

Sports

Insigne double inspires Napoli as Roma crash in Bologna

‘The facts condemn us, they condemn me’

MILAN: Lorenzo Insigne bagged a brace to inspire Napoli to a 3-1 win over Torino and join Juventus at the top of Serie A yesterday, as Roma plunged further into crisis with a 2-0 loss at Bologna.

Carlo Ancelotti's Napoli have 12 points from five games, equal with champions Juventus who can pull ahead again when they travel to promoted Frosinone later. But Roma coach Eusebio Di Francesco is under increasing pressure after a fourth league game without a win sees last year's third-placed team slump to 12th with five points from as many games.

Federico Mattiello and Federico Santander scored in either half to give Bologna, who occupy the first relegation spot of 18th position, their first goals and win of the season. "I'm not the type to look for excuses, I need solutions and I can not find them," said Di Francesco. "The facts condemn us, they condemn me."

In Turin, Ancelotti switched things around following Napoli's uninspiring goalless draw at Red Star Belgrade in the Champions League midweek. Insigne played a more central role along with Dries Mertens as defender Sebastiano Luperto got his first start for the Serie A runners-up. "I'm satisfied, we dominated in Belgrade but we couldn't finish things off like we did today," said Ancelotti. "Insigne was decisive, but everyone put in a strong performance." The Italian international got the first after just four minutes when poor Torino defending saw Emiliano Moretti clear to Nicolas N'Koulou with the rebound favouring Insigne, who finished off under the crossbar.

Simone Verdi added the second with a half-volley on 20 minutes, with Torino pulling one back after the

break when Andrea Belotti slotted in a penalty. But Insigne restored Napoli's two-goal lead after 59 minutes when a Jose Callejon shot bounced off the inside of the far post and into the path of the Italian forward. It gives Napoli a boost ahead of next week's trip to reigning seven-time champions Juventus.

"We won there last season and still finished second," said Insigne. "If we don't win the midweek game with Parma, then the result with Juve is irrelevant, so we have to take it one at a time." Torino are in 13th position with five points from as many games.

'NO INNER FIRE'

In Bologna, Roma plunged further into crisis after a summer which saw Di Francesco's side lose goalkeeper Alisson to Liverpool with midfielders Radja Nainggolan and Kevin Strootman also exiting the Italian capital.

Mattiello curled in Bologna's first goal of the season after 36 minutes with Paraguayan Santander adding the second after 59 minutes. Roma-last year's Champions League semi-finalists-also fell 3-0 at Real Madrid midweek, and have not won a league game since their first game against Torino. "There's no inner fire," lamented the Roma coach. "Something is wrong."

Next weekend Roma face bitter city rivals Lazio, who saw off Genoa 4-1 on Sunday with Ciro Immobile scoring a double, to move up to fifth place.

Before the derby Roma will try to boost morale against Frosinone midweek with Lazio heading to Udinese, who won 2-0 at Chievo. Inter Milan snatched a late 1-0 win against Sampdoria in Genoa on Saturday to move up to ninth. — AFP



TURIN: Napoli's Albanian defender Elseid Hysaj (C) vies for the ball during the Italian Serie A football match between Torino and Napoli at the Olimpico Grande Torino stadium, in Turin, yesterday. — AFP

Neymar gets PSG back on track

PARIS: From a deeper than usual playmaker role Brazil's Neymar pulled the strings as Paris Saint-Germain came from behind to beat Rennes 3-1 in Ligue 1 yesterday helping to dispel midweek memories of a European flop at Liverpool. Hosts Rennes took a surprise 11th minute lead when PSG midfielder Adrien Rabiot nodded past his own keeper Gianluigi Buffon from a corner before goals from Angel di Maria, Thomas Meunier and Eric Maxim Chupot-Moting gave them a hard-fought sixth straight Ligue 1 win.

PSG critics had suggested the French giants had overspent on strikers and forgotten about the midfield after a tame 3-2 defeat in the Champions League at Anfield this week. With superstar striker Kylian Mbappe banned after his red card there was room for both Di Maria and German winger Julian Draxler in the starting line up with Neymar pulled into the No.10 position, where his passes were a sight to behold, behind Edinson Cavani.

A young fan ran onto the pitch as Neymar was leaving as a late sub and the youngster crumpled in tears as his hero hugged him and gave him his shirt in touching scenes bound to glorify the former Barcelona striker when they go viral on social media.

After Rabiot's earlier upset Neymar seemed to be at the origin of almost everything the visitors threw at

Rennes including when Cavani hit the post from a sumptuous set up. On the stroke of half time Draxler cut back from the by-line and Cavani dummied setting up di Maria to crack a precise jab into the bottom right-hand corner from a good 25 metres out.

The 26-year-old Neymar was at the origin of both Meunier's go ahead goal on 61 and for Chupot-Moting's first goal for the Parisians since joining from Stoke. Buffon had his work cut out in the second half as Rennes playmaker Clement Grenier fed the speedy Senegalese strike-pair M'Baye Niang and the 20-year-old Ismaila Sarr.

Rennes coach Sabri Lamouchi threw on ex-PSG midfielder Hatem Ben Arfa for one last roll of the dice but PSG went home with all three points and ideas about a new format for coach Thomas Tuchel. — AFP

Kane scores as Tottenham return to winning ways

BRIGHTON: Harry Kane became Tottenham's joint fifth highest scorer as he helped his side earn a 2-1 Premier League victory over Brighton & Hove Albion on Saturday. Kane moved level with Jermain Defoe on 143 goals for the London club as Tottenham put behind them successive defeats by Watford, Liverpool and Inter Milan in all competitions to climb to fifth in the Premier League table.

Kane opened the scoring from the penalty spot on 41 minutes after Glenn Murray handled in the box and the England striker fired the spot-kick into the corner of the net. Brighton had a goal ruled out for offside and substitute Erik Lamela added Tottenham's second with a neat finish on 76 minutes. Anthony Knockaert's stoppage-time effort was a late consolation for the hosts.

Tottenham manager Mauricio Pochettino was thrilled with the attitude shown by his players. "Everyone can understand what we are feeling now. The spirit we showed was the most important thing," Pochettino told BT Sport.

"We played some very good football and apart from the last minute which was a little bit embarrassing with the late goal, the performance was great. "The three points was so important for us." Kane was also happy to see his side emerge from the mini slump and hopes they can now maintain their position near the top of the table.

"Today was about mentality, getting around the pitch, pressing high and harder and I think we did that," Kane told the BBC. "We could have put it to bed and won 3-0 or 4-0 but it's good to get back to winning ways. The gaffer will be pleased and we can build on this."

Brighton manager Chris Hughton felt his team created enough chances to take something from the game but praised the clinical finishing from the Tottenham forward line. "On the balance of play, it got a little bit frantic in the last period where they had a few chances. I think we had as many good opportunities as they did," Hughton told BT Sport.

"But with the quality they have, they can be clinical with theirs. I think they showed their quality with the second goal in a high press from us trying to get back in the game. "I don't think anyone can doubt our willingness to get back in it. They're a very expansive team and on a good, wet surface like this, they can move the ball quickly." — Reuters

Real see off gritty Espanyol, Atletico cruise to victory

MADRID: Marco Asensio's strike earned Real Madrid a 1-0 win over Espanyol to send them top of La Liga and Thomas Lemar scored his first goal for Atletico Madrid in a 2-0 victory at Getafe on Saturday. Julen Lopetegui's Real were tested by Espanyol at the Santiago Bernabeu, with Borja Iglesias hitting the crossbar, but held on for the victory.

After an emphatic Champions League win over AS Roma on Wednesday, Lopetegui shuffled his pack for the visit of Espanyol, sixth in the table after a good start to the season. The coach rested Gareth Bale, Marcelo and Toni Kroos, handing a debut to defender Alvaro Odriozola in place of the injured Dani Carvajal.

Real dominated possession but Espanyol were a persistent threat on the break. "(The clean sheet) was really important for us, we don't want to let in goals," Real defender Raphael Varane said. "Espanyol played very well but we played as a team and did not concede." The hosts took the lead four minutes before the break, when Luka Modric's pass took a triple deflection but found its way to Asensio, who steered home his first goal in La Liga this season.

The forward had to wait for VAR to prove he was onside before he could celebrate. Espanyol forward Iglesias robbed Real captain Sergio Ramos after the break and chipped Courtois, but his effort bounced back off the crossbar.

"We're furious (about losing), we had chances to score," Iglesias said. "I saw (Courtois) off his line and shot but it hit the crossbar. Maybe next time it will go in." Real held on despite late Espanyol pressure to take top spot before second-placed Barcelona host Girona on Sunday in a Catalan derby.

STUTTERING START

Atletico's comfortable victory at Getafe eased nerves after a stuttering start to the season during which they gathered five points from their first four



MADRID: Real Madrid's Spanish midfielder Marco Asensio runs with the ball during the Spanish league football match between Real Madrid CF and RCD Espanyol at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid on Saturday. — AFP

games. French winger Lemar struck the crossbar with a powerful long-range effort and the ball bounced back, hitting Soria and crossing the line, to send Atletico ahead after 14 minutes.

The visitors struggled to create openings at the Coliseum Alfonso Perez but Lemar put the finishing touch to a quick counter-attack after an hour to net his first goal since his close season move from Monaco.

Getafe winger Ivan Alejo was sent off for an apparent stamp just four minutes after coming on as a substitute, leaving Atletico to cruise to victory and climb to fifth in the table.

"I wasn't nervous at all when they started to criticise us two weeks ago, as if everything was lost and we

were dead, and now we are the best in the world," said Atletico defender Juanfran.

"Our people, our fans have to know that this Atletico Madrid team will always show up, whether or not results go our way, and they are, bit by bit."

Rayo Vallecano were thrashed 5-1 by third-placed Alaves at Vallecas after Abdoulaye Ba was sent off in the first half. Ba became the first player in Spanish football to be dismissed after VAR flagged an off-the-ball incident, with the officials deciding he elbowed Jonathan Calleri.

Villarreal earned a 3-3 draw at Real Sociedad thanks to Leo Suarez's equaliser in the final minute of stoppage time while Eibar edged Leganes 1-0. — Reuters

Koreas to field joint teams for Paralympic event

JAKARTA: North and South Korea have agreed to march under a neutral Korean peninsula flag and form unified teams for some sports at the upcoming Asian Para Games. "This is the first time the two countries have paraded together and competed together at a para-sport event," Majid Rashed, chairman of the Asian Paralympic Committee, said in a statement posted yesterday. About 100 athletes from South Korea and 20

from North Korea will compete at the multi-sport event in the Indonesian capital Jakarta between October 6-13. Flag-bearers from each country will carry a Korean unification flag and competitors will wear the same uniforms at the opening and closing ceremonies, the statement said. The two countries, still technically at war, will field two joint table tennis teams and a mixed team in a men's 40100 metre swimming relay event. North and South Korea formed unified teams for some events at the Asian Games in Jakarta and in Palembang from August 18-September 2, securing one gold, one silver and two bronze medals.

Earlier this month the two countries announced a joint bid for the 2032 Olympics, in a deepening sign of rapprochement on the peninsula. Some 3,000 athletes from 43 countries are expected to take part in 15 Paralympic and three non-Paralympic sports during next month's event. —AFP

English Premier League table

English Premier League table after yesterday's early match (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Liverpool	6	6	0	0	14	2	18	Crystal Palace	6	2	1	3	4	6	7
Man City	6	5	1	0	19	3	16	Everton	5	1	3	1	8	9	6
Chelsea	6	5	1	0	14	4	16	Brighton	6	1	2	3	8	11	5
Watford	6	4	1	1	11	6	13	Southampton	6	1	2	3	6	9	5
Tottenham	6	4	0	2	12	7	12	Fulham	6	1	2	3	8	13	5
Man Utd	6	3	1	2	9	9	10	Burnley	6	1	1	4	7	10	4
Bournemouth	6	3	1	2	10	11	10	West Ham	6	1	1	4	5	11	4
Leicester	6	3	0	3	11	10	9	Newcastle	6	0	2	4	4	8	2
Arsenal	5	3	0	2	10	9	9	Cardiff	6	0	2	4	3	14	2
Wolves	6	2	3	1	6	6	9	Huddersfield	6	0	2	4	3	14	2