

ATLETICO MADRID OUTPLAYED IN STALEMATE AT ALAVES

MADRID: Atletico Madrid had goalkeeper Miguel Angel Moya to thank for preventing Theo Hernandez inflicting defeat on his parent club as the Champions League finalists clung on for a 0-0 draw at Alaves yesterday.

Victor Languardía hit the bar in the first-half as Alaves dominated throughout. However, it was Hernandez, on loan from Atletico, who had the hosts' best chance to seal all three points when his low drive was turned behind Moya two minutes from time.

A point moves Atletico a point ahead of Real Sociedad in fourth, but Diego Simeone's men lose further ground on the top three with Real Madrid, Sevilla and Barcelona all in action today.

And a poor day for Atletico was rounded off by muscle injuries suffered by Jose Maria Gimenez and Angel Correa which make them serious doubts for Wednesday's Copa del Rey semi-final, first leg at home to Barcelona. In a sign of what was to come,

Alaves started brightly and Moya was called into action as early as the seventh minute when he saved smartly from Ibai Gomez.

Languardía was then unfortunate as his towering header came back off the underside of the bar and from the rebound Deyverson and Manu Garcia got in each other's way as they combined to send the rebound over. Gimenez left the field in tears early in the second period after tearing a thigh muscle. However, Atletico did have

one great chance to steal the win when Nico Gaitan was left one-on-one with Fernando Pacheco, but was dispossessed as he tried to round the 'keeper 15 minutes from time.

With Correa also hobbling and Simeone having made all three of his substitutions, Atletico were practically left with 10 men for the final stages. And Alaves nearly took advantage thanks to an Atletico player as Hernandez bombed forward from left-back but chose to shoot with Deyverson waiting for

a cut-back and Moya stood tall to deflect the ball wide. Earlier, sixth-placed Villarreal moved to within two points of Atletico thanks to a 2-0 win over rock bottom Granada to register their first victory of 2017. Both goals came from set-pieces as Alvaro Gonzalez's knockdown was turned home by captain Bruno Soriano just before half-time. And Gonzalez then got his first goal for the club by stabbing home whilst prone on the ground 17 minutes from time. — AFP

DOUBLE-CHASING CHELSEA DOWN BRENTFORD IN FA CUP

LONDON: Premier League leaders Chelsea remained on course for a domestic double as they eased into the last 16 of the FA Cup with a comfortable 4-0 win at home to second-tier Brentford at Stamford Bridge yesterday.

The Blues, eight points clear at the summit of English football, were rarely tested by their fellow west London side, who advanced with goals from Willian, Pedro, Branislav Ivanovic and Michy Batshuayi.

Hazard and Diego Costa among those rested, Chelsea still boasted a strong-enough team to see off a mid-table Championship side with ease. The clubs last met in 2013, with Chelsea needing a replay at the same stage of the competition to see off Brentford.

A repeat never looked likely yesterday. Chelsea had scored in their last 40 FA Cup ties, stretching back to 2000, and continued that trend through Willian's 14th-minute free-kick. Lasse Vibe was adjusted to have upended Pedro and Brazilian winger Willian stepped up to curl home past Brentford goalkeeper Dan Bentley. Brentford last defeated Chelsea in 1939 and things soon got worse for the visitors. Batshuayi, making a rare start, was given too much space to find Pedro, who took one touch before firing underneath Bentley in the 21st minute.

BENTLEY SAVES

Brentford could not cope with Chelsea's pace and movement and Batshuayi should have extended the home side's lead on the half hour. The Belgium striker, who has struggled to make an impact since joining for £33 million (\$41 million, 39 million euros) in pre-season, collected John Terry's knockdown and had two attempts only for Bentley to scramble the ball away just inches from his own goal-line.

Bentley, not for the first time, came to Brentford's rescue by pushing Ruben Loftus-Cheek's low shot wide as the visitors struggled to contain the dominant hosts.

Vibe then found himself crowded out after beating Terry to the bouncing ball.

It was a rare scare for the home side and normal service was almost resumed after Willian danced his way past two defenders before shooting just over the top in the 52nd minute. Another strong run from Willian saw him feed Loftus-Cheek only for the midfielder's chip to bounce back off the crossbar.

The game was opening up with Brentford finally finding their feet and Nico Yennaris was denied by goalkeeper Asmir Begovic. But it was Ivanovic, just five minutes after his arrival off the bench, who killed off the contest for good. After being played in by Pedro, the right-wing back drove low and true past Bentley in the 69th minute. Ivanovic was involved again when Yoann Barbet tripped the defender for a clear 81st minute penalty dispatched by Batshuayi. — AFP



LONDON: Crystal Palace's Chung-Yong Lee, center top, reacts to a challenge from Manchester City's Fabian Delph during the Emirates FA Cup, fourth round soccer match at Selhurst Park, London, yesterday. — AP



LONDON: Chelsea's John Terry, top, challenges for the ball with Brentford's Scott Hogan during the English FA Cup soccer match between Chelsea and Brentford at Stamford Bridge stadium in London, yesterday. — AP

If this was a final Chelsea appearance for Ivanovic, who has been linked with a transfer window move, the Serbia defender gave the Stamford Bridge faithful something to remember him by after coming on as a substitute for the final half hour of this match.

Chelsea manager Antonio Conte, ahead of Tuesday's league match away to Liverpool, made changes to his side. Yet even with Eden

JESUS LIGHTS CITY'S PATH TO FA CUP WIN

LONDON: Raheem Sterling, Leroy Sane and Yaya Toure scored as Manchester City secured their place in the FA Cup fifth round with a 3-0 win at Crystal Palace yesterday.

Gabriel Jesus, City's £27 million (\$33.9 million, 31.7 million euros) signing from Palmeiras, marked his full debut by setting up Sterling for City's opener shortly before half-time at Selhurst Park. Sane and Toure struck late on to rubber-stamp a win that got Pep Guardiola's side back to winning ways after their 4-0 thrashing at Everton and last weekend's 2-2 draw with Tottenham Hotspur. Defeat ended Palace's hopes of emulating last season's run to the final and leaves them with only their fight to avoid Premier League relegation to focus on.

Sam Allardyce has won just one of his first eight games since succeeding Alan Pardew as Palace manager, but having made six changes, he clearly had half an eye on Tuesday's trip to Bournemouth. Guardiola made five changes, which included a first appearance for captain Vincent Kompany since City's 2-1 win at the same ground on November 19, when the Belgian centre-back suffered a knee injury.

The visitors began brightly, Sterling narrowly failing to pick out Sane with a cross from the right and Toure teeing up David Silva for a volley that Wayne Hennessey blocked at his near post.

Palace, though, began to find joy on City's flanks and for a period during the first half they had Guardiola's men on the back foot. Willy Caballero, deputising in goal for Claudio Bravo, had to field a Jordan Mutch header and produce a smart save to repel a James Tomkins snapshot after City failed to clear Lee Chung-Yong's free-kick. Toure was perhaps fortunate to avoid a red card when, two minutes after being booked for a foul on Joe Ledley, he tripped Mutch as he forged down the Palace right.

JESUS COMES TO LIFE

Referee Mike Jones spared the Ivorian and from Andros Townsend's free-kick, via Mutch's flick-on, Christian Benteke headed over. Jesus had been quiet, but two minutes from half-time he came to life, neatly controlling the ball with his back to goal, turning sharply and freeing Sterling to slot a low shot past Hennessey.

The Brazilian almost made it 2-0 on the stroke

of the interval with a right-foot shot that was parried by Hennessey, the ball rebounding against a Palace defender and looping over the bar. Loic Remy, a half-time substitute, came close to an equaliser when Mutch's blocked shot bounced into his path and he sent an acrobatic effort whistling over the bar.

A Fabian Delph effort turned behind by Hennessey was followed by an almighty rain and hail shower that left the pitch sprinkled with white specks and briefly threatened to put City off their game. After failing to control Caballero's pass, Gael Clichy was robbed by Lee, who fed Ledley, and the Welshman drilled a shot narrowly wide. Ledley would also go close with a diving header from Townsend's cross, but by that stage Sane had put the game beyond Allardyce's side. Silva's pass down the inside-left channel was allowed to find its way to Sane and he shot across Hennessey for his third goal in three games.

Jesus squandered a chance to add a third late on, succumbing to an untimely attack of cramp after skirting Hennessey, but Toure did find the net with a fine stoppage-time free-kick. — AFP

LEIPZIG FIGHT BACK TO KEEP PACE WITH BAYERN

BERLIN: Second-placed RB Leipzig ended 10-man Hoffenheim's unbeaten run this season with a 2-1 comeback win in yesterday's key Bundesliga clash to stay just three points behind leaders Bayern Munich. Hoffenheim were the last undefeated team left in Europe's top leagues but Marcel Sabitzer's 77th-minute winner dealt the visitors their first loss of the season after striker Sandro Wagner's dismissal. With Germany coach Joachim Loew watching, Hoffenheim took the lead at Leipzig's Red Bull Arena when midfielder Sebastian Rudy, who will join Bayern next season, started a copybook counter-attack from his own box.

Hoffenheim moved the ball quickly until ex-Leicester striker Andrej Kramaric squared in the Leipzig box to present midfielder Nadiem Amiri with a tap-in on 18 minutes. Leipzig kept their composure and Guinea playmaker Naby Keita forced his way into the Hoffenheim area to lay the ball off as Timo Werner netted his 11th goal this season.

Hoffenheim were reduced to 10 men for the last 30 minutes when Wagner was shown a red card for a clumsy tackle on Leipzig's Stefan Ilsanker.

Leipzig grabbed the winner when Keita stepped on the gas and passed to Austria international Sabitzer who fired home from 22 metres out.

Carlo Ancelotti's Bayern stayed top with a 2-1 win at battling Werder Bremen, who put up a fierce second-half fight. Bayern took the lead when Franck Ribery's pass found Arjen Robben and the Dutch winger curled his shot inside the post from outside the area on 31 minutes. The lead was doubled when David Alaba hit a sweet free-kick which curled inside the post right on the stroke of half-time. But Bremen, who had last scored against Bayern in April 2014, dug deep and put up a spirited display at their Weser Stadion. Germany striker Max Kruse pulled a goal back on 53 minutes and ex-

Arsenal winger Serge Gnabry caused lots of problems down the right flank, but Bayern ultimately held on. Cologne battered bottom side Darmstadt 6-1 at home as Japan striker Yuya Osako scored twice in the rout. Ex-Germany midfielder Torsten Frings, Darmstadt's new coach, cut a frustrated fig-

ure as Cologne raced into a 3-0 half-time lead through an own goal by Aytac Sulu, Osako and Anthony Modeste. Darmstadt's Sidney Sam netted a second-half penalty before Osako, ex-Dortmund midfielder Milos Jovic and Latvia striker Artjoms Rudnevs netted for Cologne. — AFP



BURKINA FASO'S NIGUIMBE PREJUICE NAKOULMA, right, scores a goal against Tunisia during their African Cup of Nations Quarter Finals soccer match between Tunisia and Burkina Faso at the Stade de l'Amitie Libreville, Gabon, yesterday. — AP

BURKINA FASO INTO AFRICAN CUP SEMIS

LIBREVILLE: Burkina Faso is first into the semifinals at the African Cup of Nations after Aristide Bance came off the bench to score late and Prejuice Nakoulma added a second on a breakaway to beat Tunisia 2-0 yesterday.

Bance, with his dyed blond hair, hit a low shot into the bottom corner from a free kick in the 81st minute to break a deadlock at Stade de l'Amitie.

Nakoulma sprinted away on a counterattack four minutes after that, avoided a tackle from Tunisia goalkeeper Aymen Mathlouthi way out near the middle of the field, and side-footed into an empty net. Burkina Faso, which lost in the final two tournaments ago, will play the winner of today's Egypt-Morocco quarterfinal. Senegal plays Cameroon in yesterday's second quarterfinal. — AP

Live		Matches on TV (Local Timings)	
AFRICAN NATIONS CUP 2017			
Congo v Ghana	19:00	Sassuolo v Juventus	17:00
Egypt v Morocco	22:00	Crotone v Empoli	17:00
beIN SPORTS MAX 1 HD AR		Cagliari v Bologna	17:00
beIN SPORTS MAX 2 HD AR		Fiorentina v Genoa	17:00
beIN SPORTS MAX 1 HD AR		Napoli v Palermo	22:45
		beIN SPORTS	
SPANISH LEAGUE PRIMERA DIV.			
Real Betis v Barcelona	14:00	GERMAN BUNDESLIGA 1ST DIV.	
beIN SPORTS 3 HD		Freiburg v Hertha Berlin	17:30
Espanyol v Sevilla	18:15	Mainz v Borussia Dortmund	19:30
beIN SPORTS		beIN SPORTS	
Bilbao v Gijon	20:30	FRENCH LEAGUE 1ST DIV.	
beIN SPORTS		Nice v Guingamp	17:00
Real Madrid v Real Sociedad	22:45	Toulouse v Saint Etienne	19:00
beIN SPORTS 3 HD		Paris Saint v Monaco	23:00
		beIN SPORTS	
ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE SERIE A			
Torino v Atalanta	14:30		
beIN SPORTS			
Udinese v Milan	17:00		
beIN SPORTS			
Sampdoria v Roma	17:00		
beIN SPORTS			