

## Sports

# No room for niceties as Suarez and Liverpool reunite again

## Atletico Madrid, Liverpool face off in Champions League

MADRID: Luis Suarez reunites with Liverpool in the Champions League tonight and for another 90 minutes, a fans' favorite and cherished former club will have to be enemies again. The last time Suarez met Liverpool in Spain was also the first time since he left the club five years earlier in 2014 and it was the Uruguayan who set the tone. He slid in studs up, not for a tackle but a finish, and without a moment's hesitation celebrated, circling around the back of Liverpool's goal, his arms outstretched, grinning.



### Defiant Suarez plays with something to prove

He had scored 82 goals in 133 games for them, won a cup with them, been defended through racism and biting scandals by them, and earned their adoration as one of their greatest ever players. But there at Camp Nou, in the crackle of a Champions League last-16 tie, there was no sign of restraint, let alone remorse. Suarez had given Barcelona the lead against Liverpool and nobody could say he was not relishing every second of it.

In the build-up to the second leg at Anfield, he switched back. He spoke of his close relationship with Liverpool's staff and how his children learned the excitement of football in the city. He posed for a photo, giving a thumbs up next to the club's crest on a wall.

None of that was insincere. Liverpool was the club that raised Suarez from a precocious talent at Ajax to one of the most feared strikers in the world. With them he had shared joy and despair. When Liverpool missed out on winning the Premier League in 2014, a pivotal defeat by Crystal Palace left him crying under his shirt.

But now Suarez was celebrating their disappointment and the Liverpool fans remembered. In the second leg they booed and heckled as Suarez got to work again. He flicked the ball away as Liverpool tried to take a throw. He confronted Fabinho, hoping to stir a reaction. Fabinho was booked for the challenge that followed, Suarez rolling on the floor, hands clasped around his leg. "I just can't get enough," the Liverpool fans once sang. Now it was: "Cheat, cheat, cheat".

Liverpool triumphed, an historic comeback turning a 3-0 first-leg defeat into a 4-3 win on aggregate. Suarez's anguish only adding to the satisfaction. They adored Suarez playing for them but despised him playing against them and at the Wanda Metropolitano tomorrow, they will expect nothing different.

#### 'Crush anyone'

In an interview with the BBC last year, Steven Gerrard talked about Suarez agitating even his teammates in training. "He went against them, he struggled with them, he raised his elbows and I thought, 'This is not what you normally see in training,'" Gerrard said. "Normally, you see a lot of respect, but Luis would crush anyone."

It was that same drive and defiance that made Suarez join Atletico Madrid after being cast off by Barcelona. Suarez told Diario Sport this month he was "treated like



MADRID: Atletico Madrid's Uruguayan forward Luis Suarez (center) and teammates take part in a training session in Madrid yesterday, on the eve of their UEFA Champions League first round group B football match against Liverpool. — AFP

he was 15" by Ronald Koeman and the club president, Josep Maria Bartomeu, "leaked that he was damaging the dressing room".

Suarez had not enjoyed his best season for Barca and there was an argument to say his style was depriving the team of a more mobile, free-flowing attack. But he wanted to show he still belonged to the elite and wanted to show Barcelona close

up. He scored 21 goals in 38 games for Atletico last term and the one goal that won them the title.

Diego Simeone called it "the Suarez Zone", a tendency to deliver when it matters most, and before the international break, there he was again, scoring in 2-0 win over Barcelona. He celebrated by making a phone gesture in the direction of Koeman,

seemingly in reference to their 40-second goodbye call.

It was also his fourth goal in as many games for Atletico, easing concerns that a 34-year-old with an aching knee might not burn so brightly in his second season. But Suarez is at his best when defiant, with an opponent to prove wrong and a moment to seize. Liverpool remember it well. — AFP



SAINT-GERMAIN-EN-LAYE: Paris Saint-Germain's forward Neymar (center) controls the ball next to forward Lionel Messi (right) and defender Marquinhos during a training session at the club's Camp des Loges training ground in Saint-Germain-en-Laye yesterday, on the eve of their UEFA Champions League first round group A football match against RB Leipzig. — AFP

## Neymar ruled out of Champions League clash against Leipzig

PARIS: Neymar has been ruled out of Paris Saint-Germain's Champions League Group A clash with RB Leipzig tonight with an adductor muscle injury, his club said. PSG said in a medical bulletin yesterday that Neymar "had some pain in his groin since returning from international duty and will undergo more treatment over the next few days before returning to full training." The world's most expensive player scored for Brazil in their 4-1 World Cup qualifying win against Uruguay last Thursday, playing 90 minutes in that game having also featured in their 0-0 draw in Colombia the previous weekend. He didn't play for PSG as they beat Angers 2-1 in Ligue 1 last Friday, a game also missed by Lionel Messi.

The Argentine should return against Leipzig at the Parc des Princes as PSG

look to build on their 2-0 win over Manchester City in their previous Champions League outing last month. Neymar, meanwhile, will hope to recover in time to play Marseille next weekend. "The priority is always the health of the players. 'Ney' has a small issue which we hope will only keep him out for a few days," PSG coach Mauricio Pochettino told reporters yesterday.

Despite his injury, Neymar did take part in training yesterday, unlike Mauro Icardi, who was absent due to what Pochettino called "personal problems". Media reports in France said former Inter striker Icardi had gone to Milan to try to resolve relationship troubles with his partner Wanda Nara, who is also his agent. PSG are without the suspended Angel di Maria as well as the unfit duo Leandro Paredes and Sergio Ramos for the meeting with the Germans.

"They are a super team with some of the best attacking players in the world. Maybe we will have to play with a seven-man defense," smiled Leipzig's American coach Jesse Marsch. Leipzig are currently bottom of Group A without a point, while PSG and Club Brugge are level on four points and Manchester City have three before playing in Belgium tonight. — AFP

and take a 2-0 lead in the best-of-seven series. The reigning World Series champion Dodgers will try to regroup when they host game three tonight. Atlanta scored in each of the last two innings, Rosario leading off the eighth against Dodgers pitcher Julio Urias — a regular starter who was sent in as a reliever — with a single.

Rosario advanced to second on Freddie Freeman's fly out and scored on a single from Ozzie Albies — the sliding Rosario managing to avoid the attempted tag at home plate by Dodgers catcher Will Smith to pull the Braves within 4-3.

Austin Riley, who delivered a walk-off hit in game one on Saturday, then belted a double over the head of Mookie Betts and off the centerfield wall that saw Albies

## Gritty Chiefs rally in Washington, Cardinals stay unbeaten

LOS ANGELES: The Kansas City Chiefs "dug down deep" for a 31-13 come-from-behind NFL victory over the Washington Football Team that moved them back to .500 for the NFL season on Sunday. A week after the Chiefs fell to the Buffalo Bills in a rematch of last season's American Conference title game, quarterback Patrick Mahomes completed 32-of-47 passes for a season-high 397 yards and put together three second-half touchdown drives.

Mahomes threw for two touchdowns — atoning for two first-half interceptions — and Darrell Williams ran for 62 yards and two touchdowns as the Chiefs scored 21 unanswered points in the second half. "Guys just dug down deep," Mahomes said. "We've been battling adversity all season long. The first half was like that, but guys dug down deep in that second half. We just stopped pressing. We stopped trying so hard. We have to do like we did in that second half, play tight and play gritty."

The Chiefs defense also showed up, holding an opponent to fewer than 29 points for the first time this season. They forced one fumble and intercepted Taylor Heinicke to clinch the victory and leave Washington at 2-4 for the season.

The Arizona Cardinals improved their perfect record to 6-0 with a 37-14 victory over the Browns in Cleveland. Despite the absence of head coach Kliff Kingsbury, quarterbacks coach Cam Turner, defensive line coach Zach Allen, and top edge rusher Chandler Jones because of positive COVID-19 tests, the Cardinals didn't miss a beat. Quarterback Kyler Murray connected on 20 of 30 passing attempts for 229 yards and four touchdowns and the Cardinals defense came up with three takeaways. Arizona scored on all five of their possessions in the first half to build a 23-7 lead.

The Browns trimmed the deficit on

Baker Mayfield's "Hail Mary" completion as time expired in the opening half. But Cleveland wouldn't score after the break, Mayfield finishing the day with two lost fumbles and an interception.

He also aggravated a left shoulder injury when he was sacked by defensive lineman J.J. Watt in the second half. Possibly worse for Cleveland, running back Kareem Hunt exited with a calf injury in the second half.

The Las Vegas Raiders shook off the departure of head coach Jon Gruden to dominate the Broncos 34-24 in Denver. Gruden resigned on Monday over emails exchanged with former Washington Football Team president Bruce Allen between 2011 and 2017 in which he Gruden used homophobic slurs and a racist trope to describe players union chief DeMaurice Smith.

Gruden was critical of the NFL's employment of women officials, player demonstrations during the national anthem and the league's efforts to curtail concussions in the emails, the affair casting an ugly shadow over week six. But the Raiders responded with possibly their best game of the season under interim coach Rich Bisaccia. Quarterback Derek Carr threw for 341 yards and two touchdowns.

A change of scene proved refreshing for the Jacksonville Jaguars, who snapped

a 20-game losing streak when Matthew Wright kicked a 53-yard field goal as time expired to give them a 23-20 victory over Miami in London.

#### 'Just crazy'

Wright became the first kicker in NFL history with multiple field goals beyond 50 yards in the last four minutes of regulation time in a game. He had also connected from 54 yards to lift the Jaguars level with 3:40 to play before his game-winner left both clubs 1-5.

Wright, recently of the practice squad, was playing just his third game for the Jaguars, getting the starting nod over Josh Lambo. "He was telling me he was, like, a software engineer like a month and a half ago," Jags quarterback Trevor Lawrence said. "Just crazy, you can't even make it up." Elsewhere, Baltimore quarterback Lamar Jackson threw for 167 yards and a touchdown while Devonta Freeman, Le'Veon Bell and Latavius Murray each ran for a touchdown to power the Ravens to a 34-6 rout over the visiting Los Angeles Chargers.

Dallas quarterback Dak Prescott connected with CeeDee Lamb on a touchdown pass to give the Cowboys a 35-29 overtime victory over the New England Patriots. The Minnesota Vikings also won in overtime, edging Carolina 34-28. — AFP



LANDOVER: Patrick Mahomes #15 of the Kansas City Chiefs runs with the ball against Khaleke Hudson #47 of the Washington Football Team during the first half at FedExField on Sunday in Landover, Maryland. — AFP

Ian Anderson before an out had been recorded.

Former Dodger Joc Pederson answered with a two-run blast off a curveball from Dodgers starter Max Scherzer to tie the game in the fourth inning. Chris Taylor put the Dodgers up again in the seventh with a double that scored two runs before the Braves rallied in the final frame. Cy Young Award contender Scherzer didn't make it out of the fifth inning, with Roberts going to his bullpen with one out in the frame.

#### 'Fun challenge'

For the second year in a row the Braves now take a 2-0 lead in the NLCS into game three against the Dodgers. "That's absolutely huge," Riley said of gaining two

home wins before heading to Dodger Stadium. "That's a tough atmosphere, but I feel like it's going to be a fun challenge."

The Braves have lost seven straight games and 10 of their last 11 at Dodger Stadium. They were swept in a three-game regular-season series there in August-September. The Dodgers won 15 straight home games at the end of the regular season and have won two of three at home this post-season.

"I don't have to remind them of anything," Braves manager Brian Snitker said of what he will tell his team about the task that awaits. "I think that they're going to realize, and we all do, last year when we were up 3-1, how hard it is to win a baseball game." — AFP

## Braves walk off again to take 2-0 series lead over Dodgers

LOS ANGELES: Eddie Rosario cracked a line-drive single up the middle to score Dansby Swanson and give the Atlanta Braves their second straight walk-off win over the Los Angeles Dodgers in baseball's National League Championship Series on Sunday. The Braves, who twice trailed by two runs, rallied to beat the Dodgers 5-4