

Sports

Suarez at the double as Barca break down impressive Inter

BARCELONA: Luis Suarez scored a scintillating double and the returning Lionel Messi set up the winner as Barcelona came from behind to beat Inter Milan in a thrilling contest at Camp Nou on Wednesday. Lautaro Martinez fired Inter ahead after just two minutes and Antonio Conte's side, mean in defense and ruthless on the break, looked capable of pulling off an historic victory in Group F. But Suarez broke down the Italians' determined back-line with a stunning volley just before the hour and then finished off a weaving Messi run in the 84th minute to complete a pulsating 2-1 win.

Inter had never beaten Barcelona away from home in the Champions League but were the better side for long spells, particularly in the first half when they should have added to their one-goal lead. Instead, Barca's deadly duo came up trumps again, Suarez breaking through just as the hosts looked to be running out of ideas before Messi, back from injury, teed up his partner for the decisive second. Inter play Juventus at home on Sunday, sitting top of Serie A after winning all of their six games so far and on this evidence, they could go far in Europe too.

Barcelona will be wary of the return fixture at the San Siro in December, which could yet decide who wins this group. "Those are a big three points," said Suarez. "When you're the number nine, you always try to help the team with goals and assists. Sometimes it doesn't work, but I always work hard. Don't give up in difficult times."

Conte added: "This leaves a bitter taste because we deserved a lot more than we got. But congratulations to Barça, their stars (Suarez and Messi) changed the face of the match." For

Ernesto Valverde's team, a hard-fought victory, combined with Messi's return, will come as a welcome boost to morale and momentum after consecutive victories in La Liga steadied the ship following a bumpy start. While they had their star striker back for only his second start of the season, Inter were without theirs, Romelu Lukaku ruled out with a thigh strain.

The first half was an engrossing battle of control against counter-attack as Barcelona had 67 per cent of the ball but Inter more of the clear-cut chances. The pattern was set by Inter scoring early, after 122 seconds, as Gerard Pique was pulled out of position and Martinez sprinted into the gap, holding off Clement Lenglet before finishing inside the far post. For half an hour, Barcelona played well, switching the ball from one side to the other in an attempt to dislodge the dogged Inter defense. But the threat of their opponents on the break was always lurking and as the half wore on, Inter looked increasingly likely to grab a second. Antonio Candreva scored but was ruled offside, Nicolo Barella would have but Nelson Semedo made a last-ditch block while Martinez and Alexis Sanchez both went close, the former drawing an excellent save from Marc-Andre ter Stegen.

WHISTLES IN STANDS

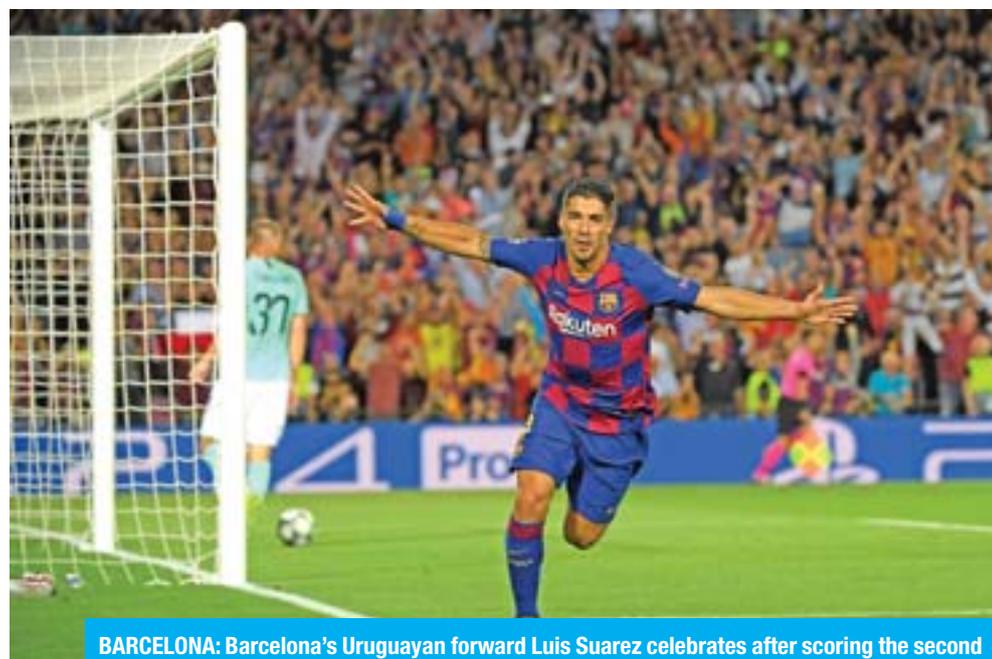
By the end, Barca were relieved to reach half-time, even if the whistle on the pitch was greeted by a scattering of whistles in the stands too. Arturo Vidal replaced Sergio Busquets before the hour and made a difference, meeting an Antoine Griezmann cut-back before feeding Suarez for

played well, but we made two mistakes. "For the first, we ran into each other. For the second, we are not awake enough. Lyon had hardly any chances."

The visitors were virtually handed an early lead after a horrible mistake from the home defense. Lyon midfielder Houssem Aouar nicked the ball from Leipzig's Ibrahima Konate, beat defender Dayot Upamecano and sprinted into the area. He generously let the ball roll for winger Depay to fire home and silence the home crowd. The Dutchman had the ball in the net again after he got in behind the Leipzig defense just before half-time, but was ruled offside.

Leipzig striker Timo Werner squandered two great chances and forward Yussuf Poulsen had an effort cleared off the line as Lyon stayed in front at the break. Both Nagelsmann and Lyon coach Sylvainho were shown yellow cards early in the second half after a touchline dispute. "You'll have to ask him. I have no idea," fumed Nagelsmann when asked what his yellow card was for.

Leipzig's second calamity came when a poor pass across the back fell to substitute defender Nordi Mukiele. The 21-year-old watched in horror as he lost control and the ball was snapped up by Terrier, who rounded Leipzig keeper Peter Gulacsi to make it two on 65 minutes. Nagelsmann reacted by dragging off Upamecano moments later and despite a few half-chances, Leipzig could not claw their way back. — AFP



BARCELONA: Barcelona's Uruguayan forward Luis Suarez celebrates after scoring the second goal during the UEFA Champions League Group F football match between Barcelona and Inter Milan at the Camp Nou stadium. — AFP

the equalizer. Suarez still had a lot to do when the clipped ball came over to him on the edge of the box but the Uruguayan caught it perfectly in the air with his right foot and sent it flying into the net. Barca wanted a winner. Vidal found Messi, who slid in Griezmann but he could only find the side-netting. Griezmann was replaced

by Ousmane Dembele, who fired over. The game looked to be drifting towards a draw until Messi intervened. Collecting the ball on the right, he span around one defender, then jinked inside another before passing to Suarez, whose first touch pushed the ball perfectly into the area. From there, the finish was simple. — AFP

Depay makes Leipzig pay as Lyon find form

LEIPZIG: Lyon ended their poor recent run on Wednesday as Memphis Depay scored in a 2-0 Champions League win at RB Leipzig that condemned the Germans to a second home defeat in four days. Goals by ex-Manchester United forward Depay and Martin Terrier sealed a deserved victory for the French side which put them level on four points with Group G leaders Zenit Saint Petersburg and a point clear of third-placed Leipzig.

"We deserved it. We've had a difficult time and we're not through that yet but we're doing everything to turn things around," Lyon captain Leo Dubois told RMC Sport. Lyon arrived in Germany on a seven-match winless streak which had seen them plummet to 11th in the Ligue 1 table, while Leipzig were leading the Bundesliga as recently as Saturday before falling to a 3-1 defeat at home by Schalke. Coach Julian Nagelsmann had insisted the Schalke defeat was just a blip, but Lyon again exposed Leipzig's lack of composure at the back on a sobering night for the hosts. "In my eyes, that was an undeserved defeat," said Nagelsmann. "We actually

'Dangerous' Hakimi brace gives Dortmund the win

PRAGUE: Achraf Hakimi scored twice to hand Borussia Dortmund their first victory in Champions League Group F as the Bundesliga side won 2-0 at reigning Czech champions Slavia Prague on Wednesday. With 10 minutes remaining in the first half, Hakimi — on loan from Real Madrid — sprinted down the right flank, wove his way through the Slavia defence into the box, fooled keeper Ondrej Kolar and blasted home left-footed.

A minute before the final whistle, the 20-year-old Moroccan struck following another strong run and clinical finish with a low shot across goal to end Slavia's 24-game unbeaten streak in competitive games. "He played very well although he's not used to the position," Dortmund coach Lucien Favre said of Hakimi, who is a right-back by trade but started on the left wing. "He is very dangerous up front and we are happy with his performance, the two goals say it all. "We had drawn the last three games against Barcelona, (Eintracht) Frankfurt and (Werder) Bremen, so we're happy with the victory today, it was very important for us."

Dortmund now top Group F with four points from two games, leading Barcelona on goal difference after the Catalans beat Inter Milan 2-1 at the Camp Nou on Wednesday owing to a Luis Suarez brace. With prolific striker Paco Alcacer ruled out with an Achilles tendon injury,

Dortmund, who had drawn 0-0 with Barcelona at home in their opening game, started without a fully-fledged striker, relying on counter-attacks rather than constant pressure. Captain Marco Reus started up front alongside Julian Brandt and English teenager Jadon Sancho, who went close with the first shot on goal in the second minute. Sancho then set up the tireless Hakimi who fired wide, before playing a pass which a sliding Reus narrowly shot past a gaping Slavia goal.

Having reached the Champions League group stage for the first time in 12 years, Slavia, who held Inter Milan to a 1-1 draw at the San Siro in their opener, had a great chance on 20 minutes. Lukas Masopust collected a pass that left him one-on-one with Roman Buerki, but the Swiss keeper saved his poorly-placed effort. Slavia's Romanian midfielder Nicolae Stanciu then saw his free-kick kept out by a diving Buerki and centre-back Ondrej Kudela had an effort blocked by the visiting defense. "Slavia were a threat throughout the game, they were very athletic, they attacked us well," said Favre. Sancho went clean through against Kolar early in the second half, but was denied by the Slavia goalkeeper. Minutes later, striker Stanislav Tecl squandered a similarly clear opportunity for Slavia, firing wide as the hosts kept Dortmund under pressure. — AFP