

Sports

PSG suffer defeat at Rennes with 16-year-old in starring role

PSG without forward Neymar for a third successive game

RENNES: Champions Paris Saint-Germain slipped up in their second league game of the season losing 2-1 to Rennes on Sunday in a repeat of April's French Cup final with a 16-year-old playing a starring role.

Edinson Cavani scored after less than 15 minutes of play for the visitors in Brittany before Mbaye Niang and Romain del Castillo responded for the home side.

PSG were without forward Neymar for a third successive game this term with the world's most expensive player continuing to be the subject of interest from Barcelona and Real Madrid.

Angolan-born 16-year-old Eduardo Camavinga starred in Rennes midfield, and proved to be key in his team's winning goal, along with experienced playmaker Clement Grenier.

Rennes boss Julien Stephan said Camavinga, the first player born since January 2002 to feature in Europe's top five leagues, had continued to improve since making his first team debut in April.

"It's more than six months he's been training with the professionals. He's settled in well with the squad," he told broadcaster Canal+.

"We've prepared him with the players, the staff and the whole club so he can evolve in the right conditions.

"He started doing it at the end of last season and he's confirming all the talent we think he has at the start of this season," he added.

PSG skipper Thiago Silva admitted his side stepped off the gas after their good start through Cavani's effort.

"We started well but we eased off a bit, I don't know why, we lost concentration," he told Canal+.

"It wasn't the real PSG. Rennes played well, they were solid defensively, they were more careful than us," he added.

The Parisians dominated the early proceedings and showed their quality with two good chances within the opening quarter of an hour of play.

Firstly Julian Draxler's half-volley skimmed over the bar before Cavani's header hit the post after 14 minutes.

Uruguay forward Cavani made up for hitting the woodwork by scoring 20 minutes later after a defensive howler from Rennes captain Damien da Silva. The centre-back received the ball in his own box but his misplaced pass to goalkeeper Romain Salin was intercepted by Cavani who tucked it away to make it 1-0.

FOUR-MINUTE FEVER

The sides were back level just before the half-time whistle.

Right-back Hamari Traore found Niang in the box with a soft cross and the Senegal forward took two light touches, held-off Marquinhos before smoothly curling his effort past Alphonse Areola.

The Bretons took the lead than four minutes later of the second-half following a sublime cross from Camavinga.

Midfielder Camavinga found a free Del Castillo, starting instead of suspended Flavien Tait, who easily beat Areola with a header. The hosts refused to settle for the one-goal advantage and had a superb chance to make it 3-1 on 62 minutes.

Benjamin Bourigeaud played his corner to front post and centre-back Jeremy Gelin's header glanced past Areola but hit the post and dribble out for a goal-kick.

Youngster Camavinga could have added a third himself but his half-volley skied over the crossbar.

Kylian Mbappe and Cavani had a late chances but they could not save PSG and Thomas Tuchel's blushes, losing to the side who finished in 10th



RENNES: Paris Saint-Germain's French forward Kylian Mbappe (R) vies with Rennes' French defender Damien Da Silva during the French L1 football match between Rennes (SRFC) and Paris Saint-Germain (PSG), at the Rosharon Park stadium in Rennes, northwestern France. —AFP

place in the league last season.

Earlier on Sunday Saint-Etienne salvaged a late point at home to promoted Brest with new signing

Denis Bouanga's 83rd minute effort claiming a 1-1 draw and it finished goalless between Reims and Strasbourg. —AFP

Alves scores winner on Sao Paulo debut

SAO PAULO: Brazil veteran Dani Alves scored the winning goal on his debut for Sao Paulo on Sunday, weeks after signing a three-year deal with the club. Alves, 36, found the back of the net in the 40th minute to score the only goal of the game against Ceara.

Alves and Spanish international Juanfran, 34, are the stars for Sao Paulo, who snapped up both players after their contracts with European clubs expired. Alves' return to Brazil after 17 years playing for top clubs in Europe has had a big impact on his home country.

The right-back played for Sevilla before going on to play for Barcelona, Juventus and PSG, collecting nine national league titles along the way — six in Spain, one in Italy and two in France.

He has collected 40 trophies in all with club and country including three Champions League titles with Barcelona and two UEFA Cups with Sevilla. He has also won two Copa Americas with Brazil, most recently in July when he was named player of the tournament as he captained them to victory over Peru in the final at the Maracana in Rio de Janeiro.

Juanfran arrived in Sao Paulo after an extensive career in Spain where he played for Real Madrid, Espanyol, Osasuna and Atletico Madrid. —AFP



SAO PAULO: Dani Alves (L) of Sao Paulo controls the ball during their Brazilian Championship football match against Ceara at Morumbi stadium, in Sao Paulo, Brazil. —AFP

Five talking points from La Liga weekend

BARCELONA: Five talking points from the weekend in La Liga:

Barcelona began their title defence with a 1-0 defeat by Athletic Bilbao on Friday, while Zinedine Zidane's Real Madrid beat Celta Vigo 3-1 on Saturday. Here are the five big talking points from the weekend in La Liga.

BARCA SHOW WHY NEYMAR ON SHOPPING LIST

Rumours in Spanish media have linked Barcelona with Paris St. Germain forward Neymar all summer, even though the Catalans already signed Antoine Griezmann from Atletico Madrid.

However as Athletic shut out Ernesto Valverde's side, shorn of injured captain Lionel Messi, it became evident why Barcelona want to bring the Brazilian back to Camp Nou.

Valverde was forced to throw on Rafinha Alcantara for Luis Suarez after the Uruguayan tweaked a calf muscle, while B team winger Carles Perez was also thrown on to no avail as the Catalans tried to win the game.

Eventually 38-year-old Bilbao legend Aritz Aduriz won the hosts the game with a spectacular late scissors kick, showing more cutting edge than Barcelona had mustered all night.

SAME OLD REAL MADRID

After their last shambolic campaign Real Madrid invested heavily over the summer, spending 300 million euros on new recruits to refresh the team.

However Zinedine Zidane picked a side to face Celta Vigo which could have turned out last season for Madrid. Star signing Eden Hazard picked up a thigh injury on Friday, while Ferland Mendy is also sidelined.

Other new signings Luka Jovic and Eder Militao watched from the bench as the old guard picked up a good result in Vigo. Two players who have been continuously touted to leave this summer, Gareth Bale and James Rodriguez, were involved — the Welshman starting and the Colombian watching from the bench as an unused substitute.

Bale created a goal for Karim

Benzema with a fine dribble and it seemed like little had changed from Zidane's first era in charge.

TRIPPIER'S ADVENTURE STARTS WELL

Not many English players try their luck in La Liga but Kieran Trippier joined Atletico Madrid from Tottenham this summer. The former Burnley right back made his debut as Atletico beat Getafe 1-0 on Sunday and it was his cross which created the goal for Alvaro Morata.

Trippier attacked with abandon and gave Atletico a dangerous outlet on the right flank, with other crosses causing the Getafe defence problems. There are question marks over the England full back's quality in purely defensive tasks, but starting with a solid display and a clean sheet at the Wanda Metropolitano was a good way to respond.

SOLDADO AND CAZORLA ROLL BACK THE YEARS

The most entertaining game of the weekend in Spain was a 4-4 draw between Villarreal and Granada on Saturday, with each side boasting a veteran Spain international who hit the target. Santi Cazorla opened the scoring from the penalty spot and was the

standout player in the thriller on Spain's east coast.

However former Villarreal and Tottenham striker Roberto Soldado inspired the newly promoted side to fight back from 4-2 down, heading home on his debut to pull Granada within one goal of the hosts. Another Soldado header was nodded over the line by Antonio Puertas in the 81st minute for the Andalusians' equaliser.

ACHILLES TENSION

Real Madrid midfielder Luka Modric and Getafe striker Jose Molina were both dismissed this weekend for nearly identical fouls, with the pair catching the Achilles tendon of an opponent with their studs. Neither challenge would have been greeted with a red card in previous La Liga seasons, leaving players and fans angry with the decisions. Deliberate attempts to hack an opponent on the Achilles tendon from behind are to be punished with sendings off this season.

"The truth is that I don't understand it because last Friday we had a chat (with the refereeing federation) and they made it clear that it was (to be a red) when it was done intentionally," said Getafe coach Jorge Borradalas. "I don't understand it in the case of Modric or Jorge Molina." —Reuters

Balotelli signs for home town team Brescia

MILAN: Mario Balotelli will return to Italy with home town team Brescia after it was confirmed on Sunday he has signed for the newly-promoted club. The Italian forward has penned a "multi-year contract" and will be officially presented on Monday, the northern team confirmed on their website.

"Mario returns home," Brescia said in a statement. "The return to Italy, after three years, was made possible by Mario's determination and enthusiasm to return to Brescia, the city where he grew up and where, since he was a child, he stood out for his physical and technical skills," the club continued.

Balotelli, who was born in Sicily but adopted and raised just outside Brescia, has reportedly agreed a three-year deal with the Serie B champions after being released by Marseille in June. "Finally back in MY CITY," Balotelli posted on social media along with a video collage of photos and clips of different moments of his career.

Balotelli made his debut in local team Lumezzane in

Serie C as a 16-year-old, before moving to Serie A giants Inter Milan in 2007. However, Balotelli's debut in the Brescia shirt is not imminent as the striker has to serve a four-match ban and his return could be on September 25 against Juventus.

Sky Sports Italia reported Balotelli has signed a three-year deal worth three million euros (\$3.3 million) for the first year, plus a further three million if the club remains in Serie A.

In the following two years he will receive six million euros per season if Brescia remain in Serie A. Sky reported. The 29-year-old rejected a move to Brazilian club Flamengo as he pushes for a place in the Italian national team as Euro 2020 approaches. —AFP

Bayern Munich offer Coutinho fresh start on loan

MADRID: Barcelona's Philippe Coutinho has joined Bayern Munich on a one-year loan worth 8.5 million euros (\$9.5 million) with an option to buy, the Spanish club confirmed yesterday. "The agreement provides for an option for Bayern to buy at a 120-million-euro fee," Barcelona said.

The 27-year-old Brazilian joined Barcelona from Liverpool in January 2018 for an initial 120 million euros in a deal that included another 40 million euros in potential add-ons. But the international midfielder's stint at Barcelona never worked out as hoped despite huge excitement around his arrival at the Camp Nou. Initially tried in midfield where he plays for Brazil, Coutinho was pushed into the front three by Ernesto Valverde last season but the switch never paid off and fans rarely glimpsed the form he showed at Liverpool. "Coutinho: story of a massive disaster," headlined yesterday's Barcelona-based Sport newspaper. Speculation about his future had shadowed Coutinho over the summer with French champions Paris Saint-Germain mentioned as a likely destination in a deal linked to a potential Neymar return to Barcelona.

Coutinho's place in the side looked shaky following the arrival of French World Cup winner Antoine Griezmann from Atletico in July and he was left out of the squad for the first game of the new La Liga season on Friday, a 1-0 loss to Athletic Bilbao.

The player, who has scored 21 goals in 75 games for Barca in all competitions despite being unsettled, said he was delighted with the move to Germany. "For me, this move means a new challenge in a new country with one of the best clubs in Europe," Coutinho said on Bayern's website.

"I'm very much looking forward to that. Like FC Bayern, I have big ambitions and I'm convinced that I can achieve them together with my new teammates." The German club hope he will provide reinforcement in attack following the departure of veteran duo Arjen Robben and Franck Ribery at the end of last season. "With his creativity and outstanding skills, Philippe is a player who will immediately strengthen our attack," Bayern CEO Karl-Heinz Rummenigge said.

Meanwhile, Uli Hoeness has confirmed he is stepping down as president of Bundesliga giants Bayern Munich and will not stand for re-election in November. The 67-year-old told German daily Bild at a golf tournament on Sunday that he will remain on the board at Bayern, "but will relinquish my presidency when the time comes".

That means Bayern members will vote for a new head of the defending Bundesliga champions at the annual general meeting in November with Hoeness to step down as head of the club's board. After 40 hugely successful years in charge, Hoeness will hand over the reins and former Adidas boss Herbert Hainer, currently his deputy on the club's board, is widely tipped as his successor. —AFP

Live		Matches on TV
		(Local Timings)
ENGLISH FOOTBALL LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP		
Birmingham City FC v Barnsley FC	beIN SPORTS	21:45
Derby County FC v Bristol City FC	beIN SPORTS	21:45
Hull City v Blackburn Rovers FC	beIN SPORTS	21:45
Middlesbrough v Wigan Athletic	beIN SPORTS	21:45
Sheffield Wednesday FC v Luton Town	beIN SPORTS	21:45