

Sports

Atletico Madrid need Eibar win to resuscitate title challenge

MADRID: Time is running out for Atletico Madrid to reboot their La Liga title challenge, even as they still sit top of the table with eight games left to play. Atletico remain in pole position, one point ahead of Real Madrid and two in front of Barcelona, but their poor form means it is the chasing duo now considered favorites to lift the trophy. Four wins in Atletico's last 11 games inspires little confidence they will be able to keep pace with Real and Barca, who have put early-season problems behind them to accelerate down the final straight. But a victory at home to struggling Eibar tonight would go some way to reigniting belief.

It would put Atletico five points ahead of Barcelona, and four clear of Madrid, before Zinedine Zidane's side take on Getafe later tonight. Marcos Llorente will be back, having served his suspension by missing last weekend's draw against Real Betis, but Atleti will still be without Luis Suarez, who is expected to need another fortnight to overcome his leg injury.

With Joao Felix also out, Diego Simeone has a lack of options in attack, Angel Correa the likely partner for Llorente up front, assuming Moussa Dembele is not

suddenly thrust into favor. Zidane said last weekend that Real Madrid are "physically at their limit" and he will be forced to make changes too at the Coliseum Alfonso Perez.

Casemiro is suspended after being sent off in the Clasico, meaning Isco or Fede Valverde could start in midfield while Raphael Varane is still unavailable after testing positive for COVID-19. With Sergio Ramos injured and Nacho Fernandez suspended, it leaves Eder Militao as Madrid's only fit central defender.

Ferland Mendy may have to play centrally or Zidane could turn to youth, with the 21-year-old Victor Chust also an option. Eden Hazard should at least be fresh, after returning to training two weeks ago, while Mariano Diaz and Marcelo could also be handed rare starts.

Sevilla will need to beat fifth-placed Real Sociedad to boost their hopes of joining the title race while at the other end of the table, Huesca take on Alaves in a battle of 16th against 19th. Huesca have transformed their survival chances after back-to-back wins over Levante and Elche, but their reward is only a one-point cushion over the bottom three. — AFP



SEVILLE: Atletico Madrid's Argentine coach Diego Simeone (2L) walks on the sideline during the Spanish League football match between Real Betis and Club Atletico de Madrid at the Benito Villamarin stadium in Seville on April 11, 2021. — AFP

News in brief

PSG given chance

PARIS: French Ligue 1 leaders Lille needed a spectacular late strike from Luis Araujo to rescue a 1-1 draw at home to Montpellier on Friday with Paris Saint-Germain handed the chance to turn the screw in the title race. Lille moved to 70 points but defending champions PSG can close the gap to just a point if they defeat Saint Etienne today. Andy Delort headed Montpellier ahead in the 21st minute on Friday. But Brazil's Luis Araujo grabbed a deserved equalizer with five minutes left with a memorable half-volley. Lille were unlucky not to have taken the lead earlier in the game when a Benjamin Andre drive came back off the post in the 57th minute. Montpellier are a resolute side and have now gone 14 matches in all competitions without defeat. They are eighth and still well-placed to claim a European place next season. — AFP

Leipzig draw

BERLIN: Leipzig had a last-minute goal ruled out and were held to a 0-0 draw at home by Hoffenheim on Friday. Second-placed Leipzig have 61 points. Leipzig thought they had won the game at the death when Yussuf Poulsen headed in but he was penalized for handball after the referee consulted the pitchside monitor. Friday's result was a fair outcome with Julian Nagelsmann's side taking until the 53rd minute to have an attempt on target with Christopher Nkunku failing to trouble the Hoffenheim keeper. Nagelsmann went into the game with speculation linking him as Hansi Flick's successor at Bayern next season. Flick, meanwhile, seen as the man to replace Joachim Loew as national team coach after the European Championship, has yet to confirm he will stay at Munich where he has a contract until 2024. — AFP

Italy to ease ban

ROME: Up to a thousand spectators will be allowed at outdoor events from May 1 when Italy eases its stadium fan ban in regions less affected by the coronavirus, it was announced Friday. Fans will be allowed to attend football, basketball and volleyball games in Italy's 'yellow zones', the government said. It also means fans can attend the Rome Masters tennis event from May 9-16. The country gave a green light this week for up to 17,000 fans to attend football's European Championship quarter-final in Rome on July 3. Stadiums have been closed to fans in Italy since October. — AFP

Injury clouds Kane double as Spurs draw

LIVERPOOL: England forward Harry Kane suffered a worrying ankle injury ahead of next week's League Cup final after scoring twice in Tottenham Hotspur's 2-2 draw away to Everton in the Premier League on Friday. Gylfi Sigurdsson also grabbed two goals for Everton in a result that did little for either side's European hopes. Kane, expected to lead England's attack in this year's coronavirus delayed European Championships, went off in stoppage time towards the end of the match after rolling his ankle when challenged in the box at an Everton corner.

"It is too early to say something," Tottenham manager Jose Mourinho told Sky Sports when asked afterwards about Kane's injury. "For him to leave the pitch with a few minutes to go is obviously because he felt something. Let me be optimistic and believe that he has time to recover. Let's see. It's obvious he's a very important player for us. I cannot say much or speculate."

Kane's 20th league goal of the season put Spurs ahead in the 27th minute at Goodison Park only for Sigurdsson to equalise soon afterwards from the penalty spot. It was the reverse story in the second half, Sigurdsson getting his second in the 62nd minute before Kane leveled six minutes later.

Spurs remain seventh, five points off the top four

having played one game more than West Ham. Mourinho said of Kane's double: "It was great finishing. Two beautiful goals but not a surprise for the ones who see him do it every day in training."

Meanwhile, Mourinho had little time for Paul Pogba's recent criticism of his management style when he was in charge of Manchester United. Pogba accused Mourinho of "going against players" and making them feel like "they don't exist anymore."

But Mourinho, who made France midfielder Pogba the world's most expensive player when he brought him to Old Trafford in 2016, insisted Friday: "I would like to say that I couldn't care less what he says. I am not interested at all."

'Keep fighting'

Everton were left a place and one point further back than Tottenham, but do have a game in hand on Mourinho's side. "It was probably the best we played at home this season," said Everton manager Carlo Ancelotti. "We were unlucky. We did easy mistakes and when you do mistakes against Harry Kane you are condemned. We have more difficulties to reach Europe but we have to keep fighting. We still have (the) possibility, playing like tonight."

After an uninspiring opening, Spurs broke the deadlock with their first effort on target. Everton's Michael Keane missed Tanguy Ndombele's cross and in the process allowed Kane to control the ball and shoot into the bottom corner past England team-mate Jordan Pickford.

This was Kane's 20th goal of the Premier League season — the fifth time in his career he had achieved the feat. Only Alan Shearer (seven) and Sergio Agüero (six) have done so in more Premier League seasons.

But the Londoners' lead lasted barely four minutes, with Everton equalizing after Sergio Reguilon charged into James Rodriguez and Sigurdsson beat Hugo Lloris from the penalty spot. Lloris kept the game all square come half-time, however, by denying both Rodriguez and Richarlison with fine saves.

Spurs then squandered several chances to regain the lead and they were punished for their wastefulness when Iceland's Sigurdsson fired into the far corner following a pull-back from Seamus Coleman. But Kane had his second goal when he pounced from close range after Everton's Mason Holgate and Keane collided in the Merseysiders' box. — AFP



LIVERPOOL: Tottenham Hotspur's English striker Harry Kane holds his foot before leaving the pitch injured during the English Premier League football match between Everton and Tottenham Hotspur at Goodison Park in Liverpool, north west England on Friday. — AFP



MANCHESTER: Manchester United's Norwegian manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer (center) congratulates Manchester United's Spanish goalkeeper David de Gea (right) after the UEFA Europa league quarter final, second leg football match against Granada at Old Trafford stadium in Manchester England, on April 15, 2021. — AFP

Giving up on title race is not in Man Utd's DNA: Solskjaer

LONDON: Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer says giving up on the Premier League title is "not in our DNA" even though their pursuit of runaway leaders Manchester City appears hopeless. United head into tonight's home game against struggling Burnley second in the table, 11 points behind City but with a game in hand.

The Norwegian believes his side are on the right track but admits adding to their 20 league titles is unlikely. "Of course we'll never give up," Solskjaer said after his side wrapped up a 4-0 aggregate victory against Granada in the Europa League quarter-finals on Thursday, setting up a last-four clash with Roma.

"Man United will never, ever give up. This club has had too many setbacks and too many great comebacks to have that in our DNA. (Giving up) is

not in our DNA. But if it's realistic? No, probably not because when you've had a team so consistent as Man City have been, you don't expect them to lose three games out of the last six."

United are on course to finish in the top four in back-to-back seasons for the time since Alex Ferguson retired as a champion in 2013. They are also desperate to claim their first silverware since winning the Europa League under Jose Mourinho in 2017.

"Of course, third last year, second this year if that's what we manage and close to a trophy, it's progress," said Solskjaer. "That's not the end game. "The end game is, of course, winning the league. But we're not in the era of Sir Alex now. We've had a transformation period since he left, which always would happen because there's no one better. There never will be." — AFP

Classifieds

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Adan Hospital	23940620	Nuzha	22526804		
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764		
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	Qadsiya	22515088		
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9	Dasmah	22532265		
Clinics		Bneid Al-Gar	22531908		
		Shaab	22518752		
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