

Sports

# Liga leaders Barca drop more points, Atletico beat Almeria

**BARCELONA:** A subdued Barcelona could not break down Getafe in a 0-0 draw on Sunday, dropping more points but still sitting 11 clear of Real Madrid at the top of La Liga. Third-place Atletico Madrid beat Almeria 2-1 at home with Antoine Griezmann netting a brace as he continued his sparkling form. Valencia sunk deeper into the relegation mire with a 2-0 home defeat by Sevilla, who host Manchester United in the Europa League on Thursday.

Champions Madrid beat Cadiz on Saturday to cut back Barcelona's lead, and with nine games remaining it seems highly unlikely they will catch Barcelona — but Xavi Hernandez's side are limping over the line. Barcelona drew 0-0 at home against Girona on Monday and followed that up with a second consecutive stalemate, the team still wallowing after their Copa del Rey semifinal thrashing by Madrid earlier in April.

The one positive for Barca was a 22nd clean sheet of the season in the top flight, with Getafe, 15th, not creating much danger. "Here you suffer, because the grass is high, the usual tricks, so it's hard, the clear chances you have — you have to put them away," Barca goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen told DAZN. "It's a dry pitch, so it's difficult. We did things differently to normal." Xavi echoed Ter Stegen's complaint that the low quality of the pitch played a part in the result, but said Barca could not hide behind it. "It's not an excuse, we weren't accurate, we made chances but we could not finish them," said Xavi. "But yes, the grass did hurt us, the ball didn't run."

### No way through

After a slow start, the Catalans created the first clear chance at the Coliseum Alfonso Perez, when Raphinha fired against the post, with Balde's follow-up also striking the woodwork. Sergi Roberto pulled up injured, seemingly with a hamstring issue, adding to Barcelona's long list of absentees.

The league leaders have badly missed explosive winger Ousmane Dembele and creative midfielder Pedri in recent weeks.

Getafe were content with the point, sitting back as Barcelona probed for a breakthrough and found goalkeeper David Soria in their way, although Borja Mayoral almost snatched a winner for the hosts on the break. Xavi's side are still firm favorites to lift the title for the first time since 2019, but should they stumble at home against Atletico next weekend, doubts could creep in.

Getafe are four points above the drop zone, after Valencia, 18th, lost at Mestalla. Sevilla, who welcome Manchester United for the Europa League quarter-final second leg clash next week, earned a hard-fought win over the frustrated hosts, for whom Ilaix Moriba was sent off late on. Defender Loic Bade sent Sevilla ahead at Mestalla early in the second half, with Suso doubling the visitors' lead.

Valencia's anger grew when they were not awarded a penalty after the ball struck Fernando's hand in the area, and then later on had a spot kick award cancelled by the referee after VAR showed no foul had been committed. The victory helped Jose Luis Mendilabar's Sevilla rise to 12th, eight points clear of the bottom three, continuing their improvement since he replaced Jorge Sampaoli at the helm in March.

### Griezmann goals

Atletico stayed two points behind Real Madrid with a narrow win over Almeria, 17th, which should have been more comfortable than it proved to be. Antoine Griezmann headed Atletico ahead in the fifth minute when Angel Correa nodded on a corner to the back post. Diego Simeone's side were dominant throughout, but Almeria pulled level when Leo Baptistao's shot deflected in off Jose Gimenez.

Griezmann sent the Rojiblancos ahead again



MADRID: Almeria's Brazilian defender Rodrigo Ely fights for the ball with Atletico Madrid's Spanish forward Alvaro Morata at the Wanda Metropolitano stadium on April 16, 2023. — AFP

before the break, finishing clinically from Yannick Carrasco's pass at the end of a fine team move for his 11th league goal. Carrasco and Griezmann both hit the post in the second half as Atletico looked to kill the game. They could not find the third and Almeria gave Atletico a few scares in the final stages, appealing for a penalty when Gimenez handled but

VAR showed there was an offside. "I think I'm at my most complete version in terms of assists and goals," Griezmann told Movistar. "I'm happy with my performances but I haven't reached my ceiling yet — I hope I can soon." Girona, ninth, beat bottom-of-the-table Elche 2-0, leaving the stragglers 17 points from safety. — AFP

## Vitinha double lifts Marseille second

**PARIS:** Marseille new signing Vitinha scored his first ever Ligue 1 goals in Sunday's 3-1 win over Troyes that lifted the south coast club into second behind Paris Saint-Germain. The 23-year-old Portuguese was on the mark for the first time in the league since a 32 million euros move from Braga in January, as the goalmouth predator began to deliver for his new owners. For relegation-threatened Troyes this was a 14th Ligue 1 match without a win as they remain level second bottom.

Marseille's win edged them above Lens into second, and trimmed PSG's lead to eight points, with seven games left to play, a day after the leaders had beaten Lens 3-1. At Marseille's raucous Velodrome stadium there were 63,800 fans on hand to see Croatian coach Igor Tudor's charges bounce back from a 0-0 stalemate at Lorient last week.

Vitinha's two tap ins and a fine goal from Turkish striker Cengiz Under left them a point above third-placed Lens and three above Monaco, who beat Lorient 3-0. Lille scored twice in two minutes late in the second half as they fought back earlier on Sunday for a 2-1 home victory over Montpellier. With his 20th goal Lille's Canadian Jonathan David joined



MARSEILLE: Marseille's Portuguese forward Vitinha heads the ball against Troyes at the Velodrome stadium on April 16, 2023. — AFP

PSG's Kylian Mbappe as leading scorer in Ligue 1 this season.

Elsewhere Strasbourg beat Ajaccio 3-1, Auxerre edged Nantes 2-1 and Clermont-Ferrand also beat Angers 2-1 as Nice went down 1-0 at Brest. On Saturday, Kylian Mbappe became PSG's all-time top goalscorer in Ligue 1 with 139 strikes in 169 games, while his teammate Lionel Messi scored the goal of the game against Lens. — AFP

Verona and second-placed Lazio won at Spezia on Friday. Jose Mourinho's Roma bucked the trend by beating Udinese 3-0 with Eduardo Bove slamming home a loose ball after a saved penalty for the opener. Lorenzo Pellegrini and Tammy Abraham also scored as Roma consolidated third place, five points ahead of Inter in fifth.

On Sunday Juventus, dressed in a pink and blue strip, started with Arkadiusz Milik and Dusan Vlahovic up front in a drab first half. Shortly after the break Drefel pounced on an error, pivoted, and fired a low hard shot past Mattia Perin in the Juve goal. Coach Massimiliano Allegri then made a swathe of substitutions bringing on Paul Pogba and Angel di Maria to no avail. Perin was in goal as regular keeper Wojciech Szczesny was benched after being subbed with chest pains in midweek. Juve beat Sporting 1-0 in the Europa League in midweek, and here showed signs of fatigue. Juventus are also waiting to see if they and 12 other current and former club figures will face trial for alleged financial crimes in May. — AFP

## Ten-man Union go third despite Bochum stalemate

**BERLIN:** Union Berlin remain on course for a first-ever Champions League qualification, reclaiming third in the Bundesliga with a 1-1 home draw against Bochum on Sunday. Union took the lead late in the first half thanks to a Josip Juranovic free kick, before Bochum's Kevin Stoeger equalized from the spot early in the second.

Union were reduced to 10 men shortly after the penalty but were the more dangerous side in the closing stages, forward Kevin Behrens going agonizingly close to a winner with five minutes remaining. Despite dropping points, Union leapfrogged RB Leipzig who won 3-2 at home against Augsburg on Saturday to move back to third. Union manager Urs Fischer blamed his side's "lethargic minutes" at the start of the second half, saying "in football, you get punished for mistakes".

Free-kick specialists Union opened the scoring in typical fashion in first-half injury time. Croatia international Juranovic hit a perfectly weighted free kick between a gap in the wall and past keeper Manu Riemann, his fourth goal since arriving from Celtic in January. Bochum grabbed control of the fixture in a ten-minute period early in the second half, starting with a seemingly harmless tactical yellow card for Union's Paul Jaeckel after 50 minutes.

Union's Aissa Laidouni swept Ivan Ordets' legs out from under him in the penalty box shortly after, with Stoeger blasting the equaliser straight down the middle from the spot. Five minutes later, Jaeckel picked up a second yellow for a foul on Patrick Osterhage, reducing the home side to ten men. Union's Behrens' had a 64th-minute goal chalked off for offside. The big forward had another golden chance with five minutes to go when Seraldo Becker found him unmarked in front of goal, but he headed just wide. Bochum, who have claimed eight points from their past five matches, got three points clear of the relegation places with the draw.

In Sunday's late game, Wolfsburg dented Bayer Leverkusen's hopes of an unlikely return to Champions League football, holding Xabi Alonso in-form side to a 0-0 draw at home. Leverkusen, who had been in the relegation zone when the former Bayern



BERLIN: Union Berlin's Croatian defender Josip Juranovic and Bochum's Austrian midfielder Kevin Stoeger vie for the ball on April 16, 2023. — AFP

Munich, Liverpool and Real Madrid player took over as coach earlier in the year, won five league matches in a row to sit in the Europa League placings.

Leverkusen's Sardar Azmoun rattled the bar after 27 minutes and Moussa Diaby was a constant source of danger for the visitors, a long-range bullet forcing a two-handed save from Wolfsburg goalie Koen Casteels with 20 minutes remaining. Casteels again intervened with just one minute left, rushing off his line to stifle Amine Adli, who was one-on-one with the 'keeper, securing a point for the home side. — AFP

## Sassuolo stun Juve, Roma in race for second place

**MILAN:** Juventus were beaten 1-0 by modest Sassuolo to remain stuck in seventh in Serie A on Sunday when Gregoire Drefel reacted fastest to score from a fluffed clearance. The defeat leaves Juventus below the European spots after the Turin giants were docked 15 points for illicit transfer activity in January. Runaway leaders Napoli drew on Saturday as Italy awaits an explosive party in Naples where Napoli look certain to clinch a first title since the days of Diego Maradona.

Italy's champions-elect have had their imposing league lead cut to 14 points after a second-string XI could only manage a goalless stalemate with

Today's Matches	
UEFA Champions League	
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Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
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Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

### Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144

Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
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**I SEKHAR KAKI** holder of Indian passport no L4533078 Indian permanent address Hno 4112 Rv Nagar Cuddapah Ysr Dist 516003 India residing in Kuwait at present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under Given name SEKHAR and Surname NAGAPPAGARI. (C 3505) 18/04/23

**I, MOHAMMED**, holder of Indian passport no. M8399055 having permanent address in Mumbai 400 003, Maharashtra, India residing in Kuwait at present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as MOHAMMED BADRI. (C 3503) 17/04/23

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