which Salomon Kalou converted in their 2-2 draw at home to Hertha Berlin.

Dortmund's England international Jadon Sancho, 18, scored twice and could have finished with four goals in an outstanding display, only for Kalou to snatch a point by converting the late penalty after his first-half goal. Dortmund's next home match—against Bayern in a fortnight—is shaping up to be a top of the table clash.

Bayern have climbed from sixth to fourth and now to second over the last seven days. It was all one-way traffic in the first-half in Mainz as Bayern dominated with Joshua Kimmich hitting the woodwork on 27 minutes, Thiago had a goal disallowed for an offside.

The Mainz defence finally yielded when Kimmich sent the ball into the box and Goretzka volleyed home six minutes before half-time as it stayed 1-0 at the break. Just as it looked like Bayern were going to pull away, Mainz drew level thanks to sloppy defending.

Bayern's goalkeeper and captain Manuel Neuer was furious after Serge Gnabry failed to close down a cross by Daniel Brosinski and Jean-Paul Boëtius stole a yard on Kimmich to tap home with a first-time shot on 48 minutes.

Having been denied a first-half goal, Thiago hit the winner 28 minutes from time with a superb strike, sliding in to tap home Robert Lewandowski's low cross after burly midfielder Renato Sanches won possession. The win lifts Bayern to second, but Werder Bremen can

move above them if they beat Bayer Leverkusen today.

In Dortmund, Sancho provided the hosts' goals as Paco Alcacer, who has scored seven times in four league games, was again sidelined by a thigh injury.

The English teenager caught the eye with two well-taken goals after having had a third, scored with an audacious backheel chip, ruled out for offside and his early shot was cleared off the line. Sancho finally got on the scoresheet by firing from a tight angle after a great pass from Mario Goetze on 27 minutes.

However, Hertha, who beat Bayern 2-0 four weeks ago, proved how dangerous they are on the counter-attack by equalising four minutes before the break when defender Maximilian Mittelstaedt, 21, sent Kalou away to bundle the ball past Dortmund goalkeeper Roman Buerki.

Sancho claimed his second goal on 61 minutes after Dortmund captain Marco Reus did the work. Left-back Achraf Hakimi, 19, on loan from Real Madrid, threaded a pass into Reus, who flicked it past a defender to Sancho, unmarked at the back post, to tap home.

Dortmund were punished for living dangerously in the dying stages with Kalou again going close before converting the spot kick after Davie Selke was brought down in the box. Elsewhere, Wolfsburg ended a seven-game winless run with a 3-0 romp at bottom side Fortuna Duesseldorf with Wout Weghorst converting a first-half penalty before Josip Brekalo and Daniel Ginczek added second-half goals.

Augsburg stay in mid-table after their 2-1 win at Hanover while Borussia Moenchengladbach sit third after losing 3-1 at Freiburg on Friday night thanks to a Nils Petersen penalty and goals by Luca Waldsnieth and Luca Hoeler. — AFP



MAINZ: Mainz' Cameroonian midfielder Kunde Malong and Bayern Munich's Spanish midfielder Javier Martinez (L) vie for the ball during the German first division Bundesliga football match FSV Mainz 05 vs FC Bayern Munich in Mainz, western Germany, yesterday. — AFP

Eriksson takes Philippines job

MANILA: Former England manager Sven-Goran Eriksson has been hired to lead the Philippines' football team following the surprise departure of Three Lions football great Terry Butcher earlier this year. Philippine team manager Dan Palami said the Swede would coach the Azkals in next month's AFF Suzuki Cup and the Asian Cup in January.

"One of the legendary coaches of all time, coach Sven-Goran Eriksson will be coaching the Azkals for the Suzuki Cup and the Asian Cup," Palami said in a

video posted on the team's Twitter page. "He will be a great addition to the team and I'm sure the players will learn a lot from him."

The contract terms of Eriksson, 70, have not been disclosed. He fills a void left by the abrupt departure of Butcher, who resigned as head coach in August without ever taking charge of a single Azkals match. Butcher, a veteran of three World Cups who had managed in England, Scotland, Wales and Australia, lasted less than 50 days in the job after deciding he could not carry out his plans for the team. Eriksson in 2001 became the first foreigner to head England's football team, and has since also coached Mexico and the Ivory Coast as well as league clubs in Sweden, Portugal, Italy and China.

He takes charge as the Philippine team enjoys unprecedented success, having jumped as high as 111 in the FIFA rankings in May 2018. — AFP



Sven-Goran Eriksson

Svitolina, Stephens grind out three-set wins to reach Singapore final

SINGAPORE: Sloane Stephens and Elina Svitolina enjoyed contrasting three-set victories yesterday to set up a fascinating WTA Finals title showdown between the only undefeated women at the eight-player season-ending tournament.

Stephens remarkably lost the first eight games of her semi-final against a relentless Karolina Pliskova before the athletic American turned the contest on its head in the second set to emerge with a 0-6 6-4 6-1 triumph over the Czech.

"I came out a little nervous and wasn't quite feeling the ball and she was absolutely working me in the beginning," Stephens said in a post-match interview. "I just tried to stay in it, get as many balls back as I could and am really proud of my fight today."

In the early match, Ukraine's Svitolina put on a defensive masterclass to stifle the power of Kiki Bertens with a 7-5 6-7(5) 6-4 victory over the Dutchwoman in a gripping encounter that could have gone either way.

Few could have predicted what was to come when Pliskova started her match full of controlled aggression against an erratic Stephens as the Czech rattled through the opening set in 31 minutes.

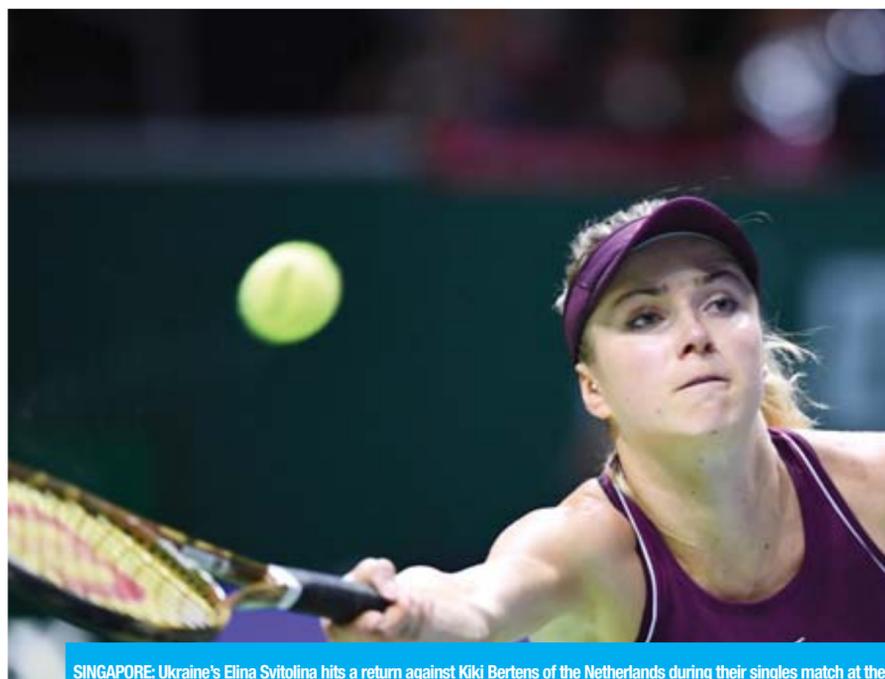
Pliskova was equally relentless at the start of the second set, breaking again to register an eighth game in a row before Stephens finally got on the scoreboard, roaring as if she had won the match when she broke back.

Buoyed by the avoidance of total humiliation, Stephens appeared reborn and reeled off five of the next seven games to tie up the match as Pliskova struggled to maintain the pace. The final set started as a baseline slugfest with both players struggling to hold, until Stephens showed the kind of scintillating form that carried her to the 2017 US Open title to ease away for a memorable come-from-behind victory.

Svitolina arrived in Singapore out of form yet determined to "silence the haters", who she said believed she did not deserve to be in the tournament, and the Ukrainian has played brilliantly to win all three pool matches and her semi-final.

"In the end, it was just about running and chasing every ball... the level was very tough, we were both playing such good tennis, I was just happy to close it out," Svitolina said. A pumped-up Svitolina made the better start, chasing down every ball to earn an early break but the aggressive Bertens broke back as she began to find her range with a blistering forehand loaded with heavy topspin.

Svitolina had been a virtual spectator during the fightback but shook off her passive play and concen-



SINGAPORE: Ukraine's Elina Svitolina hits a return against Kiki Bertens of the Netherlands during their singles match at the WTA Finals tennis tournament in Singapore yesterday. — AFP

trated on depth as opposed to direction, taking advantage of mental lapses from Bertens to claim the opener when her opponent double-faulted.

A pep talk from coach Raemon Sluiter seemed to

help Bertens iron out her unforced errors but the world number nine collapsed completely with the second set at her mercy, failing to convert four opportunities to level the match. — Reuters

Former England manager Hoddle 'seriously ill'

LONDON: Former England manager Glenn Hoddle has been hospitalised after being taken ill on his 61st birthday yesterday. Hoddle fell ill shortly after he began his punditry duties on BT Sport—the show was cancelled as a result.

BT presenter Jake Humphrey said Hoddle was "taken seriously ill at the BT Sport studio this morning". He added on social media: "Everyone of us is right with you Glenn, sending love and strength." Chelsea—who Hoddle managed—tweeted a message of support.

"Our thoughts are with former Blues boss Glenn Hoddle who has been taken seriously ill on

his 61st birthday. We're right with you Glenn." Hoddle, capped 53 times for England and was a star midfielder for Tottenham Hotspur, was considered to be one of the best players of his generation. He won the FA Cup and UEFA Cup with Spurs and also played for Monaco, Swindon and Chelsea. Hoddle went on to manage England after spells in charge of Swindon and Chelsea and took them to the 1998 World Cup finals where they reached the second round bowing out on penalties to Argentina.

He lost his job the following year after controversial remarks he made suggesting disabled people were paying the price for sins in past lives in an interview with The Times—the remarks all the stranger as he was an ardent fundraiser for disabled peoples charities.

He went on to manage Southampton, his beloved Spurs and then finally Wolverhampton Wanderers but since he left them in 2006 he has steadily built up a reputation as a respected pundit. — AFP



Matches on TV

(Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Crystal Palace FC v Arsenal FC 16:30
beIN SPORTS
Burnley FC v Chelsea FC 16:30
beIN SPORTS HD 2
Manchester United v Everton FC 19:00
beIN SPORTS HD 2

SPANISH LEAGUE PRIMERA

Getafe CF v Real Betis 14:00
beIN SPORTS HD 3
FC Barcelona v Real Madrid CF 18:15
beIN SPORTS HD 1
beIN SPORTS HD 3
Deportivo Alaves v Villarreal CF 20:30
beIN SPORTS HD 3
Sevilla FC v Huesca 22:45
beIN SPORTS HD 3

ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE

US Sassuolo Calcio v Bologna FC 14:30
beIN SPORTS HD 4
Genoa CFC v Udinese Calcio 17:00
beIN SPORTS
Cagliari Calcio v AC Chievo Verona 17:00
beIN SPORTS HD 4
spal v Frosinone Calcio 17:00
beIN SPORTS
AC Milan v UC Sampdoria 20:00
beIN SPORTS HD 4
SSC Napoli v AS Roma 22:30
beIN SPORTS HD 4

GERMAN BUNDESLIGA

FC Nuremberg v Eintracht Frankfurt 15:30
beIN SPORTS HD 5
RB Leipzig v Schalke 04 17:30
beIN SPORTS HD 5
SV Werder Bremen v Bayer 04 Leverkusen 20:00
beIN SPORTS HD 5

FRENCH LEAGUE

Stade Rennais v Stade Reims 17:00
beIN SPORTS HD 6
FC Girondins de Bordeaux v OGC Nice 19:00
beIN SPORTS HD 6
Olympique Marseille v Paris Saint-Germain 23:00
beIN SPORTS HD 6

AI urges Juventus, AC Milan to shun Italian Super Cup in Saudi

DUBAI: Amnesty International (AI) yesterday urged football clubs AC Milan and Juventus to shun the Italian Super Cup—a game Saudi Arabia is set to host in January—over the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

"Big clubs like Juventus and AC Milan need to understand that their participation in sporting events in the country could be used as a form of 'sportswashing'," Hogarth said.

Khashoggi, a Saudi journalist critical of his government, was killed after entering his country's Istanbul consulate on October 2 to obtain paperwork to marry his Turkish fiancée.

"We'd urge these Italian clubs to think twice about the signal this sends out to sports fans across the world and the brave activists who stand up for human rights in Saudi Arabia," Hogarth said.

The murder has dealt a serious blow to Saudi Arabia's image, which Prince Mohammed has sought to improve since his appointment as heir to the throne last year. He has ended a ban on women driving and loosened other restrictions in the kingdom.

The 2018/2019 Italian Super Cup is scheduled for January 2019 in the Saudi capital Riyadh, and pits last year's Italian Cup winner—Juventus—against the runner up, AC Milan. — AFP