

Sports

Spurs rally, roll toward history on the road



Messi or Ronaldo? No thanks, says Leipzig boss



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RED CARDS TO BE INTRODUCED IN CRICKET FOR UNRULY CONDUCT Page 17



MADRID: Real Madrid's Karim Benzema, center, heads the ball as he scores his team's second goal during the Champions League, Group F, soccer match between Real Madrid and Borussia Dortmund at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid, Spain, yesterday. — AP

DORTMUND STRIKE LATE, BEAT MADRID TO TOP SPOT

MADRID: Marco Reus's dramatic equaliser two minutes from time ensured Borussia Dortmund beat holders Real Madrid to top spot in Champions League Group F with a pulsating 2-2 draw yesterday.

With both sides already qualified, a double from Karim Benzema looked to have Real well set to leapfrog Dortmund and secure a home tie in the second leg of their last-16 tie.

However, Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang reduced the arrears before substitute Reus slid in to turn Aubameyang's dangerous low cross high into the net.

A point does at least ensure Madrid match a club record 34 games unbeaten in all competitions, while Los Blancos are now also ensured of avoiding the likes of Bayern Munich, Manchester City or Paris Saint-Germain in Monday's draw.

Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane kept his promise to

go for victory despite the possibility of an easier draw by remaining in second with Casemiro and James Rodriguez coming into the side in only two changes from Saturday's Clasico.

However, Dortmund were well worthy of a point having created a huge number of chances in an end-to-end encounter.

Dortmund goalkeeper Roman Weidenfeller was busy early on as he parried a Benzema drive before denying Rodriguez twice in quick succession.

Benzema wasn't to be denied on 28 minutes when he bundled home Dani Carvajal's low cross at the back post. Real only went in ahead at the break, though, thanks to a mixture of good goalkeeping from Keylor Navas and wayward finishing from the visitors.

American wonder kid Christian Pulisic wasted a great chance when his weak effort was placed too close to

Navas before the Costa Rica international produced a brilliant stop to turn Andre Schuerrle's free-kick behind.

Another dangerous break moments later saw Gonzalo Castro burst through on goal, but he tried to square for Aubameyang and overhit his pass.

RONALDO FRUSTRATED

Dortmund were even more profligate at the start of the second period as Ousmane Dembele and Castro fluffed their lines from point-blank range.

Benzema should have got his second of the night when Weidenfeller produced a brilliant save to parry the Frenchman's volley.

However, Benzema only had seconds to stew on that miss as moments later he bulleted home a header from Rodriguez's inch-perfect cross.

Just when Madrid looked in control, Dortmund final-

ly took one of their chances when captain Marcel Schmelzer's run wasn't tracked and his low cross was gratefully tapped home by Aubameyang for his 19th goal in as many games this season.

Cristiano Ronaldo's week had been dominated by unwanted headlines off the field surrounding allegations he stored millions of euros from image rights in tax havens.

And there wasn't much for the Portuguese to shout about as he was held scoreless for a fourth straight Champions League game by more Weidenfeller heroics to turn a rising drive headed for the top corner behind.

Ronaldo then seemed in disbelief as he struck the base of the post with just Weidenfeller to beat. And that miss proved costly as Aubameyang stormed past Sergio Ramos and produced the perfect cross for Reus to slide home the equaliser. — AFP

SPURS SINK CSKA TO EARN EUROPA LEAGUE BERTH

LONDON: Tottenham rounded off a frustrating Champions League campaign with a 3-1 victory over CSKA Moscow that secured the dubious consolation of a place in the Europa League. Mauricio Pochettino's side were already eliminated from the Champions League before yesterday's final Group E fixture, but they finished on a high note with their first victory at Wembley at the third attempt.

After falling behind to Alan Dzagoev's strike, Tottenham equalised through Deli Alli and Harry Kane netted in first half stoppage-time before goalkeeper Igor Akinfeev's own goal sealed the points.

Tottenham ended third in the group and the north Londoners will enter the Europa League when the knockout stages begin in February. Playing in the less glamorous of Europe's club competitions, with its gruelling itinerary and far-flung destinations, might be something of an unwanted burden for Tottenham given the potential to damage their Premier League ambitions.

But the Europa League winners qualify for the Champions League so Pochettino's men may yet end up taking it seriously.

CSKA's failure to hold onto their lead meant boss Leonid Slutsky was unable to leave Moscow with the parting gift of prolonged involvement in Europe after revealing on Tuesday that he would quit the Russian champions after the Spurs match.

Defeats against Monaco and Bayer Leverkusen in their other group matches at Wembley had played a major role in Tottenham's exit and contributed to a negative feeling about the stadium among players and fans.

But with Tottenham likely to spend the whole of next season as tenants at Wembley

while White Hart Lane is redeveloped, Pochettino was keen for his team to make themselves more at home by beating CSKA.

The swathes of empty seats at kick-off suggested many Tottenham supporters had already made up their minds about the Wembley experience. But the stay-aways missed Tottenham's only emphatic performance of the tournament.

EXTRA GEAR

Early on, Alli headed wide from Christian Eriksen's cross before Son Heung-Min's low strike was pushed out by CSKA goalkeeper Akinfeev. Another flowing Spurs attack saw Kyle Walker feed Kane, whose instinctive first-time pass released Eriksen, only for the Danish winger to shoot straight at Akinfeev.

Alli wasted a good chance to open the scoring when his tame shot from eight yards barely forced Akinfeev to move.

Not for the first time in their strangely lethargic European campaign, Tottenham were punished for a lackadaisical mistake in the 33rd minute.

A high punt towards CSKA's Zoran Tosic should have been easy for Jan Vertonghen, but the Spurs defender allowed his opponent to win the header and Dzagoev, unchecked by Eric Dier, raced onto the loose ball before firing past Hugo Lloris.

Faced with elimination from Europe, Tottenham found an extra gear and Alli equalised five minutes later when he controlled Eriksen's cross on the left side of the penalty area and whipped a fine finish into the far corner.

Tottenham had failed to score more than once in each of their past nine Champions League games, but 30 seconds into first half stoppage-time, they ended that dismal



LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur's English striker Harry Kane (2nd L) misses with this header during the UEFA Champions League group E football match between Tottenham Hotspur and CSKA Moscow at Wembley Stadium in north London yesterday. — AFP

sequence. Eriksen chipped a pass towards Danny Rose and the left-back's low cross found Kane, who wasted no time dispatching a cool shot past Akinfeev for his seventh goal in his last six appearances.

Having established the lead, Tottenham looked far more composed after the interval and Kane came close to his second goal when he tested Akinfeev with a lunging volley.

Spurs defender Toby Alderweireld, back from a knee injury, came off the bench for his first appearance since October.

And Tottenham wrapped up only their second Champions League win this season in the 77th minute when Alli headed goalwards and Akinfeev saved before accidentally nudging the ball into his own net. — AFP

PORTO CRUSH LEICESTER TO EASE INTO LAST 16

PORTO: Porto eased into the Champions League knockout stages with an embarrassingly simple 5-0 win over Leicester City's hapless second-string side in the Estadio do Dragao yesterday.

With their qualification as Group G victors assured, the English champions rested key players, leaving their Portuguese hosts to cash in hungrily with a double from Andre Silva and fine strikes from Jesus Corona, Yacine Brahimi and Diogo Jota.

Leicester had only conceded one goal in their previously unbeaten first Champions League campaign but shipped three in 45 minutes with Silva starting the rout by heading home unchallenged from Corona's corner after six minutes.

One-way traffic and two brilliant goals ensued, Corona's magnificent first-time volley from Alex Telles' cross in the 25th minute being followed by Brahimi's cheeky back-

heel finish from Maxi Pereira's delivery just before halftime.

After a fairytale start to their European adventures which matched their Premier League heroics last season, Leicester, who had left the likes of Riyad Mahrez and Jamie Vardy at home, were suddenly left with nothing but thoughts of damage limitation.

They improved markedly but Danny Drinkwater's 65th-minute foul on Silva allowed the striker get up and slot home his fifth European goal of the season from the spot before Jota crashed home a fifth.

Even worse for the hopelessly outclassed visitors, Drinkwater, one of the few first-team regulars on duty, limped off with an ominous-looking injury.

With Copenhagen winning at Club Brugge in the other group game, Porto finished two points ahead of the Danish side and two adrift of Leicester. — Reuters



PORTO: Porto's Andre Silva, right, fights for the ball with Leicester's Wes Morgan during a Champions League group G soccer match between FC Porto and Leicester City at the Dragao stadium in Porto, Portugal yesterday. — AP