

ARNAUTOVIC'S DOUBLE SINKS STRUGGLING VILLA



STOKE-ON-TRENT: Aston Villa's desperate hopes of a lifeline at the bottom of the Premier League foundered on yet another miserable away-day yesterday as Marko Arnautovic struck twice for Stoke City. After a dismal first half low on quality, Arnautovic

buried his fierce penalty straight down the middle and into the net early in the second half after Phil Bardsley had been brought down in the box by Ashley Westwood. Within five minutes the Austrian international bundled in his second, winning a header and then chesting the ball over the line himself, before Villa gave themselves half a chance with a 79th-minute Leandro Bacuna reply. The result left Remi Garde's men still seven points adrift after a game which epitomised why they are the league's lowest scorers. They have been unable to win an away league game all season since their opening-day victory at Bournemouth.—Reuters

WATFORD AND BOURNEMOUTH IN STALEMATE



LONDON: Watford and Bournemouth played out a turgid 0-0 draw in the Premier League yesterday that left the visitors embroiled in the battle to avoid relegation. Watford striker Odion Ighalo forced Bournemouth keeper Artur Boruc into an early save as the hosts started well. Heurlho Gomes made a fine stop to deny Harry Arter's sweet strike for Bournemouth

in the second half before striker Ighalo wasted an excellent chance for the hosts when he headed over the bar from an unmarked position.

Daniels extends contract
Bournemouth left back Charlie Daniels has committed his future to the south coast side by signing a new three-and-a-half year contract, the Premier League club said on Friday. The 29-year-old, who has claimed five league assists this campaign, more than any other defender apart from Tottenham Hotspur's Danny Rose, has made more than 150 appearances for club. Daniels, who joined from fourth tier Leyton Orient in 2011, has started 25 of Bournemouth's 26 league matches this season, scoring two goals.— Agencies



LONDON: West Ham United's Cheikhou Kouyate (right) and Sunderland's Lee Cattermole (left) battle for the ball, during the English Premier League soccer match between West Ham United and Sunderland FC yesterday. — AP

WEST HAM'S ANTONIO KEEPS SUNDERLAND IN TROUBLE



LONDON: Michail Antonio struck as West Ham United enhanced their European qualifying hopes and snuffed out Sunderland's recent revival with a 1-0 victory yesterday. The former Nottingham Forest midfielder scored in the 30th minute, clinically punishing a loose clearance by Patrick van Aanholt to take his tally for the east London club to five goals. Slaven Bilic's side climbed to fifth place in the Premier League, supplanting Manchester United in the Europa League berth, and closed to within four points of the Champions League places. Sunderland manager Sam Allardyce met with defeat on his return to Upton Park and has now seen his team go 14 matches without a clean sheet in all competitions.

Sunderland, who had drawn 2-2 at Liverpool and beaten Manchester United 2-1 on their two previous outings, remain a point from safety. A sleepy game leapt to life in the 19th minute when Manuel Lanzini teed up Mark Noble for a first-time drive that Sunderland goalkeeper Vito Mannone brilliantly tipped onto the visitors' bar. Mannone's opposite number, Adrian, gave the home fans a scare when he elected to perform some kick-ups after receiving a back-pass, allowing Wahbi Khazri to charge down his attempted clearance. Moments later, Khazri almost embarrassed the Spaniard with an opportunistic free-kick from deep on the right that hit the top of the crossbar. But it was West Ham who made the breakthrough after Van Aanholt failed to get enough purchase on the ball as he attempted to

clear Sam Byram's hopeful pass down the hosts' right flank. Antonio picked up the pieces, leaving Van Aanholt trailing by languidly dragging the ball onto his left foot and then curling a low shot into the bottom-left corner. Like Allardyce, Jermain Defoe was up against his former club and he spurned a chance to equalize early in the second half when he lashed wide after James Collins had misjudged Lee Cattermole's lobbed pass. Van Aanholt and Yann M'Vila also shot off-target as Sunderland began to make inroads, while Adrian saved sharply with his feet from Jack Rodwell. West Ham substitute Andy Carroll almost made the game safe when he met Byram's knock-down with a full-blooded volley, but the ball cannoned back into play off the bar. Back at the other end, Byram thwarted Rodwell and Adrian saved one-handed from Dame N'Doye, before Dimitri Payet went close to swelling the hosts' lead by flashing a left-foot volley narrowly wide.— AFP

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE		
Liverpool v Everton	15:00	beIN SPORTS 4 HD
Newcastle v Man City	15:00	beIN SPORTS 10 HD
Man United v Arsenal	17:05	beIN SPORTS 8 HD
Tottenham v Swansea	17:05	beIN SPORTS 4 HD
SPANISH LEAGUE		
Real Sociedad v Malaga	0:05	beIN SPORTS 5 HD
Villarreal v Levante	14:00	beIN SPORTS 5 HD
Valencia v de Bilbao	18:00	beIN SPORTS 4 HD
Deportivo v Granada	20:15	beIN SPORTS 1 HD
Barcelona v Sevilla	22:30	beIN SPORTS 3 HD
ITALIAN LEAGUE		
Citta di Palermo v Bologna	14:30	beIN SPORTS 6 HD
Udinese v Hellas Verona	17:00	beIN SPORTS 8 HD
Chievo Verona v Genoa	17:00	beIN SPORTS 6 HD

Matches on TV (Local Timings)

BAYERN WINS IN WOLFSBURG AS STUTTGART LOSES TO HANNOVER

FRANKFURT: Kingsley Coman and Robert Lewandowski scored in the second half to give Bundesliga front-runner Bayern Munich a 2-0 win in Wolfsburg yesterday. The defending champion stayed on course for an unprecedented fourth straight title and provisionally increased its lead over Borussia Dortmund to 11 points. Dortmund hosts Hoffenheim today. In other matches, Claudio Pizarro scored a late goal to salvage a 2-2 draw for Werder Bremen against Darmstadt, bottom-place Hannover ended a five-match losing streak under new coach Thomas Schaaf with a 2-1 win in Stuttgart and Hamburger SV settled for a 1-1 draw at home against Ingolstadt.

Lewandowski raised his league-high tally to 23 goals to secure Bayern's win in Wolfsburg. Pep Guardiola's team did just enough to win against last season's runner-up. There were no other matches yesterday, with four matches scheduled unusually for Sunday due to Europa League matches two days ago. In Wolfsburg, the host team wasted the better chances in the first half despite Bayern's dominance.

Franck Ribery came on 11 minutes into the second half for Arjen Robben and the French winger played a role in both Bayern goals. He dribbled past three Wolfsburg players before getting the ball to Lewandowski, whose shot was deflected. The ball fell kindly to Coman, who slotted it home from close range in the 66th. The same three players also created Bayern's second in the 74th. Coman broke through on the right and crossed into the area. Ribery chested the ball down and Lewandowski drove it inside the post with the outside of his right foot. Lewandowski scored a Bundesliga-record five goals inside nine minutes when Bayern won 5-1 at home in the fall.

"These are a very important three points for us," Lewandowski said. "We were patient. Wolfsburg was defending and waiting for the counter." Guardiola said it was difficult to play four days after the intense 2-2 draw with Juventus in the Champions League. "We started very well but we are not resolute enough in our attacks," the outgoing Bayern coach said. "Once we scored, it became easier for us. Ribery was important with his one-on-one skill." In Stuttgart, Hannover earned its first win after eight straight losses with Japan midfielder Hiroshi Kiyotake setting up both goals with free kicks for captain Christian Schulz.

Timo Werner scored the opening goal for Stuttgart, which had several chances foiled by Hannover goalkeeper Ron-Robert Zieler and lost for the first time after an undefeated run of eight matches. The win restored some hope for Hannover in the battle against relegation. Werder didn't help its cause by failing to win at home against promoted Darmstadt, which led 2-1 on goals from Sandro Wagner's penalty and Aytac Sulu before Pizarro struck in the 89th. Werder, which led on a goal by Anthony Ujah, has only one win in 11 home matches. Newly signed Josip Drmic gave Hamburg an early lead before Lukas Hinterseer struck in the 61st for Ingolstadt's first goal away from home in five matches.— AP



MADRID: Atletico's Antoine Griezmann (bottom) celebrates with teammates after scoring during a Spanish La Liga soccer match between Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid yesterday. — AP

GRIEZMANN KEEPS ATLETICO'S TITLE HOPES ALIVE; BEAT REAL

MADRID: Antoine Griezmann scored a goal early in the second half to give Atletico Madrid a 1-0 win over Real Madrid at Santiago Bernabeu Stadium yesterday, keeping Atletico's title hopes alive and virtually ending its rival's chances in the Spanish league. The French forward scored with a left-footer in the 53rd minute after a cross by Brazilian left back Filipe Luis, helping visiting Atletico pull within five points of leader Barcelona, which hosts Sevilla today to close out the 26th round. Real Madrid could drop 12 points behind Barcelona if the Catalan club wins today.

It was Real Madrid's first defeat at home since a humiliating 4-0 loss to Barcelona in November. The team had won seven straight at Bernabeu. Fans loudly jeered Real Madrid president Florentino Perez, calling for his resignation. After the final whistle, many fans waved white "goodbye" handkerchiefs to show their displeasure with the president. Some protested outside the stadium, prompting police to intervene to disperse the crowd. "The league is over for us," Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane said. "To lose to Atletico at home is very difficult to overcome."

It's the third season in a row that Atletico beat Real Madrid at Bernabeu in the Spanish league. "This win gives Atletico Madrid fans reason to feel very proud of their players," Atletico coach Diego Simeone said. "Atletico keeps improving. We are going through a good moment." Simeone said it remains difficult to catch up to Barcelona, which against Sevilla has a chance to tie Real Madrid's record of 34 unbeaten games in all competitions set in 1988 and 1989. "The truth is that Barcelona is very good, it will be difficult for them to lose three games," Simeone said. "Of course you always want more, but we have to keep focused on our goal, which is to finish in the top three."

Griezmann got the winner in a breakthrough that started near midfield. He carried the ball to the top of the area, fed Luis on the left flank and the Brazilian passed it right back for Griezmann's shot from near the penalty spot. "It was crucial victory for us," Griezmann said. "We will keep fighting." Atletico had not scored a goal in its last two games. It hasn't conceded in four straight matches. Real Madrid started pressuring and controlled the early parts of the game but Atletico improved and didn't allow the hosts to create many chances. Cristiano Ronaldo, who had scored seven goals in his last three games at the Bernabeu, came close to equalizing with a header in the 68th but the ball went straight into the hands of Atletico goalkeeper Jan Oblak.

"It was a game we had to win and we didn't," Ronaldo said. "It was already complicated to win the league before this loss, now it's even harder. We have to keep our focus on the Champions League." Ronaldo's best opportunity with the game tied came just three minutes into the second half when he entered the area free from markers but sent his low show just wide of the far post. He had another chance from a free kick in the 32nd but his swerving shot was saved by Oblak. One of Atletico's best chances in the first half had been a long-range shot by Griezmann, forcing goalkeeper Keylor Navas to make a difficult save in the 40th.

Madrid wanted a red card for Atletico defender Diego Godin pulling Karim Benzema's jersey when the French striker headed toward the goal in the 31st but the referee only showed Godin a yellow card. Madrid also sought a penalty on Danilo in the 75th. The game match marked the encounter of the league's best offense and the top defense.— AP

KOHLI PROPS UP INDIA AFTER BOWLERS SKITTLE PAKISTAN

DHAKA: Virat Kohli scored a confident 49 to prop up India in a tricky chase as they defeated neighbors Pakistan by five wickets in a low-scoring Asia Cup match yesterday. India, who will host the World Twenty20 next month, will be boosted by the performance of their bowlers ahead of the March 8-April 3 tournament after they skittled Pakistan for 83 inside 18 overs.

India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni opted to bowl first on a green-tinged pitch at the Shere Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur and his bowlers responded brilliantly, extracting good movement out of the wicket. Medium paceman Hardik Pandya was the most successful among the Indian bowlers, picking up three wickets for eight runs, while Pakistan did not help their own cause with Khurram Manzoor and captain Shahid Afridi running themselves out.

Wicketkeeper Sarfraz Ahmed's 25 was Pakistan's highest individual score while Manzoor, making his T20 debut, was the only other batsman to reach double figures

with 10. India's chase also began on a sorry note with left-arm paceman Mohammad Amir dismissing both openers Rohit Sharma and Ajinkya Rahane leg before in the first over before they had opened their scoring. Suresh Raina fell in Amir's next over as India were reduced to 8-3 with Kohli and Yuvraj Singh at the crease.

Yuvraj struggled against the Pakistan pace attack initially but managed to stay at the crease with Kohli as the duo added 68 for the fourth wicket to take India in sight of their target. Kohli looked assured and on course for his 13th T20 fifty but was given lbw against paceman Mohammad Sami though he seemed to have got an edge on the ball. Pandya fell two balls later for a duck, edging Sami to Mohammad Hafeez at first slip where the fielder managed to hold on after juggling the ball a few times. India were still eight runs away from their target but southpaw Yuvraj (14 not out) and Dhoni took them home with 27 balls to spare.— Reuters

SCOREBOARD

DHAKA: Scoreboard yesterday in the Asia Cup match between India and Pakistan at Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium:

Pakistan	0-11-2 (4w), Ravichandran Ashwin 3-0-21-0 (5w).
Mohammad Hafeez c Dhoni b Nehra	4
Sharjeel Khan c Rahane b Bumrah	7
Khurram Manzoor run out	10
Shoaib Malik c Dhoni b Pandya	4
Umar Akmal lbw b Singh	3
Sarfraz Ahmed b Jadeja	25
Shahid Afridi run out	2
Wahab Riaz lbw b Jadeja	4
Mohammad Sami c Raina b Pandya	8
Mohammad Amir b Pandya	1
Mohammad Irfan not out	0
Extras: (4lb, 11w)	15
TOTAL: (all out)	83
Overs: 17.3	
Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-22, 3-32, 4-35, 5-35, 6-42, 7-52, 8-70, 9-83, 10-83.	
Bowling: Ashish Nehra 3-0-20-1 (2w), Jasprit Bumrah 3-2-8	
1, Hardik Pandya 3.3-0-8-3, Yuvraj Singh 2-0-11-1, Ravindra Jadeja 3	