

Sports

Bayern fight back twice in Liverpool tune-up win

Bayern Munich concede fastest own-goal in Bundesliga history

BERLIN: Bayern Munich conceded the fastest own-goal in Bundesliga history on Friday and twice had to equalise before securing a 3-2 win at Augsburg in their final tune-up before their Champions League tie at Liverpool.

Ahead of Tuesday's last 16, first-leg clash at Anfield, Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp will have watched with interest how Augsburg, who sit just above the Bundesliga relegation places, caused Bayern a few problems.

The away league win means defending champions Bayern trimmed the gap to just two points behind leaders Borussia Dortmund, who are at bottom side Nuremberg tomorrow. With one eye on Anfield, Bayern goalkeeper Manuel Neuer returned after three games out with a thumb injury, but conceded two goals in the opening 24 minutes—the first after just 13 seconds. Leon Goretzka claimed an unwanted record for the Bundesliga's fastest own-goal when he turned the ball into his own net. "I can't remember a worst start from us," admitted Bayern coach Niko Kovac. "We have to play much better at Liverpool."

The win could have come at a price as Kingsley Coman, who scored Bayern's first-half goals, was injured in the dying stages. "We need to see how he is, but it doesn't look good," admitted Kovac. Coman twice equalised in the opening half, cancelling out the own-goal then levelling at the half-time break after South Korea international Ji Dong-won had restored Augsburg's lead.

David Alaba scored Bayern's winning goal early in the second half, but Bayern will need to improve to trouble

Liverpool. "The goals we conceded were crazy," said Bayern captain Neuer. "We had said we wanted to defend well and we didn't manage that."

"Liverpool are a strong, attacking team and we must do better, luckily we have a few days to improve."

Bibiana Steinhaus, the first female referee in Europe's top five leagues, had barely blown for kick-off when Augsburg winger Philipp Max put in a cross which flummoxed the Bayern defence.

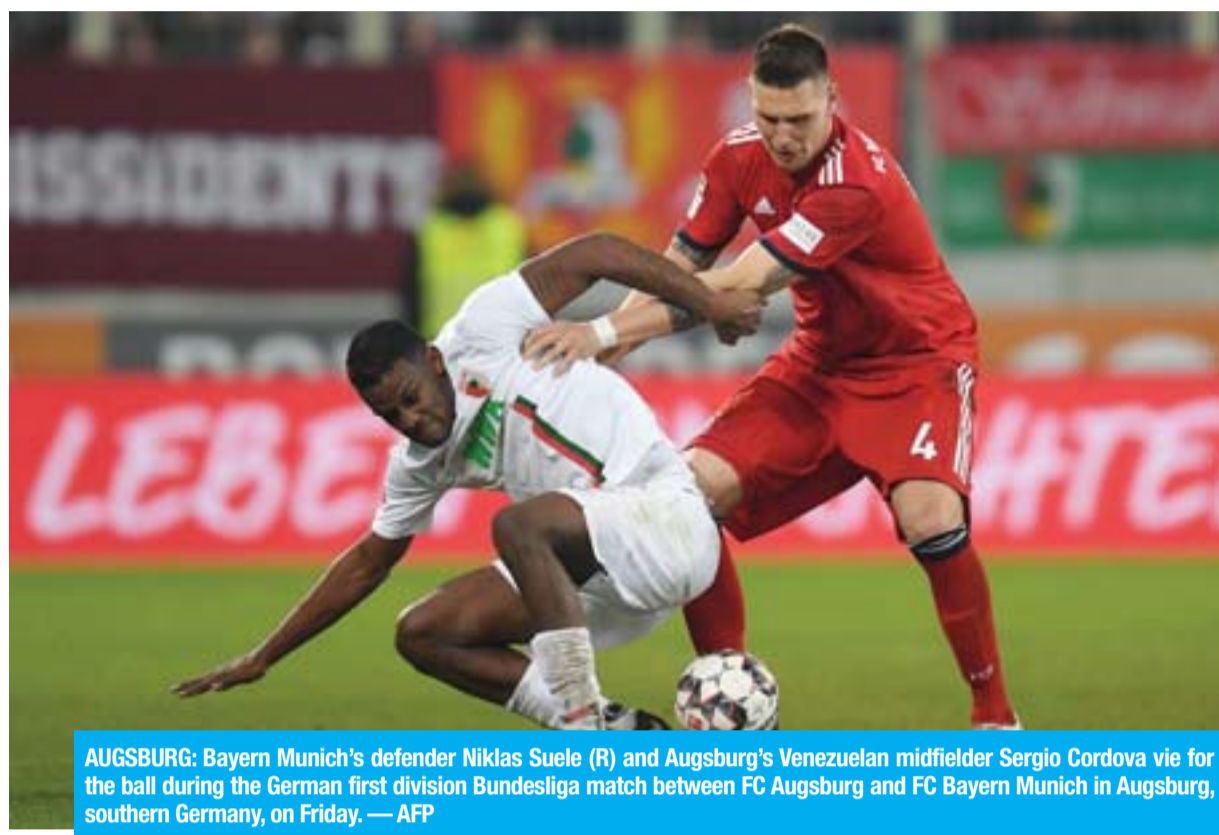
Goretzka watched in horror as the ball ricocheted off his boot and into the net as the injury-hit hosts took a shock lead. It was short of the Bundesliga's record fastest goal, just nine seconds, shared by Kevin Volland, for Hoffenheim against Bayern in 2015/16, and Karim Bellarabi, for Leverkusen against Dortmund in 2014/15.

However, shell-shocked Bayern quickly regrouped. Serge Gnabry and Robert Lewandowski went close, then Bayern drew level on 17 minutes when a beautifully curling

Joshua Kimmich cross found Kingsley Coman, who tapped home at the far post.

Augsburg restored their lead with almost a copy of their first goal when Max again fired in a cross and Ji rifled an unstoppable shot past Neuer from 14 metres out on 24 minutes. Bayern still managed to go into the half-time break level when Coman claimed his second goal.

Goretzka made up for his earlier mistake with a pass to the French winger, who fired through the legs of Augsburg goalkeeper Gregor Kobel to make it 2-2 just before the



AUGSBURG: Bayern Munich's defender Niklas Sule (R) and Augsburg's Venezuelan midfielder Sergio Cordova vie for the ball during the German first division Bundesliga match between FC Augsburg and FC Bayern Munich in Augsburg, southern Germany, on Friday. — AFP

break. The winning goal arrived eight minutes into the second-half when Coman flicked the ball inside to Alaba and the 26-year-old fired a trademark low-shot inside the post

which gave Augsburg keeper Kobel no chance. Augsburg's Reece Oxford headed over with a brilliant effort with 26 minutes left, but Bayern held on for victory. — AFP

Ronaldo on target as Juventus cruise

MILAN: Cristiano Ronaldo set up Paulo Dybala to score early and added one himself with defender Leonardo Bonucci also on target as Juventus surged 14 points clear in Serie A on Friday with a 3-0 win over lowly Frosinone.

Coach Massimiliano Allegri was taking no chances, even against a side sitting second bottom of the table, ahead of next week's Champions League last 16, first-leg tie at Atletico Madrid.

The seven-time reigning Serie A champions are also building towards a top-of-the table clash against Napoli in the San Paolo Stadium on March 3.

Allegri's side continued their unbeaten run against their outclassed rivals from outside Rome to move 14 points clear of Napoli who host Torino today.

"A great series of matches commence, coming thick and fast," warned Allegri as he included Ronaldo alongside Dybala and Mario Mandzukic on the front line.

Defender Bonucci returned from an ankle injury along with captain Giorgio Chiellini who had limped off during their shock Coppa Italia exit to Atalanta on January 30.

Ronaldo set up Dybala to fire in the first goal after just six minutes in Turin as the Argentina forward, who has been overshadowed since the arrival of the former Real Madrid player, scored his first league goal since

November 3.

Ten minutes later Bonucci broke through after a desperate goalmouth scramble. Frosinone goalkeeper Marco Sportiello denied Mandzukic's diving header with defender Bonucci in place to turn the rebound into goal. Ronaldo slotted in his 19th Serie A goal and 21st in all competitions on 62 minutes with Rodrigo Bentancur crossing for Mandzukic who provided the assist for the Portuguese striker.

Ronaldo was then replaced by Federico Bernardeschi with the tie against Atletico in mind.

AC Milan, in fourth, travel to Atalanta, one place below in fifth, in a battle for Champions League football next season. Napoli host Torino on Sunday, with Inter Milan, in third, hosting ninth-placed Sampdoria.

Roma play relegation threatened Bologna tomorrow after winning their Champions League last 16, first-leg tie against Porto 2-1. —AFP

Argentines pay tribute to Sala

PROGRESO: Grieving Argentines paid tribute to footballer Emiliano Sala yesterday at a special memorial in his home region of Santa Fe. The body of the 28-year old Sala, who died in a plane crash last month, was laid out in a gymnasium in the town where he grew up so friends and family could pay their last respects.

A single-engine plane carrying Sala from French club Nantes to his new team Cardiff City crashed on Jan. 21 in the English Channel, before he made his debut for the Premier League side who bought him for a club record 15 million pounds (\$19.34 million).

Wreckage was found on Feb. 3 following a privately-funded underwater search and a body recovered three days later. Sala's body was flown back to Argentina and arrived in Buenos Aires on Friday morning before being driven the 538 km (334 miles) to Progreso, where he grew up.

The gymnasium of the Atletico y

Social San Martin de Progreso club hosted boys' teams where Sala played as a child. Residents in the town of around 2,500 people, many wearing the red and black shirt of the local side with the name EMI on the back, began arriving at about 7am on Saturday to see the body and pay their last respects. Outside, fans draped a banner saying, 'Emi, nunca caminaras solo' or 'Emi, You'll Never Walk Alone.' "It's as if he was a member of my family," said a sobbing Lucia Torres, who lives nearby. "It's something I can't understand nor accept because it hurts so much. The town has been in darkness since Jan. 21."

Sala's body will be taken to the nearby city of Santa Fe for cremation later in the evening but his family did not give details of what would happen to his ashes. Cardiff manager Neil Warnock along with the Welsh club's chief executive Ken Choo and president Mehmet Dalman are among those attending the ceremony, as is Sala's former Nantes team mate Nicolas Pallois. "I would like to find a responsible person... someone who says to me, 'This happened', but, well, it seems this was just an accident," said Sala's aunt, Mirta Taffarel. — Reuters



CARDIFF: File photo released by Cardiff City FC via Noticias Argentinas taken on January 20, 2019 showing Argentine footballer Emiliano Sala posing with Cardiff's jersey after signing for the club, in Cardiff, UK. — AFP

Ethiopia's Tefera breaks Guerrouj's 1500m indoor record

BIRMINGHAM: Ethiopia's Samuel Tefera set a new 1500 metres indoor world record in Birmingham yesterday as he broke a mark that had stood for more than 20 years. Tefera upstaged compatriot Yomif Kejelcha to stop the clock in a time of 3min 31.04sec, shaving 0.14sec off the previous record set by Moroccan middle-distance great Hicham El Guerrouj in 1997.

Kejelcha, who came within 0.01sec of the world indoor mile record last week, had announced his intention to break the 1500m mark ahead of yesterday's World Indoor Tour meeting in Birmingham.

And with pacemakers taking the field through 800m in 1:52.70 and 2:49.28 at the 1200m mark, Kejelcha was on course for a record. But Tefera, the world indoor champion at the distance, was tucked in on his shoulder and, as the bell sounded for the final lap, he kicked past his countryman and charged towards the line. Kejelcha came second in an outright personal best of 3:31.58. — AFP



BIRMINGHAM: Ethiopia's Samuel Tefera poses with his world record time after competing win the men's 1500m final at the Indoor athletics Grand Prix at Arena Birmingham in Birmingham yesterday. — AFP



Matches on TV

(Local Timings)

SPANISH LEAGUE		
Real Madrid CF v Girona	beIN SPORTS HD 3	14:00
Valencia CF v RCD Espanyol	beIN SPORTS HD 3	18:15
Villarreal CF v Sevilla FC	beIN SPORTS HD 3	20:30
Real Betis v Deportivo Alaves	beIN SPORTS HD 3	22:45
ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE		
Spal v ACF Fiorentina	beIN SPORTS	14:30
Udinese Calcio v AC Chievo Verona	beIN SPORTS	17:00
Genoa CFC v SS Lazio	beIN SPORTS	17:00
Empoli v US Sassuolo Calcio	beIN SPORTS	17:00
Internazionale Milano v UC Sampdoria	beIN SPORTS	20:00
SSC Napoli v Torino FC	beIN SPORTS	22:30
GERMAN BUNDESLIGA		
Eintracht Frankfurt v Borussia Monchengladbach	beIN SPORTS	17:30
Bayer 04 Leverkusen v Fortuna D, Sseldorf	beIN SPORTS	20:00
FRENCH LEAGUE		
LOSC Lille v Montpellier HSC	beIN SPORTS	17:00
Caen v RC Strasbourg	beIN SPORTS	17:00
FC Girondins de Bordeaux v Toulouse FC	beIN SPORTS	17:00
Stade Reims v Stade Rennais	beIN SPORTS	19:00
Saint Etienne v Paris Saint-Germain	beIN SPORTS	23:00

Lyon ready for 'game of season' with Barcelona

PARIS: Lyon edged rock-bottom Guingamp 2-1 in Ligue 1 on Friday with a fabulous winner from captain Nabil Fekir, just days ahead of Barcelona's visit for a Champions League clash. Lyon consolidated third place in Ligue 1 while resting a couple of key players and even taking their foot off the gas with Barcelona in mind.

"It's our game of the year, it'll be a big match, but we often do well in them," Lyon president Jean Michel Aulas told French TV. "Bruno (Genesio the Lyon coach) takes tactical risks and we have surprised (Manchester) City before, and this stadium was built for matches like this," he added on their 60,000-capacity home.

"Many of the players had Tuesday on their minds but with Barcelona coming that's normal," said Genesio, mastermind of the four points Lyon took off City in the group phase to squeeze into the last-16. "We have some doubts still about who is playing on Tuesday, but you'll have to wait until Monday to find out," Genesio added.

Ahead of their today's game with Saint Etienne, PSG still lead Ligue 1 on 59 points with Lille second on 49 and Lyon third on 46. Martin Terrier put Lyon ahead after a scramble on 15 minutes before defender Leo Dubois was then overpowered five minutes later by Guingamp's Cameroonian midfielder Felix Eboa Eboa, who rushed in for a header at the far post shouldering the defender out of the way to make it 1-1. But then on 35 minutes Fekir controlled the ball on his chest, took a quick touch to set himself up for the shot and curled a fabulous left-foot shot into the top corner from outside the box.

Fekir, however, will miss the game against Barcelona through suspension. "I'll be in the stadium supporting my teammates from the stands and I'll believe in them all the way," said French international Fekir.

One other worry for Lyon was the loss of lively striker Moussa Dembele, who was replaced late on by Dutch forward Memphis Depay. Earlier Friday, Nimes secured top flight survival with a 2-0 win over Dijon. — AFP