

## MANAGERLESS LEEDS HOLD UNITED

### MAN UNITED'S MANAGER FUMES AFTER 2-2 DRAW



MANCHESTER: Leeds United's Austrian defender Maximilian Wober (rear) fights for the ball with Manchester United's Dutch striker Wout Weghorst during the English Premier League football match between Manchester United and Leeds United on February 8, 2023. — AFP

MANCHESTER: Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag criticized his side's "unacceptable" start to Wednesday's 2-2 draw with managerless Leeds, despite battling back from 2-0 down. Leeds sacked Jesse Marsch on Monday following a run of seven league games without a win. Caretaker manager Michael Skubala had just one 20-minute training session to prepare for the trip across The Pennines, but the visitors had been on course for a first victory over United since 2010.

Wilfried Gnonto gave Leeds the perfect start after just a minute and Raphael Varane's own goal doubled their advantage early in the second half. Marcus Rashford's 20th goal of the season sparked the United fightback before Jadon Sancho's first goal since September stretched the Red Devils unbeaten run at home to 16 games.

"You can say we won a point because when you are in a derby and come back from 2-0 down it is good," said Ten Hag after the first of two Premier League clashes in five days between the sides. "But on the other hand when you start a derby like we did it's unacceptable. You have to be ready to fight and we weren't ready for the battle." A point leaves third-placed United still seven

points adrift of leaders Arsenal, having played two games more. The draw is more valuable to Leeds, who edge one point clear of the relegation zone.

#### Casemiro missed

United badly missed the presence of the suspended Casemiro in midfield, which allowed Leeds to counter-attack at will. Gnonto has been a consistent bright spark of an otherwise sad season for Leeds and exploded the game into life after just 60 seconds as he found the bottom corner for his fourth goal in seven games. United should have been level by half-time as Alejandro Garnacho fired just wide and then saw a shot cleared off the line by Max Woeber after the Argentine had rounded Illan Meslier.

However, the home side were slow out of the blocks after the break and were punished. Gnonto was at the heart of the move again as he released Crysencio Summerville down the left and his cross was turned into his own net by Raphael Varane. "I think it instills belief in the players that they are good enough at this level," said Skubala, who remains unsure if he will be in charge for the visit of United to Elland Road on

Sunday. "They know that and we know that and we just need to go after every game between now and the end of the season."

Ten Hag turned to his bench for solutions and found them in Sancho and Facundo Pellistri to replace the ineffectual Wout Weghorst and Garnacho. Weghorst's withdrawal put Rashford through the middle and within minutes he rose highest to meet Diogo Dalot's cross for his 12th goal in 14 games since the World Cup. Leeds were inches away from restoring their two-goal lead almost immediately when Brenden Aaronson's free-kick came back off the post.

But their advantage was soon wiped out completely 20 minutes from time. Sancho's fitness struggles have sidelined him for most of the season, but his return to action has been a timely boost with United still involved in four competitions and short on attacking options. The England international collected Luke Shaw's deflected cross and his low strike caught out Meslier low to his left. "He's all the way back," added Ten Hag. "We know he's a magnificent player. I think consistently he can have a big impact. But he has to work hard. It will motivate him to get more." — AFP

#### EPL TABLE

English Premier League table after Wednesday's match (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Arsenal	20	16	2	2	45	17	50
Man City	21	14	3	4	53	21	45
Man Utd	22	13	4	5	36	28	43
Newcastle	21	10	10	1	34	12	40
Tottenham	22	12	3	7	41	31	39
Brighton	20	10	4	6	38	27	34
Brentford	21	8	9	4	35	28	33
Fulham	22	9	5	8	32	30	32
Chelsea	21	8	6	7	22	21	30
Liverpool	20	8	5	7	34	28	29
Aston Villa	21	8	4	9	25	31	28
Crystal Palace	21	6	6	9	19	29	24
Nottm Forest	21	6	6	9	17	35	24
Leicester	21	6	3	12	32	37	21
Wolves	21	5	5	11	15	30	20
Leeds	21	4	7	10	28	36	19
West Ham	21	5	4	12	18	26	19
Everton	21	4	6	11	16	28	18
Bournemouth	21	4	5	12	19	43	17
Southampton	21	4	3	14	17	38	15

## MARSEILLE STUN PSG, THE FIRST IN 12 YEARS

PARIS: Ruslan Malinovskyi scored an excellent second-half winner as Marseille beat rivals Paris Saint-Germain at home for the first time since 2011 on Wednesday, winning 2-1 to reach the French Cup quarter-finals. Alexis Sanchez gave Marseille the lead just after the half-hour mark from the penalty spot, before Sergio Ramos equalized on the stroke of half-time.

But Ukraine international Malinovskyi blasted the hosts back in front and they held on to end their long wait for a victory over PSG at Stade Velodrome. "We know that our supporters have been waiting for that victory for a long time. We are happy to share this with them," Marseille captain Valentin Rongier told France 3 after only his side's second win in their last 27 meetings with PSG.

It was a second straight early Cup exit for record 14-time winners PSG after last season's last-16 loss to Nice. "We made a few mistakes that cost us dearly," said PSG skipper Marquinhos. "It's a defeat that hurts because it's a Cup match against our great rivals. We wanted to come back to Paris with victory and qualification. "We have to do better, keep working and move forward." Igor Tudor's Marseille will now be among the favorites to lift the trophy for an 11th time but first since 1989.

Marseille, who slipped eight points behind leaders PSG on Sunday after a 3-1 home loss to Nice, started slowly. But they grew into the game after goalkeeper Pau Lopez had denied Nuno Mendes an



MARSEILLE: Marseille's players celebrate winning the French Cup round of 16 football match between Olympique Marseille (OM) and Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) on February 8, 2023. — AFP

early opener, with Matteo Guendouzi's shot excellently saved by Gianluigi Donnarumma. Ramos was the culprit as Marseille forged ahead, clumsily fouling Cengiz Under just inside the area. Sanchez stepped up to send Donnarumma the wrong way and score his 11th goal of a productive first season since joining OM from Inter Milan.

Lionel Messi, with a free-kick, and Neymar both came close to levelling, before Ramos did just that by steering a header into the far corner from a Neymar set-piece in first-half stoppage time. Marseille restored their lead in the 57th minute as a loose ball broke to Malinovskyi on the edge of the box and the on-loan Atalanta midfielder hammered a left-footed strike into the top corner. PSG rarely carried a threat but almost forced a penalty shootout when Neymar set Messi in the clear, only for the seven-time Ballon d'Or winner to fire off target. — AFP

## CRAWFORD WINS WORLD SUPER-G

COURCHEVEL: Canada's James Crawford upset a loaded field to snatch a surprise super-G gold at the World Ski Championships in Courchevel on Thursday. Crawford, who won alpine combined bronze at last year's Beijing Olympics, clocked 1min 07.22sec down L'Eclipse piste in the French resort. "It's been a long time since I've dreamed of being on the top step at a world stage. I've been teasing myself with it the last couple of years with a couple of World Cup podiums and Olympic Games bronze," said Crawford. "To be able to come out today and put down a run worthy of winning was an amazing experience. I'm going to cherish this day for a long time."

That time was enough to edge fancied Norwegian Aleksander Aamodt Kilde into silver by just one-hundredth of a second - that translates into 27 centimeters. France's Alexis Pinturault, fresh from winning alpine combined gold on Tuesday, again thrilled his home Courchevel crowd by taking bronze, at 0.26sec. "I'm super satisfied to take my first world champs medal," said Kilde, one part of alpine skiing's glamour couple alongside US star Mikaela Shiffrin, who claimed silver in the women's super-G Wednesday with the same bib number nine.

"It's been a weight on my shoulders for many, many years. It's been one of my biggest goals. It would have been even better if it was in gold, but I feel like I won the silver medal and didn't lose the gold medal today and that's what I have to think about and continue to fight for that gold." Pinturault said a second medal on home snow, just 10 minutes on skis from the hotel which his parents run and

where he grew up, was "extraordinary".

"I could dream about it for sure, but it's something else to achieve," he said. "Being able to get two medals in two races including one gold is incredible. "Bringing everything else together at the right moment, especially when the world champs are in France, is something special." Pinturault also played down any fears that he is enjoying home advantage on the slope, which was only modified into a race track for last year's World Cup Finals. "Everyone thinks I trained here before, but no!" he joked.

#### Crawford the outsider

With just three World Cup podiums to his name, albeit two in December of this season, Crawford was a rank outsider coming into the race. His gold was Canada's first since Erik Guay claimed the super-G title in the 2017 worlds in St Moritz.

Starting with bib number 10, Crawford could only look on as first in-form Swiss Marco Odermatt, the runaway World Cup overall leader, streaked into the lead. Odermatt was hot favorite, having notched up 13 podium finishes in his last 16 participations in World Cup super-G events, including seven victories - four of which have come this season. Pinturault was next down, the flag-waving crowd going wild in a cacophony of sound mixing cowbells, airhorns, a sole trumpeter and bass-heavy dance music.

French hopes of a second gold in as many days were shortlived as Kilde next descended the course in bib number nine. Pinturault was left shaking his head and grimacing in the knowledge that the Norwegian, winner of two World Cup super-G races this season, had taken the lead. No one had bet on Crawford, however, the 25-year-old Canadian superbly negotiating speeds of 115km/h (71mph) and jumps of up to 45 metres down a course that demanded both technical and gliding ability. — AFP