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Arnautovic's double sinks struggling Villa

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LEICESTER: Leicester's Riyad Mahrez (center) is tackled by Norwich's Alexander Tettey (left) during the English Premier League soccer match between Leicester City and Norwich City at the King Power Stadium in Leicester yesterday. — AP

LEICESTER SURGE CLEAR AS ULLOA SHINES



LEICESTER: Leicester City eked out a critical win against struggling Norwich City with a very late winner from substitute Leonardo Ulloa that opened up a five-point lead at the top of the Premier League yesterday. Following their crushing stoppage time defeat at Arsenal last time out, the Foxes had, according to manager Claudio Ranieri, been "ready for the fight" but for most of the match seemed curiously becalmed as Norwich enjoyed the best openings.

Yet Ulloa's 89th-minute winner, following one of Leicester's flattest performances of their surreal season, demonstrated to him that his side has the patient, determined make-up of champions. "The conclusion I have drawn from this is that my players believe until the end," a delighted Ranieri told the BBC. "That, for me, is very important. If the other teams start to win, they can win all the matches. But for us, the next match is always the final match. That is our mentality."

Ranieri reckoned he had been particularly worried about this match with his players having had two weeks since the deflation of their Arsenal loss to reflect on what might have been. "I was so worried about this match, because after two weeks, your players can lose their tempo, but now I am very relaxed, and now I start

to think about the West Brom match (on Tuesday). It is a derby and a very, very tough match."

Cameron Jerome had squandered the outstanding chance of the game for the Canaries just before halftime, glancing a header wide, but though they labored unimaginatively through much of the second half, Leicester sent the King Power Stadium wild in the dying seconds. For once, it was not Jamie Vardy or Riyad Mahrez who delivered the goods but unsung Argentine striker Ulloa, who was brought on in the 77th minute as Ranieri's final gamble to take the points. It proved an inspired change, with the 29-year-old sliding in at the back post to latch on to Marc Albrighton's cross and earn the result which leaves Norwich, who were worth at least a point, still in peril just above the relegation zone. — Reuters



SOUTHAMPTON: Chelsea's Brazilian-born Spanish striker Diego Costa (left) shoots but doesn't score as Southampton's Dutch defender Virgil van Dijk (right) defends during the English Premier League football match between Southampton and Chelsea at St Mary's Stadium in Southampton yesterday. — AFP

WAWRINKA WINS DUBAI TITLE AFTER MARATHON TIEBREAK

DUBAI: Stan Wawrinka edged out Cypriot Marcos Baghdatis in a nerve-jangling, near-30 minute tiebreak to secure the Dubai Duty Free Championship with a 6-4 7-6(13) triumph yesterday. Wawrinka's path to victory had been eased by the retirements of world number one Novak Djokovic and Australian prospect Nick Kyrgios in the earlier rounds but the Swiss often toiled against surprise finalist Baghdatis, whom he beat for a sixth successive time.

World number four Wawrinka was gifted the first set by a Baghdatis double fault-his third of that game alone-and a tepid second set was notable for not featuring a single break point. But then followed a 28-point tiebreak in which twice grand slam champion Wawrinka saved five set points before a Baghdatis backhand drifted long to give the Swiss a second title of the year following his victory in Chennai in January. "It's been an amazing year. I'm playing my best tennis since a few years now so hopefully I can keep this level," Wawrinka said.

Baghdatis initially played serve and volley with aplomb, while Wawrinka's stinging backhand was lethal from the baseline, but that early assurance proved fleeting as both players made a catalogue of errors. Wawrinka afforded Baghdatis two break points after whipping a forehand wide and the Cypriot converted following another wayward Swiss forehand for a 3-2 first-set lead. Wawrinka, who was within two points of suffering opening-round elimination at the Aviation Club, immediately broke back with a crosscourt winner past the advancing Baghdatis, who was seeking a first title since 2010.

The pair were content to trade half-paced shots from



DUBAI: Stan Wawrinka from Switzerland holds the trophy after he beats Marcos Baghdatis from Cyprus during the final match of the Dubai Tennis Championships in Dubai yesterday. — AFP

the back of the court and when either did up the tempo it usually failed. World number 57 Baghdatis, serving at 4-5, saved four set points but his serve deserted him again as he conceded the set. The second set went with serve before an attritional tiebreak in which Baghdatis fluffed chances to square the match and Wawrinka threw his racket in frustration after missing an easy forehand. "It was a crazy tiebreak," added Wawrinka. "Until 6-6 I was always up with a mini break ... I did two or three quick mistakes. Then it starts to be all about nerves. You try to play simple, aggressive and it was good to finish in two sets." — Reuters

CHELSEA SINK SOUTHAMPTON



dropped to seventh place in the table - dealing a blow to its own hopes of European football next season.

In a surprise move, given Southampton's recent fine form, head Ronald Koeman made two changes, giving striker Charlie Austin his first league start in place of Graziano Pelle, as well as recalling right-back Cedric for James Ward-Prowse. Chelsea, which was still without injured captain John Terry, remained unchanged after last weekend's 5-1 victory against Manchester City. The visitors were however forced into an early change after Pedro pulled up with what looked like a hamstring injury, with Oscar taking his place.

But just as Chelsea was beginning to grow into the game, Southampton took the lead following a mistake by Baba Rahman. The young defender headed the ball straight into the path of Long, and Southampton's top scorer was able to race into the penalty area before beating Thibaut Courtois with a highly composed close-range chip. However, Chelsea produced a vastly-improved performance in the second half and got its reward with a fortuitous equalizer, when Fabregas sent over a 75th minute cross that crept past goalkeeper Fraser Forster. The goal gave Hiddink's side renewed hope, with Willian going close from the edge of the area. Willian then followed up by providing the corner kick for Ivanovic's match-winning header. — AP

SOUTHAMPTON: Late goals from Cesc Fabregas and Branislav Ivanovic saw an impressive Chelsea come from behind to beat Southampton 2-1 at St Mary's Stadium in the Premier League yesterday. Southampton took the lead on 41 minutes through Shane Long, but Fabregas drew the champions level in the 75th, as Chelsea became the first team to score against Southampton in seven games.

Ivanovic headed the winner in the 89th minute following a corner taken by Willian. Chelsea extended its unbeaten league run since interim manager Guus Hiddink replaced Jose Mourinho in December to 11 games. That level of form could yet salvage Chelsea's season, with the team moving up to 11th in the standings, 11 points behind fourth-place Manchester City. Southampton, which had not conceded in six games before Saturday,