

Arsenal fightback denies West Ham

Chelsea beat Sheffield Utd to reach FA Cup semi-finals

LONDON: Arsenal came from 3-0 down to claim a 3-3 draw at West Ham yesterday, but a share of the points from a thrilling encounter did little for either side's hopes of a top-four Premier League finish. A blistering start from the Hammers had them three goals up inside 32 minutes thanks to goals from Jesse Lingard, Jarrod Bowen and Tomas Soucek.

But own goals from Soucek and Craig Dawson cut Arsenal's deficit before Alexandre Lacazette's header rescued a point eight minutes from time. West Ham remain in fifth, but are two points adrift of fourth-placed Chelsea. Arsenal's realistic hopes of Champions League football next season now hinge on success in the Europa League as they are nine points adrift of the top four down in ninth.

Mikel Arteta's men suffered a hangover from their European exertions in midweek as they progressed to the quarter-finals despite a 1-0 home defeat by Olympiakos. West Ham took full advantage of a sluggish start from the visitors. Lingard was recalled to the England squad by Gareth Southgate for his fine form since joining on loan from Manchester United in January. The midfielder smashed into the top corner from just outside the box for his fifth goal in seven games for the Hammers.

Two minutes later, Lingard's quick thinking created the second for David Moyes's men as his free-kick caught Arsenal napping and Bowen beat Bernd Leno at his near post. The Gunners were all over the place defensively in the opening half-hour and were caught out again when Michail Antonio's header was deflected in by Soucek. West Ham were cruising towards three points which would have brought them level on points with Chelsea at that stage.

However, Arsenal awakened from their slumber before the break. Soucek was credited with a deflected goal at both ends as Lacazette's fierce strike flicked off the Czech and high beyond former Arsenal goalkeeper Lukasz Fabianski. Bukayo

Saka then fired too close to the Polish international moments later with the chance to pull back another goal.

Instead, it was another West Ham mistake which got Arsenal right back in the game just after the hour mark as Dawson diverted Calum Chambers' driven cross into his own net. The home side were pressed back inside their own box for much of the second period, but still had two clear chances to seal victory on the break. Kieran Tierney made two brilliant blocks to deny Bowen and Antonio before Antonio hit the post from point-blank range as he stretched to reach Said Benrahma's cross.

A week on from being dropped for ill-discipline prior to the north London derby, Arsenal captain Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang was hauled off by Arteta 10 minutes from time as he chased an equalizer. But Aubameyang was still making his way back to the bench when Lacazette headed home another brilliant cross from the Arsenal right, this time by Nicolas Pepe.

Meanwhile, Chelsea moved into the FA Cup semifinals as Oliver Norwood's own goal and a late Hakim Ziyech strike sealed a 2-0 win against Sheffield United yesterday. Thomas Tuchel's much-changed side were below their best at Stamford Bridge, but Norwood's first half mistake put them on course to win a hard-fought quarter-final.

Hakim Ziyech netted in stoppage time as Chelsea joined Manchester City and Southampton in the April semifinals at Wembley. Leicester hosted Manchester United in the last quarterfinal later yesterday. The Blues are back in the FA Cup semifinals for a fourth time in the last five seasons after losing last year's final against Arsenal. Chelsea won the last of the club's eight FA Cups under Antonio Conte in 2018.

Despite their uncertain start, Chelsea took the lead in fortuitous fashion in the 24th minute. Aaron Ramsdale couldn't hold Callum Hudson-



LONDON: Arsenal's French striker Alexandre Lacazette scores his team's third goal during the English Premier League football match between West Ham United and Arsenal at The London Stadium yesterday. — AFP

Odoi's cross and Phil Jagielka scrambled it clear for a corner. When the corner curled out to Ben Chilwell on the edge of the area, the Chelsea left-back hit a low shot that Norwood turned into his own net as he stretched in a failed attempt to block it.

The moribund Blades are bottom of the Premier League and look destined for relegation following the recent departure of boss Chris Wilder. Christian Pulisic should have put them out of their misery when he jinked past three defend-

ers, only to shoot straight at Ramsdale and scuff the rebound over the bar.

Picked out by John Lundstram's cross, David McGoldrick wasted a golden opportunity to equalize when the United forward sent his diving header wide from just four yards. Oli McBurnie's long-range drive was pushed away by Kepa before United substitute Rhian Brewster shot just wide. But United's late flourish wasn't enough to force extra-time as Ziyech came off the bench to fire home from Chilwell's pass. — AFP



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