

## Sports

# Liverpool battle to Champions League win, Messi fires PSG

## Real Madrid, Manchester City, Ajax win big

PARIS: Liverpool survived an Atletico Madrid fightback to win 3-2 and Lionel Messi scored twice as Paris Saint-Germain came from behind to beat RB Leipzig by the same score on a breathless night of Champions League action on Tuesday.

In other games, Karim Benzema netted for Real Madrid as the 13-time European champions thrashed Shakhtar Donetsk 5-0 in Ukraine on the eve of the start of his trial in France on charges of complicity in blackmail.

Much of the night's drama happened at the Wanda Metropolitano in the Spanish capital where Mohamed Salah scored another impressive goal, twisting away from a string of Atletico defenders before his shot deflected in off James Milner to open the scoring.

Naby Keita doubled Liverpool's lead with a stunning volley but Atletico hit back with French international Antoine Griezmann scoring twice to fire up the home crowd. Just as Atletico seemed to have the upper hand, Griezmann was given a straight red card for a high boot in the face of Roberto Firmino.

A pulsating game was decided from the penalty spot in the 78th minute as Salah sent Jan Oblak the wrong way after Mario Hermoso pushed Diogo Jota. The Egyptian's 31st Champions League goal makes him the club's top scorer in

the competition, overtaking Steven Gerrard. In a dramatic finish, Atletico were denied a penalty when the referee studied the VAR and decided Jota had not fouled Jose Maria Gimenez.

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp told BT Sport: "We played a really solid second half in a tough game with intense football from both teams. We got the penalty, then there was a red card and obviously it was in our favor." The Reds

had given the Qatar-backed club the lead but a Leipzig side crushed 6-3 at Manchester City earlier in the competition held their own.

Leipzig went ahead through goals from Andre Silva and Nordi Mukiele as PSG suddenly looked disoriented. But Messi was set up by Mbappe for the equalizer and then deftly chipped in a 74th-minute penalty awarded for a foul on the France striker. Mbappe's missed spot kick proved unimportant.

PSG top Group A with seven points but Manchester City bounced back from their defeat in Paris in the last matchday by crushing Club Brugge 5-1 in Belgium. Pep Guardiola declared City's win "one of the best performances in Europe we've done so far" after Riyad Mahrez scored twice and 19-year-old Cole Palmer was among City's scorers.

In Kiev, Benzema scored the final goal in Real's rout of Shakhtar. A first-half own goal from Serhiy Kryvtsov put Real on their way before Vinicius Junior scored two superb goals and set up Rodrygo for the fourth before Benzema completed the job.

Sheriff Tiraspol's fairytale run of results in the competition ended with a 3-1 defeat at Inter Milan. Goals from Edin Dzeko, Arturo Vidal and Stefan de Vrij sealed the win over the side from



### Inter Milan spoils Sheriff's fairytale run

are top of Group B with three wins out of three while Atletico are equal on four points with Porto, who beat AC Milan 1-0 in Portugal.

#### Mbappe penalty

At the Parc des Princes, Messi scored twice and Kylian Mbappe sparked but later missed a penalty as PSG came from behind to beat RB Leipzig 3-2. Mbappe



PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's Kylian Mbappe (left) greets teammate Lionel Messi during their team's UEFA Champions League first round group A football match against Leipzig at The Parc des Princes stadium, in Paris, on Tuesday. —AFP

Moldova but Sheriff remain top of Group D despite having the same number of points as Real.

Borussia Dortmund and Erling Braut Haaland had an off night as they were beaten 4-0 by Ajax at the Amsterdam

Arena. Former West Ham striker Sebastian Haller scored his sixth Champions League goal in three games as Ajax took an iron grip on Group C with a maximum nine points. Dortmund are second on six points. —AFP

#### News in brief

##### Fan critical after beating

BRUSSELS: Five arrests have been made after a Manchester City fan was left in critical condition following a fight after a Champions League match with Belgian club Bruges. The City fan was a Belgian and was badly beaten at a motorway service station where rival fans first stole his club scarf. Police said they had made five arrests after the fight that began inside the service station shop and continued outside on the forecourt. "His life is in danger," a police statement said. "The victim is a 63-year-old from Ninove." The victim's son runs a Manchester City fan club 'Blue Moon Belgium', and the club's star player is the Belgian midfielder Kevin de Bruyne. "They left my father for dead after an act of mindless violence," the son wrote on social media. Bruges condemned the violence that followed City's 5-1 win over the Belgian champions. —AFP

##### Gymnast hurt in training

KITAKYUSHU: Japanese gymnast Hitomi Hatakeda suffered a serious spinal injury yesterday after falling off the uneven bars in training, the Japan Gymnastics Association said. Hatakeda, who appeared at the Tokyo Olympics, was taken to hospital and diagnosed with damage to her central spinal cord and bruising of the cervical vertebrae. The 21-year-old qualified for Thursday's world championships all-around final in fourth place in Kitakyushu, in western Japan, but was forced to withdraw. Hatakeda is coached by her mother Yukiko. Her father, Yoshiaki, is a former gymnast who won bronze in the team event for Japan at the 1992 Olympics. Her younger sister, Chiaki, is also a gymnast. —AFP

##### PSG fans blocked from Marseille

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain fans will be banned from travelling to Marseille for Sunday's Ligue 1 contest after several French matches were marred by violence in recent weeks, the Interior Ministry said yesterday. "Away games by the PSG club often disrupt public order" while "certain" Marseille fans "often display violent behavior," the ministry said. Individual or group travel by PSG supporters will also be prohibited starting at midnight Saturday because relations between the clubs "have been tainted with animosity for several years," it added. The decision comes after riot police and security staff had to intervene to stop fan clashes or acts of hooliganism at a series of Ligue 1 matches last month that saw dozens injured. Marseille has been involved in the violence more than once. —AFP

##### Panda pride for Mbappe

PARIS: French footballer Kylian Mbappe will act as godfather to the twin pandas recently born at Beauval zoo, the animal park authorities said yesterday. Chinese Olympic diving gold medalist Zhang Jiaqi will be the godmother alongside the Paris Saint-Germain star at a naming ceremony on November 18. "It's an honor for the zoo to have top athletes leaning over the pandas' cradle," zoo director Delphine Delord said. "The baby pandas are in good health, they weigh four kilos each, have opened their eyes and started to move" Delord said of the 10-weeks-old cubs. Only 2000 pandas remain alive in the wild although the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) removed them from the red list of endangered species in 2016. The cubs are the offspring of Yuan Zi and Huan Huan who were loaned to France by China a decade ago. —AFP

## Back to the future as Salah spearheads Liverpool's revival

LIVERPOOL: Liverpool came close to missing out on this season's Champions League but with Mohamed Salah in stunning form and a clean bill of health, Jurgen Klopp's men look like contenders for the trophy once more.

Salah took his tally for the season to 12 goals in just 11 games with a double as the Reds enjoyed a victorious return on Tuesday to the Wanda Metropolitano, where they won the Champions League two years ago.

Liverpool's thrilling 3-2 victory against Atletico Madrid leaves them on the brink of qualification for the last 16 after just three games. AC Milan and Porto have also been swept aside, with the six-time European champions making a potentially awkward group look easy.

Liverpool have also started strongly in the Premier League, sitting just a point behind leaders Chelsea and boasting the only unbeaten record in the English top-

flight. Dating back to a late rally to secure their place in the top four last season, the Reds are now 21 games unbeaten in all competitions.

Salah's return to the form that saw him score 44 goals in an incredible debut season at Anfield in 2017/18 has been the principle cause. The Egyptian has scored memorable solo goals against Manchester City and Walford in recent weeks and even has luck on his side at the minute as another jinking run made space for a shot that was deflected in for the opening goal against Atletico.

The only blot on Salah's season was a missed penalty against AC Milan in the opening group game, his first miss from the spot for Liverpool since 2017. However, he put that behind him with a calm and precise finish with a penalty to win the game in Madrid 12 minutes from time.

#### Salah record

That strike made more Liverpool



MADRID: Liverpool's Egyptian forward Mohamed Salah shoots and scores a penalty kick during the UEFA Champions League Group B football match between Atletico Madrid and Liverpool at the Wanda Metropolitano stadium in Madrid on Tuesday. —AFP

history for Salah as he surpassed Steven Gerrard as the club's highest scorer in the Champions League, with his two goals taking him to a tally of 31. He is also the first player to score in nine consecutive matches

for the club. "He is a hungry player, he's a hungry striker," said Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson Becker. "He's showing on the pitch all the time, making really nice goals, not just easy goals." —AFP

## Foden dazzles, Palmer cameo showcases Man City youngsters

BRUGES: Phil Foden ran the show for Manchester City in their 5-1 hammering of Club Brugge in the Champions League, but it was the goalscoring cameo of fellow academy graduate Cole Palmer that underlined the club's vast strength in depth.

Operating in a false number nine role, Foden tormented the Brugge defense before he was withdrawn on 64 minutes — with City 3-0 up and cruising against a side that had held Paris Saint-Germain in their opening game. Three minutes later and Palmer, just on as a replacement for Kevin De Bruyne, added to City's lead with a clinical finish from Raheem Sterling's pass for his first European goal.

England coach Gareth Southgate recently called Foden's emergence as an England star "fabulously exciting", and the 21-year-old, who missed the Euro 2020 final with injury, did not disappoint in Belgium. His sublime chipped pass for Joao Cancelo resulted in the Portugal defender breaking the deadlock after City dominated the first 30 minutes against overmatched opponents.

Foden's constant movement forged numerous openings for City, whose failed pursuit of Harry Kane in the summer has forced Pep Guardiola to get creative with his attack to compensate for the lack of a genuine center-forward.

"He can play as a striker, dropping when he wants and going in behind. He can attack really well with Rodri, with Kevin. Phil has a special talent," said Guardiola. "We don't have a real striker to score 25 goals so we have to put as many players as possible close to the box to score a goal. He's one of the guys."

"When Phil plays close to the box you have the feeling he can always create something for himself. He played really well," added Guardiola.

#### Guardiola unwilling to rush youth

While City's spending power is almost unparalleled, and often questioned by rivals, the club is showing it can nurture talent as well as compete financially for any player on the market. Foden had



BRUGES: Manchester City's Cole Palmer (center) celebrates with teammates after scoring a goal during their team's UEFA Champions League first round day 3 Group A football match against Club Brugge at the Jan Breydel stadium in Bruges on Tuesday. —AFP

to bide his time before developing into a core member of City's first team, providing the blueprint for the likes of the exciting Palmer.

Guardiola said he plans to keep the 19-year-old attacking midfielder at the Etihad this season and turn down any approach from clubs to take him on loan. Palmer made a late appearance as a substitute in Saturday's 2-0 Premier League win over Burnley, and then scored a hat-trick just a couple hours later for the under-23s against Leicester's reserves.

"Cole has a special quality, in front of the box he has this talent that is difficult to find. When he has the ball there, most of them finish in the net," said Guardiola. "But I know how it works with young players in all countries, especially this one (England) as well. So let's be calm, let's be patient like we've done with Phil. He's a player for our future, for the future of this club."

Palmer became just the third teenager to score for City in the Champions League after Foden and Kelechi Iheanacho. But Guardiola insisted the teenager would not be fast-tracked into his plans, name-checking a handful of other youngsters for whom the Spaniard has high hopes. —AFP

## Destination 2022 T20 World Cup in Australia — via Spain and Rwanda

PARIS: While the vast majority of cricket eyes are firmly focused on events in the Gulf where the 2021 T20 World Cup is just getting underway, a small minority are locked on events in Spain and Rwanda. The Desert Springs Cricket Ground in Almeria, a verdant cricketing outpost in a parched corner of south-east Spain, is currently hosting the European qualifiers for the next edition of the T20 World Cup, to be held in Australia next year.

Denmark, Germany, Italy and Jersey are the four teams bidding to finish in the top two and progress to the global qualifier. Hardly big names in the world of cricket but each side has its share of players claiming first-class experience.

Italy's Jade Dernbach, 35, spent 15 years with Surrey and represented England in 35 T20s and 24 ODIs, playing in the 2012 T20 World Cup. The South African-born fast bowler qualifies for Italy through his mother and came on board after being tapped up by captain and head coach Gareth Berg, who plies his trade as an all-rounder for Northamptonshire.

"He (Berg) picked up the phone and he outlined what he was looking to achieve with Italian cricket and where he thought I could fit in on that journey," Dernbach told The Cricketer. "He gave me some glowing reviews in terms of what it could be like for me, what I could add. It was nice to be wanted by someone." Dernbach duly made his second international debut 2,757 days after his last international appearance in 2014 when he took 1-17 from his four overs in the six-wicket win over Denmark on Monday. On the other side of the deck that day was another former England player.

Denmark's Amjad Khan, 41, won a single Test cap against the West Indies in 2009 and played one T20 international but injuries cut short his chances, not just with England but in county cricket as well where he turned out for Kent and Sussex. Already the only Danish cricketer to play Test cricket, the Copenhagen-born Amjad, who is not quite as fast a bowler these days as he was in his pomp, set another record in that game against the Italians on Monday. —AFP