

## Giants deliver epic comeback; Commanders rally, Chiefs win

### Washington Commanders overturn 18-point deficit

**LOS ANGELES:** The New York Giants rallied from 21 points down to win 31-28 at the Arizona Cardinals in a remarkable franchise-record-equaling comeback on Sunday. The Giants lost their opening game 40-0 to Dallas last week and had statisticians scrambling for details on the worst ever start to an NFL season when they trailed 20-0 at half-time. But quarterback Daniel Jones set about orchestrating a stunning turnaround with a 13-yard rushing touchdown early in the third.

Although Cardinals quarterback Joshua Dobbs responded by connecting with Marquise Brown for a three-yard score, the Giants proved unstoppable. New York put up 24 unanswered points in the remainder of the game before Graham Gano slotted a 34-yard field goal with 19 seconds left on the clock to put the Giants ahead. Jones ended the game with three total touchdowns having thrown for 321 yards and rushed for another 59.

Running back Saquon Barkley had two touchdowns and rushed for 63 yards but had to come out of the game in the final stages with what appeared to be a serious ankle injury. The 21-point comeback is the biggest by the Giants in the modern NFL era and matches wins against the Chicago Cardinals in 1949 and the Philadelphia Eagles four years earlier. The Washington Commanders produced a big comeback of their own, overturning an 18-point deficit at the winless Denver Broncos to leave with a 35-33 victory.

Washington trailed 21-3 in the second, before they put up 18 unanswered points and then two rushing touchdowns from Brian Robinson Jr in the fourth quarter put them 11 points up. A field goal for Denver narrowed the gap and then with the clock running out a "Hail Mary" pass from Broncos quarterback Russell Wilson was tipped on and eventually collected in the end zone by Brandon Johnson to give Denver the chance of a comeback of their own. They were unable to make the two-point conversion needed to force overtime, leaving their new coach Sean Payton with a 0-2 start to the season.

Earlier, Patrick Mahomes threw for two touchdowns as the Kansas City Chiefs bounced back from their season-opening loss to defeat the Jacksonville Jaguars. Reigning NFL Most Valuable Player Mahomes overcame a slow start to finish with 305 yards from 29-of-41 passes to give the reigning Super Bowl champions a gritty 17-9 win on the road in Florida. Mahomes and the Chiefs had been upset at home by the Detroit Lions in their opening game of the season after a litany of blunders by the receiving corps.



**GLENDALE:** James Conner #6 of the Arizona Cardinals is tackled by Adoree Jackson #22 of the New York Giants during the second quarter at State Farm Stadium on Sept 17, 2023. — AFP

But with fit-again tight end Travis Kelce back in the starting line-up, Mahomes looked more like his old self as the Chiefs dug deep for a hard-earned victory.

Mahomes picked out favorite target Kelce for a third-quarter touchdown after earlier connecting with Skyy Moore for the Chiefs' other touchdown. The Dallas Cowboys moved to 2-0 with another confident victory, beating the New York Jets 30-10.

The Jets, who lost quarterback Aaron Rodgers for the season after he snapped his achilles tendon in the win over Buffalo on Monday, had little joy against an impressive Cowboys defense. Rodgers' deputy, Zach Wilson, threw three interceptions while the Cowboys benefited from five field goals from rookie Brandon Aubrey. The Bills bounced back with a 38-10 rout of the Las Vegas Raiders with quarterback Josh Allen tossing three touchdowns with no interceptions to finish with 274 yards from 31-of-37 attempts.

But while the Chiefs and Bills got back to winning ways, the Cincinnati Bengals fell to 0-2 after a 27-24 loss to divisional rivals Baltimore. Ravens quarterback Lamar Jackson threw for two touchdowns and 237 yards as Bengals counterpart Joe Burrow once again struggled to get into the groove. The Miami Dolphins earned their second win of the season with a 24-17 victory at divisional rivals the New England Patriots, who fell to 0-2 for the first time since 2001.

Raheem Mostert scored with two rushing two touchdowns including the 43-yard fourth quarter touchdown that ultimately proved decisive. The Patriots made it a seven-point game with Rhamondre Stevenson's two-yard run but lost the game when their play on fourth down, where they had creatively kept the ball alive rugby style, was ruled to have been short on review. In Detroit, Lions set a new NFL record for the longest passing streak without an interception came to an abrupt end in a 37-31 overtime defeat to the Seattle Seahawks in Motor City. — AFP

### Roma thrash Empoli 7-0; Fiorentina beat Atalanta 3-2

**MILAN:** Romelu Lukaku scored his first Roma goal in Sunday's 7-0 demolition of Empoli, his new team's first win of the Serie A season. Belgium forward Lukaku rolled in Roma's sixth in the 82nd minute of a dominating performance in which talisman Paulo Dybala also got off the mark for the season with a brace. Strikes from Renato Sanches, Bryan Cristante and Gianluca Mancini, as well as a comical Albert Grassi own goal ensured a rout against pointless, goalless and rock-bottom Empoli which moved Roma out of the relegation zone and up to 12th on four points.

"It's obviously important for strikers to score goals," said coach Jose Mourinho to DAZN. "It was perfect for him as he scores in front of his fans and he leaves the field happy. He needs to feel loved and wanted. He's come here and he felt immediately that the team needed him." Lukaku made his first start alongside Dybala in an attack built to help Roma qualify for the Champions League for the first time since 2018.

On loan from Chelsea, Lukaku made a substitute appearance in Roma's loss to AC Milan before the international break and had a largely low key evening against Empoli apart from his simple finish from Andrea Belotti's pass. Only 35 seconds had passed when Sebastian Walukiewicz handled Rasmus Kristensen's cross. Dybala to rammed home his first goal of the campaign from the penalty spot.

Kristensen was key again when Sanches doubled the hosts' lead in the eighth minute, swinging in another cross from which the unmarked Portugal international guided home a perfect header. Lukaku was involved in Roma's bizarre third, laying off to Cristante before Bartosz Bereszynski whacked the ball off his Empoli teammate Grassi and watched the ball drift into his own goal. Dybala netted his sublime second 10 minutes after the break when he collected Cristante's pass, sent Sebastiano Luperto packing with a feint and rolled in a cool finish.

#### Lukaku on target

The Argentina forward would have ended the night with a hat-trick had his free-kick not thwacked the crossbar moments before he was substituted in the 64th minute. The match seemed to be roll-



**ROME:** Roma's Portuguese midfielder #20 Renato Sanches celebrates after scoring his team's second goal during the Italian Serie A football match between AS Roma and Empoli on Sept 17, 2023. — AFP

ing towards an otherwise uneventful end but Cristante started a late flurry in the 79th minute when he drove home Roma's fifth from long range. The stage was set for Lukaku to lap up the applause of fans who swamped an airport to greet his arrival in Rome last month. A Mancini header wrapped up the scoring with four minutes remaining.

Christian Kouame shot Fiorentina to a 3-2 win over Atalanta with the decisive strike in Sunday's entertaining Serie A clash in Florence. Ivorian Kouame pounced on defensive indecisiveness in the 76th minute to prod home his first goal of the season and move Fiorentina up to seventh. Giacomo Bonaventura and Lucas Martinez-Quarta scored Fiorentina's other goals at the Stadio Artemio Franchi as the hosts moved level on seven points with champions Napoli and Frosinone, 4-2 winners over Sassuolo earlier in the day.

Eusebio Di Francesco's Frosinone won a Serie A game from a losing position for the first time in their history. They came back from being two goals down in the first 25 minutes to claim an impressive home win thanks to a Walid Cheddira penalty on the stroke of half-time, Luca Mazzitelli's brace and a stoppage-time finish from Pol Lirola. Atalanta are two points back in ninth after their second defeat in their opening four matches, which means that Lecce stay in the Champions League positions despite only drawing 1-1 at Monza. — AFP

### Real climb back to top of La Liga

**BARCELONA:** Real Madrid came from behind to beat Real Sociedad 2-1 and climb back to the top of La Liga on Sunday, maintaining their perfect start to the season. Earlier Sergio Ramos made his second Sevilla debut in a narrow win over Las Palmas, while Mason Greenwood played his first match for Getafe, on loan from Manchester United. After Barcelona put five past Real Betis in a flashy display on Saturday the onus was on Carlo Ancelotti's Madrid side to maintain their 100 percent record and they did, against the tricky Basque visitors.

Propelled by the electric Takefusa Kubo, Real Sociedad took an early lead through Ander Barrenetxea, but Madrid hit back with goals from Fede Valverde and Joselu to earn their fifth win from five games. England international Jude Bellingham was unable to continue his excellent goalscoring form, after netting five goals in his first four Madrid matches, but remains the division's top goalscorer. Madrid start their Champions League campaign on Wednesday at home against Union Berlin, and despite losing Ballon d'Or winner Karim Benzema in the summer and star player Vinicius Junior to injury, remain a force to be reckoned with.

"We started by letting in a goal and the good thing is that we were capable of turning it around—the bad thing is that we have to avoid that," said Ancelotti. "We did it thanks to the commitment, energy and will of the team, we have an intensity that opponents find hard to cope with for 90 minutes." The Basque visitors went ahead at the new-look Santiago Bernabeu after only five minutes, when Kubo stroked a fine pass into Barrenetxea's path. Kepa Arrizabalaga kept out his first effort with a fine save but could not claw out the second.

Kubo then beat the goalkeeper with a brilliant strike but it was disallowed for offside. Joselu hit the crossbar with the goal gaping and Alex Remiro denied Dani Carvajal as Madrid found their footing. Valverde slammed Real Madrid level less than a minute into the second half, lashing Fran Garcia's cut-back in off the post from outside the area. The left-back created the second goal too, crossing for target man Joselu to nod the hosts ahead at the back post. Spain international Joselu was immediately taken off for Eduardo Camavinga, as Ancelotti sought more control of the game.

The Italian got it too, with the visitors effectively shut down, no longer finding spaces between Madrid lines. "This is the Bernabeu and with our fans we turned it around," said Joselu. "We're doing a bit of everything, we're confident in ourselves, there's a



**MADRID:** Real Madrid's German defender #22 Antonio Rudiger (up) heads the ball during the Spanish Liga football match between Real Madrid and Real Sociedad on Sept 17, 2023. — AFP

lot of quality in the squad and we came from behind again." Madrid lead Barcelona by two points, with both of Spain's giants unbeaten, although the Catalans drew their opening game against Getafe.

#### 'Die happy'

Sergio Ramos played for Sevilla for the first time since he left the club in 2005 as they earned their first win of the season over Las Palmas. The 37-year-old centre-back started in the 1-0 victory at the Ramon Sanchez-Pizjuan, following his arrival from Paris Saint-Germain this summer. Ramos, who left Sevilla for Real Madrid 18 years ago to the ire of many supporters in Andalusia, was cheered on his return. Belgian winger Dodi Lukebakio sent Sevilla ahead after 71 minutes and with Ramos patrolling, they kept their first clean sheet of the campaign. "I felt a lot of emotion ... it was amazing to find my people again, my home, my fans, it's unique," Ramos told Movistar.

The defender admitted some nerves about how fans would treat him after playing at a rival club for so long. "I had a few doubts at first but the reception I had on my arrival, I will take to the grave ... now I can die happy," he added. Elsewhere Pacheta got off to a winning start as Villarreal's new coach thanks to Alexander Sorloth's 94th minute winner against Almeria in a 2-1 victory. Getafe edged Osasuna 3-2, with Greenwood making his debut, and his first appearance since January 2022.

The English striker, on loan at Getafe from Manchester United, was charged with attempted rape and assault in October 2022 but the charges were later dropped. Getafe coach Jose Bordalas sent Greenwood on in the 77th minute to applause from home fans at the club's Coliseum Alfonso Perez stadium. A group of Osasuna supporters greeted the 21-year-old's arrival to Spanish football with chants of "Greenwood, die". "I didn't hear them so I have nothing to say," said Bordalas. "I am very happy with the kid's debut." — AFP