

Sports

Firmino sinks Spurs as Liverpool go top, 10-man Arsenal held

LONDON: Furious Jose Mourinho had a heated exchange with Jurgen Klopp after Roberto Firmino's last-gasp header sent Liverpool to the top of the Premier League with a 2-1 win against title rivals Tottenham, while troubled Arsenal were held to a 1-1 draw by Southampton on Wednesday.

Tottenham boss Mourinho was incensed with the antics of Liverpool manager Klopp and his coaching staff, claiming they set out to influence the decisions of the officials with constant complaints on the touchline.

After Klopp's wild celebrations of Firmino's 90th minute goal, Mourinho exchanged angry words with the German coach on the pitch at full-time. It was an incendiary end to an explosive clash that saw Mohamed Salah put Liverpool ahead, only for Son Heung-min to equalize before the interval.

Asked about his animated conversation with Klopp, Mourinho said: "I told him the best team lost and he disagreed, but that's his opinion. 'If I behave the same way he does on the touchline, I do not stay there. That's animated? For some reason I am different.'"

Claiming he took off Giovanni Lo Celso because he feared the midfielder would be sent off due to Liverpool's pressure from the bench, Mourinho said: "With Gio's yellow card and the incredible pressure these guys on the touchline put on the officials, I was afraid of another yellow card and I had to take him off. Everything is fine between us. The referees let him behave the way he does. It's not my problem. I feel sad for it because I cannot do it but it's just the way it is."

Klopp tried to play down the row, saying: "Nothing serious, he said it himself so I don't have to repeat it. No argument." Injury-ravaged Liverpool are now three points clear of Tottenham after extending their unbeaten run to nine league matches with a result that showed they will not surrender the title without a fight.

"A good game against a counter-attacking monster, the possession we had we did incredibly well," Klopp said. "Yes they have scored a goal, had two chances, apart from that we controlled the game and it is a massively deserved three points."

Tottenham were defeated for the first time since the opening

weekend of the league season, ending their 11-game unbeaten run. Glaring misses from Tottenham forwards Steven Bergwijn and Harry Kane proved costly in the second half. "A very unfair result. We played against the champions in their stadium and we had the best chances to win," Mourinho said. "A draw would be a bad result, so you can imagine how we feel with a defeat."

Arsenal frustration

At the Emirates Stadium, defeat would have seen Arsenal lose five consecutive home league games for the first time in the club's history as the pressure mounts on manager Mikel Arteta. The Gunners could not have got off to a worse start as Theo Walcott opened the scoring on his return to the Emirates with a fine chipped finish over Bernd Leno from Che Adams' pass.

Third-placed Southampton failed to build on their lead and were made to pay soon after the break as Arsenal scored just a third goal in their last nine league games and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang's first from open play since the first day of the season.

Bukayo Saka's burst opened up the Saints defense and when Eddie Nketiah freed Aubameyang inside the area, the Arsenal captain curling an excellent finish into the far corner. Arsenal's joy was short-lived as they again found themselves a man down as Gabriel picked up two quick bookings.

"It's very difficult to compete in this league when you play for so long with 10 men," Arteta said. "It makes it more complicated, but the boys stood up to it, they showed their character and resilience and they never gave up."

Fifth-placed Everton won 2-0 at fourth-placed Leicester thanks to goals from Richarlison and Mason Holgate. Leeds won a seven-goal thriller against Newcastle 5-2 to move level on points with the Magpies, eight points clear of the relegation zone.

Fulham moved out of the relegation zone after a 0-0 draw with Brighton at Craven Cottage. West Ham's Sebastien Haller equalised with a superb overhead kick in a 1-1 draw against Crystal Palace, whose goalscorer Christian Benteke was sent off in the second half. —AFP



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool's German manager Jurgen Klopp (R) remonstrates with the linesman during the English Premier League football match between Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspur at Anfield in Liverpool, north west England on Wednesday. — AFP

Inter close gap on leaders AC Milan, Ronaldo penalty miss stalls Juve

MILAN: Romelu Lukaku scored from the penalty spot as Inter Milan battled past title rivals Napoli 1-0 on Wednesday to move one point behind Serie A leaders and city rivals AC Milan who were held at Genoa.

Defending champions Juventus sit three points behind Inter after Cristiano Ronaldo missed a penalty in a 1-1 home draw with Atalanta. Napoli — who played the final quarter of an hour a man down after captain Lorenzo Insigne was sent off — drop to fourth, a further point adrift.

Insigne saw red for arguing with the referee after goalkeeper David Ospina fouled Inter's Matteo Darmian to concede the crucial spot-kick. "Only in Italy players are thrown out for this stuff," fumed Napoli coach Gennaro Gattuso, blasting "a dubious penalty".

Napoli also saw club record scorer Dries Mertens limp off with an ankle injury in the first half. Lukaku stepped up to slot in on 73 minutes for his 10th league goal this season, joining Ronaldo and Zlatan Ibrahimovic at the top of the Serie A

goalscoring chart.

Inter could also thank goalkeeper Samir Handanovic for their clean sheet, denying Insigne and Giovanni Di Lorenzo late on. For Antonio Conte's Inter it was a fifth consecutive league win as they target a first Scudetto since 2010, with their European hopes now over. "It was a painful victory that can do us good," said Conte. "These are three important points because against a rival and a great team like Napoli they are worth double."

AC Milan, playing a fourth consecutive league game without the injured Ibrahimovic, came from behind twice to secure a 2-2 draw as Mattia Destro scored a double for Genoa. The Italian striker tapped in a rebound after Milan goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma denied Eldor Shomurodov just after the break.

Five minutes later, Davide Calabria's long-range effort pulled Milan level before Destro headed in a second on the hour. But French defender Pierre Kalulu nodded in from close range to rescue a second consecutive draw for Milan, who stay unbeaten in Serie A since March and are looking to deny Juventus a 10th straight league triumph this season.

"We had six players out and had to grit our teeth but those who played proved to be up to par," said coach Stefano Pioli. "Our club has not been in the Champions League for many years and that is our goal."

Sixth Juventus stalemate

In Turin, unbeaten Juventus were held for the sixth time in Serie A this term. Federico Chiesa curled in a powerful shot to

put Juventus ahead before the half-hour mark. But Atalanta hit back with Remo Freuler grabbing the equalizer 12 minutes into the second half, shortly after captain Papu Gomez came off the bench.

The build-up to the game had been overshadowed by tensions between coach Gian Piero Gasperini and Gomez, left out of their last two league games amid speculation he could leave the Bergamo club in January.

Ronaldo, who had fired over the target in the fifth minute, had a rare penalty miss after an hour following a Hans Hateboer foul on Chiesa. The Portuguese striker's weak effort was easily saved by Atalanta keeper Pierluigi Gollini.

Spaniard Alvaro Morata had missed a golden chance after 12 minutes, sending a weak back-heel flick wide in front of an open goal. At the other end of the pitch, Juventus goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny saved a Cristian Romero header with a quarter of an hour to go.

"You have to take these games home," said Juventus coach Andrea Pirlo. "We had many opportunities and we weren't able to close it. When you leave the game in the balance anything can happen."

Atalanta, who also held Juventus the last time they played in Turin last July, are eighth, 10 points behind AC Milan, after a slow start to the campaign. "It's a great result," said Gasperini. "We were very good, at one point we were convinced of winning it. 'We played with personality against a team that are one of the favourites for the Scudetto.'" Fifth-placed Sassuolo drew 1-1 at Fiorentina, whose winless run stretched to seven games. — AFP