

## Arsenal win again as Liverpool go top



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool's Guinean midfielder Naby Keita (center) celebrates with teammates after scoring their third goal during the English Premier League football match between Liverpool and Crystal Palace at Anfield in Liverpool, northwest England yesterday. — AFP

LONDON: Martin Odegaard scored his first goal since his permanent switch to Arsenal yesterday to further ease the pressure on Mikel Arteta as Sadio Mane helped fire Liverpool to the top of the Premier League. Defending champions Manchester City dropped two points at home to Southampton after a 0-0 stalemate while struggling Wolves lost their fourth match in five against 10-man Brentford.

Arsenal were rock bottom of the table before last week's fixtures but wins against Norwich and now Burnley lifted them to the relative comfort of 12th spot before the late kick-off between Aston Villa and Everton.

Odegaard, who signed from Real Madrid last month after spending part of last season at the Emirates on loan, broke the deadlock in the 30th minute, curling home a free-kick to give the visitors a 1-0 lead at Turf Moor. Arsenal breathed a

sign of relief when VAR overturned a penalty awarded to Burnley in the second half after Matej Vydra tumbled to the turf following a challenge by goalkeeper Aaron Ramsdale.

Liverpool forward Mane continued his eye-catching run against Crystal Palace, netting in his ninth league match in a row against the London side to send Jurgen Klopp's men top of the table with a 3-0 win. Mohamed Salah's glancing header from Konstantinos Tsimikas' corner was kept out by goalkeeper Vicente Guaita but Mane pounced to lash home his 100th goal for Liverpool in all competitions.

Salah doubled the Reds' lead in the 78th minute before Naby Keita sealed the win with a sweetly struck volley. Liverpool, champions in 2020, have made an impressive start to the season, scoring 12 goals in their opening five games and conceding just once.

Former United striker Louis Saha said the club could "afford" the defeat in Switzerland because they have a chance to recover but he believes Solskjaer will have less room for maneuver this season because of the strength of his squad. "I do think that he will be questioned faster because the team doesn't have any weaknesses," he said. "For me, it is a very strong side."

### West Ham challenge

The Red Devils began the weekend on top of the Premier League with 10 points from their opening four games, with a potentially tricky trip to West Ham today. But some of the same flaws evident in midweek have also been on display in league games against Southampton, Wolves and Newcastle, only for United to be bailed out by their array of attacking talent. Despite their three wins, the team have lacked cohesion and have struggled to gain control of games, relying on moments of isolated magic from players such as Bruno Fernandes and Paul Pogba. Solskjaer has the unenviable task of striking a balance between defense and attack while keeping all his star names happy.

Marcus Rashford and Edinson Cavani are yet to feature this season due to injury, but will soon be competing for places with Ronaldo, Sancho, Mason Greenwood, Anthony Martial, Jesse Lingard, Donny van de Beek and Juan Mata. Behind them, Fernandes and Pogba have started the season in fine form, but their compatibility in a midfield three against stronger opposition is still up for debate.

"We've got goals, I know that, it's about striking a balance in the rest of the set-up," said Solskjaer after Newcastle made Ronaldo's homecoming last weekend far trickier than the 4-1 scoreline suggests. His attempts to find that balance in Switzerland were made tougher by Wan-Bissaka's dismissal but he drew criticism over his use of substitutes and tactics.

Solskjaer faced questions afterwards over why he took Ronaldo off at all and also over why he did not remove the 36-year-old earlier — showing how difficult it will be to keep everybody happy. The only way to quieten the noise is by getting back to winning ways, starting at the London Stadium today. — AFP

### City drop points

Manchester City will rue their inability to beat Southampton at the Etihad after consecutive 5-0 home wins. It could have been worse for them after referee Jon Moss pointed to the spot when Kyle Walker bundled into the back of Adam Armstrong in the area, showing the England international a red card.

But the incident was reviewed by VAR and Moss eventually decided to overturn both decisions. The build-up to City's match was dominated by a row over attendance levels at the Etihad, with manager Pep Guardiola urging fans to fill empty seats in comments that irritated some supporters.

But fans were frustrated by battling Southampton, who kept City's attackers at bay despite relentless pressure. The home side thought they had snatched victory in the dying minutes after goalkeeper Alex McCarthy saved a Phil

Foden header and Raheem Sterling tucked in the rebound but the flag was raised.

Watford beat Norwich 3-1 to condemn the newly promoted Canaries to their fifth consecutive defeat. Watford took the lead in the 17th minute through Emmanuel Dennis but Teemu Pukki equalised before half time. Ismaila Sarr put the visitors back in front in the 63rd minute and scored again with 10 minutes to go.

In the early kick-off, Ivan Toney scored a goal and created another as 10-man Brentford beat Wolves 2-0 to maintain their impressive start to their first Premier League campaign. The 25-year-old striker won and converted a penalty before setting up Bryan Mbeumo as the Bees prevailed at Molineux despite Shandon Baptiste's red card in the second half. Tottenham host Chelsea today while Cristiano Ronaldo's Manchester United travel to West Ham. — AFP

## Ronaldo's Man Utd return increases scrutiny on Solskjaer

MANCHESTER: Manchester United's shock Champions League defeat to Swiss champions Young Boys has already ratcheted up the pressure on Ole Gunnar Solskjaer despite an impressive start to the Premier League season.

A star-studded side including Cristiano Ronaldo plus £100 million-worth (\$138 million) of new signings in Raphael Varane and Jadon Sancho slipped to an embarrassing 2-1 loss in Bern.

United took the lead in Tuesday's opening Group F encounter in Switzerland but plans went awry after the dismissal of Aaron Wan-Bissaka, with Jesse Lingard's errant back-pass gifting the hosts a winner in time added on. Despite individual errors from his men, it was Solskjaer left in the firing line, with his in-game management once more coming under the microscope.

Ronaldo has hit the ground running since his return to the club from Juventus, scoring three goals in two games. But the fanfare surrounding the five-time Ballon d'Or winner also brings greater scrutiny on Solskjaer in what was always likely to be a defining season for the Norwegian.

The 48-year-old manager was handed a new three-year contract in July, reward for the progress United have made in the three years since he replaced Jose Mourinho. United finished second in the Premier League last season and qualified for the Champions League for a second consecutive season for just the second time since Alex Ferguson stepped down in 2013.

But Solskjaer — who won multiple trophies during his time as a player at Old Trafford — is yet to win silverware as United manager despite several near-misses. Given the talent now at his disposal even a League Cup or FA Cup win might not be enough to save his job if United do not mount a serious challenge for the Premier League or Champions League.



BERN: Manchester United's manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer (left) speaks with striker Cristiano Ronaldo as he leaves the field following a substitution during the UEFA Champions League Group F football match between Young Boys and Manchester United at Wankdorf stadium in Bern on Tuesday. — AFP

## Bayern hit seven past Bochum to go top of Bundesliga

BERLIN: Bayern Munich topped the Bundesliga for the first time this season with a 7-0 thrashing of Bochum yesterday as Robert Lewandowski scored for a record 13th consecutive home league game. Joshua Kimmich netted twice while Lewandowski poached a second-half goal to claim another league record as Leroy Sane, Serge Gnabry and Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting all scored for Bayern.

Greek defender Vasilios Lampropoulos scored a first-half own goal as Bochum ran out of luck at the Allianz Arena. "Bochum worked hard, but everything went right for us after the first goal," Sane told Sky. Bayern will lose top spot in the league table if Wolfsburg maintain their 100 percent record with a

fifth straight win on Sunday against Eintracht Frankfurt. Bayern have won their last seven games, scoring at least three goals on each occasion, with Dortmund, Leipzig and Barcelona on the list of defeated opponents. Bochum, who have now won just once in 35 games at Bayern, were 4-0 down at half-time. Fresh from their Champions League win at Barcelona on Tuesday, Bayern head coach Julian Nagelsmann made three changes to the starting line-up. Josip Stanisic and Lucas Hernandez came into the back four with Gnabry on the right wing for Jamal Musiala.

Sane was whistled by disgruntled Bayern fans during the Bavarian giants' opening games this season after a series of below-par performances. However, the 25-year-old has since flourished with five assists and three goals in the last five games and also netted twice for Germany during this month's World Cup qualifiers. "It's not something I want to go through again," admitted Sane when asked about being whistled earlier in the season. "Things are going well for me. I played well today but there are always things to improve on." — AFP