

Sports

Marseille match postponed after 'savage' fans attack training ground

Angry supporters demonstrate against team's leadership, poor results

MARSEILLE: Marseille hit out at a "frenzy of violence" as their game against Rennes in France's Ligue 1 on Saturday was postponed after hundreds of angry supporters broke into the club's training ground and caused widespread damage in a protest.

The hardcore Ultras, who were demonstrating against the club leadership and the team's poor recent run of results, assembled in the afternoon in front of Marseille's La Commanderie training ground, throwing smoke bombs and firecrackers.

"Several hundred Ultras used force and violence to get into the training ground, including the first team's building," the club said in a statement. "A frenzy of unjustifiable violence put the lives of those present in danger. Thefts were committed and vehicles damaged. Five trees were burnt down...several hundred thousand euros worth of damage was caused."

Local police in France's Bouches-du-Rhone department earlier said 25 arrests were made and seven police officers were injured after "300 OM supporters violently attacked police officers present to secure La Commanderie". Sports daily L'Equipe reported that Marseille's Spanish defender Alvaro Gonzalez was struck on the back by a projectile as he went to confront the supporters.

"We are all astonished: staff, coaching staff and players. We were not expecting a savage horde to turn up and destroy everything," Marseille president Jacques-Henri Eyraud told Canal Plus. "I think we avoided an even worse situation. It could

have been a tragedy. Everyone is shocked, players and staff. These are not real supporters, they are hooligans, delinquents, people who have no respect for anything."

The French league reacted to the incidents by postponing Marseille's home game against Rennes, that was scheduled for Saturday evening, "to a later date", even though it was due to go ahead behind closed doors due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Marseille were second in Ligue 1 when last season ended early because of the pandemic. However, they have lost their last three league matches and have slid 14 points behind leaders Lyon, albeit with two games in hand.

A 2-1 win for Lens at Montpellier on Saturday saw Marseille slip to seventh place. They have won just one of their last nine games in all competitions and are due to visit Lens in midweek before hosting fierce enemies Paris Saint-Germain next weekend.

On Friday coach Andre Villas-Boas admitted he expected to leave at the end of the season. "The place needs a clear-out... I'm responsible for the results and right now they're awful," the Portuguese former Porto, Chelsea and Tottenham Hotspur coach said.

For several weeks supporters have organized protests before home matches, which are all being played behind closed doors. On Saturday an increased number of banners attacking club leadership, including Eyraud, were hung around the city on motorway bridges, roundabouts and even the Corniche overlooking the Mediterranean Sea.



MARSEILLE: A security agent walks at the entrance of Olympique de Marseille's Robert-Louis-Dreyfus training centre (formerly known as La Commanderie) in Marseille, southeastern France yesterday, the morning after angry fans broke in. —AFP

"Follow AVB, get out of here", "Parisians, get out of here", "Give us back OM", read some of them. Eyraud, who was born in Paris, was a frequent target after he angered fans during a conference on management when he talked about the "danger" of having too many Marseille residents or club sup-

porters working at the club.

"JHE: No Marseille fans at OM? Get out of here", said one banner unfurled above a motorway, and "JHE, Marseille vomits you out" said another at the Prado roundabout, a few meters from the Stade Velodrome. — AFP

Ooredoo sponsors Int'l Show Jumping Championship

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Telecom, the first to introduce innovative digital services in Kuwait, sponsored the International Show Jumping Championship organized by Kuwait Riding Club. The three day event, commenced on January 28, 2021, Ooredoo Kuwait was the platinum sponsor to the championship, which happened for the first time in the State of Kuwait, and held at Kuwait Riding Center in Sabhan Industrial Area. It was a well-deserved victory for Ali Al-Kharafi, when he won the Showjumping championship cup. Mijbil Alayoub, Senior Director, Corporate Communications, Ooredoo Kuwait, said: "Kuwait International Show Jumping Championship is the ultimate opportunity to bring the true Arabian culture to the world, in which it gathered elite riders from the entire world. Indeed, we, at Ooredoo Kuwait looks to future with sponsoring such unique events that allow us to support the community, improve unity and cooperation among countries, and promote healthy competition."

Khalifa Al-Kharafi, Member of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Riding Club, said: "Our vision symbolized by building a place where



everyone feels welcomed to be educated about the equestrian world, ignites us to continue delivering a forward-thinking championships that meet the needs of this contemporary and innovative generation. Through its sponsorship, Ooredoo Kuwait with its pioneering role in supporting communities, contributes to honoring the Arabic culture and

positioning the State of Kuwait as a sports tourism destination that hosts major sports events." Kuwait Riding Center was established in 1996 as the first private riding center in the country. It trains more than 500 riders and 120 horses, and competes locally and internationally, hence, the majority of the horses are showjumping horses.

Kuwait bags three medals at Asian shooting tourney

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait's shooting team on Saturday won three silver medals at the Asian Online Shooting Championship organized by the Kuwait Shooting Federation. The event featured more than 400 shooters from 22 countries. Kuwait's shooter Saud Habib came second winning the silver at Men's Skeet competition. Habib's compatriot Nasser Al-Maqlad also ranked second with the silver at Trap game and Iman Al-Shammaa won silver at Women's Skeet contest. President of the Arab and Kuwait Shooting Federations, and Secretary General of Asian Shooting Confederation (ASC) Duaj Al-Otaibi congratulated the Kuwaiti athletes on their splendid performance and remarkable outcomes during the championship, which featured the most outstanding shooters in the continent. He expressed pride for "good results" made by the Kuwaiti shooters.



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti shooters participate in the Asian Online Shooting Championship.

Otaibi dedicated this achievement to HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and the Kuwait people.

He also thanked those who were involved in organizing the tournament, as well as all participating federations. Duaj thanked President of ASC Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah for his efforts to enhance the game in Asia.

Real Madrid beaten to hand Atletico title boost

MADRID: Real Madrid had Eder Militao sent off in a 2-1 defeat by Levante on Saturday, handing Atletico Madrid the chance to move 10 points clear at the top of La Liga. Zinedine Zidane's defending champions sit second in the table, seven points behind Atletico.

Militao was shown a red card in the ninth minute at the Alfredo di Stefano Stadium, with his team already without their injured captain Sergio Ramos and COVID-stricken coach Zidane. Marco Asensio gave Madrid the lead four minutes later but Jose Luis Morales equalized close to half-time before Roger Marti made up for missing a penalty by scoring the winner.

Barcelona coach Ronald Koeman had admitted earlier on Saturday his team "have to be realistic"

about their chances of overturning Atletico's considerable lead in the table. And with Real Madrid slipping up again, it may now take a seismic collapse for Atletico to miss out on repeating their incredible La Liga triumph in 2014. "The team were sad in the dressing room," said Zidane's assistant David Beltoni, who took charge of the side. "But they still have the will to fight to the end."

"You always have to fight, the season ends in May," added goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois. "It is true that Atletico continue to win and are up there. We have to win and hope that the others lose." It also leaves the Champions League as Real Madrid's only obvious chance of a trophy this season after they lost in the Spanish Super Cup semi-finals and went out to Alcoyano in the Copa del Rey.

Madrid face Atalanta next month in the Champions League's last 16. Militao was sent off for bringing down Levante's Sergio Leon, who was darting towards goal when Militao cut across him on the edge of the penalty area.

But Madrid gave themselves a lead to hang onto shortly after when Asensio continued his recent resurgence by sprinting onto Toni Kroos' brilliant through ball and finishing into the corner. Levante

were dangerous, though, and drew level before the interval as Jorge Miramon's cross to the back post was expertly caught on the half-volley by Morales.

Vinicius Junior came on for Madrid in the second half but made the worst possible start by kicking away the leg of Carlos Clerc, who was shown by VAR to have had his right foot inside the area. Courtois pushed away the penalty by Roger and with 11 men, Madrid might have seized the momentum.

Instead, their tired legs gave way and a well-worked short corner by Levante gave a clear sight of goal to Roger, who made amends by firing into the corner. Sevilla moved up to third in the table, a point behind Real Madrid, by winning 2-0 away at Eibar.

Lucas Ocampos put Sevilla in front with a penalty after the in-form Youssef En-Nesyri took a tumble in the box, before Jordan Moreno slid in at the front post in the second half to seal victory. Villarreal and Real Sociedad had to settle for a point each in their bids for the top four after drawing 1-1 but Valencia moved five points clear of the relegation zone with a 1-0 win over Elche. — AFP

Bayern stay 7 points clear in Bundesliga

BERLIN: Bayern Munich remained seven points clear at the top of the Bundesliga following a 4-1 victory over Hoffenheim on Saturday as Robert Lewandowski continued his incredible scoring run with his 24th league goal this season.

Lewandowski scored for the ninth straight Bundesliga game, while Jerome Boateng, Thomas Mueller and Serge Gnabry also hit the net at the Allianz Arena. "4-1 is a very good result for us. We have won our last four games - that is our yardstick," said head coach Hansi Flick, whose side have regained form after back-to-back league and cup defeats earlier this month.

The European champions exacted perfect revenge for their only defeat of 2020 after losing by the same 4-1 scoreline at Hoffenheim last September. Bayern were all business in Munich as Boateng headed the hosts into an early lead. Mueller then added a second having earlier struck the post.

It was 2-1 at the break as Hoffenheim striker Andrej Kramaric, who netted twice in the reverse meeting with Bayern, volleyed home a cross for his fifth goal in three games. However, Bayern moved up a gear in the second half.

Lewandowski tapped home having typically been in the right place at the right time after a Kingsley Coman shot was parried. It became a rout when Coman won the ball back and chipped over the defense for Gnabry to fire between the legs of Hoffenheim goalkeeper Oliver Baumann with an hour gone.

A fifth Bayern goal was disallowed following a VAR review with Leroy Sane offside in the build-up before Benjamin Pavard turned home. However, Mueller still saw room for improvement. "Because it was relatively easy for us to get into the danger zone up front, we missed a trick or two at the back" said Mueller, who praised the assured performance of goalkeeper Manuel Neuer.

Second-placed RB Leipzig kept pace with Bayern in the table after Christopher Nkunku scored in a hard-fought 1-0 home win over Bayer Leverkusen. Peter Bosz's Leverkusen dropped to fourth after a third defeat in the last fortnight. Eintracht Frankfurt replaced them in third as Portugal striker Andre Silva scored twice, taking his tally this season to 16 league goals, in a 3-1 home win over Hertha Berlin.

Sancho shines

After three matches without a win, Borussia Dortmund climbed to fifth with a 3-1 home victory over Augsburg as England winger Jadon Sancho notched his third goal of the new year. Dreadful Dortmund defending afforded Andre Hahn too much time and space in the area to fire Augsburg into an early lead.

Erling Braut Haaland blasted a penalty attempt against the crossbar on 21 minutes, the third spot-kick missed by Dortmund this season. However, Thomas Delaney calmed their nerves with a headed goal from a corner before Sancho put Dortmund ahead.

Augsburg defender Felix Uduokhai then scored an own goal as Dortmund bounced back from consecutive defeats. "A win like that is much nicer than the results we have had in recent weeks," admitted Dortmund winger Julian Brandt. Borussia Moenchengladbach became the latest big name to struggle at Union Berlin after being held to a 1-1 draw. — AFP