

## Sports

# Real Madrid and Atletico warm up for city derby with victories

**MADRID:** Real Madrid's crisis has been averted for the time being at least after they beat Osasuna 2-0 on Wednesday without Eden Hazard and Gareth Bale to go top of La Liga. Hazard and Bale were among a number of players rested by coach Zinedine Zidane, with Real facing seven games in 21 days, the next of them against city rivals Atletico Madrid tomorrow.

Vinicius Junior, who has endured a difficult few months, filled the void, bending a shot into the top corner before crying tears of what presumably were a mixture of joy and relief. This time last year the 19-year-old exploded onto the scene but injury and then a dip in form saw him drift, with this a chance to reassert himself in a much-rotated line-up.

If Vinicius was Madrid's Brazilian sensation 12 months ago, Rodrygo might be one for the present. The 18-year-old, who was bought from Santos in 2018 but joined last summer, added a superb second goal, and his first for the club, just one minute after coming off the bench for a remarkable debut.

"I'm glad for them," said Zidane. "Sometimes we forget they are 18 (and 19) years old. We have seen the emotion they felt about scoring at the Bernabeu. I liked Rodrygo's goal but I liked the control even more."

Earlier, Atletico's Alvaro Morata made a swift impact too but with less positive results after he was sent off eight minutes after being introduced as a substitute against Real Mallorca. Atletico were already 2-0 up thanks to goals from Diego Costa and Joao Felix but Morata will now be suspended for the derby at the Wanda Metropolitano.

The Spaniard's dreadful night got worse as he also appeared to engage in a heated ex-

change with a fan as he later left the stadium. A week ago it would have been almost unthinkable that Atletico would play their rivals in a contest of first against second in La Liga but that could now be the setting this weekend, depending on Sevilla and Real Sociedad's results later.

La Real beat Atletico, who were then held to a goalless draw by Celta Vigo, but by far the deeper sense of gloom had engulfed Zidane's side, after they were humbled 3-0 by Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League.

That was Real's worst defeat under Zidane as coach and prompted questions about the Frenchman's future, with Jose Mourinho available and seemingly waiting in the wings. Instead, back-to-back victories for the first time since Zidane came back in March have lifted the malaise and offered hope there is still life in this Madrid squad, despite the lack of change since the summer.

"We believe in what we do," Zidane said. "With humility and work you achieve a lot. This is just the start."

The only disappointment might have been the lack of a goal for Luka Jovic, who missed some excellent chances and then did score, only to have it ruled out by VAR.

Vinicius had started the first two games of the season but none since, while he was without a goal himself in seven months. His first under Zidane was a peach, coming in the 36th minute, a curling effort that took the slightest of deflections on its way into the top corner.

Jovic saw a smart finish ruled out and then watched as Rodrygo scored almost instantly after coming on. The teenager cushioned Casemiro's crossfield pass beautifully before nipping inside Osasuna defender Lillo and banging the ball low and into the net.



**MADRID:** Real Madrid's Spanish defender Alvaro Odriozola (L) vies with Osasuna's Argentinian defender Facundo Roncaglia during the Spanish league football match between Real Madrid CF and CA Osasuna at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid. — AFP

Atletico's players might have been keeping tabs on their way home from Mallorca but their job was already done after Costa and Felix finally got the goals to suggest they might form a potent partnership together.

Costa's was simple, as Mallorca failed to clear Koke's cross and the striker nipped in to head past goalkeeper Manolo Reina. Felix's was more complex but owed something to fortune

too. The Portuguese did brilliantly to bring a looping ball down but his finish on the turn took a cruel deflection before spinning up and into the far corner.

Morata's moments of madness, that included two bookings in as many minutes after an argument with Mallorca's Xisco Campos, should mean Costa and Felix reunite this weekend. — AFP

## Man Utd survive shoot-out, West Ham crash out

**LONDON:** Manchester United survived a League Cup scare against third tier Rochdale as they won 5-3 on penalties, while West Ham suffered a shock 4-0 defeat at Oxford on Wednesday. Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's struggling side were held to a 1-1 draw at Old Trafford after 16-year-old Luke Matheson scored a 76th minute equaliser following Mason Greenwood's opener for United eight minutes earlier.

With United in danger of a humiliating exit, they held their nerve in the shoot-out, winning 5-3 as Daniel James converted the decisive kick after Sergio Romero saved Rochdale's second penalty from Jimmy Keohane.

Although United avoided the embarrassment of losing to a team 17th in League One, the sloppy manner of their performance will raise fresh questions about Solskjaer's ability to inspire his side. United are languishing in eighth place in the Premier League after Saturday's dismal 2-0 defeat at West Ham left them with just two wins from six games. Liverpool eased to a 2-0 victory at third tier MK Dons as Harvey Elliott became the youngest player to start a competitive match for the club. The 16-year-old put in an accomplished display and twice hit the crossbar as James Milner profited from terrible goalkeeping from Stuart Moore to put the Reds in front before Ki-Jana Hoever wrapped up the win. — AFP

## Celtic, Rangers move into Scottish League Cup semi-finals

**GLASGOW:** Celtic thrashed Partick 5-0 to book a Scottish League Cup semi-final date with Hibernian, while Rangers beat Livingston 1-0 to clinch a last-four clash against Hearts on Wednesday. Ivorian striker Vakoun Issouf Bayo opened the scoring for holders Celtic with a close range header in the 15th minute at Parkhead. Celtic boss Neil Lennon had made eight changes for the Scottish champions, but they were still too strong for second tier Partick.

Tom Rogic added the second within a minute of the restart before two goals in six minutes from Olivier Ntcham. A 77th minute strike from substitute Scott Sinclair confirmed that the three-time treble winners have the squad to continue their success this season. Lennon was relieved to see Australia midfielder Rogic make a successful first start of the season. "That's Tom's first 90 minutes in a long time and you can see the work he has put in behind the scenes," he said.

"He got better as the game went on, it looked like he was really enjoying himself. I am really pleased for him. "He is in the best condition I have seen. He is a real asset when he is fit and firing." An early deflected goal from Glen Kamara was enough to edge Rangers past Livingston at the Tony Macaroni Arena.

Steven Gerrard's men took the lead when Kamara took advantage of Nicky Devlin's poor clearance to send a left-footed shot

in off the full-back from 18 yards inside five minutes. Livingston had two penalty claims rejected by Don Robertson - first when Robbie Crawford went down under the challenge of Filip Helander and then when Devlin's header hit Joe Aribo. Goalkeeper Chris Maxwell starred for Hibernian as they beat Kilmarnock 5-4 on penalties after a goalless draw at Rugby Park.

Hibs were reduced to 10 men in the 120th minute when Ryan Porteous was given his marching orders. The decisive moment in the shoot-out came when Niko Hamalainen's penalty was saved by Maxwell.

Hearts made it through after a 3-0 penalty shoot-out success against Aberdeen following their 2-2 draw. Aberdeen's Sam Cosgrove netted a double from the spot in the first-half after Christophe Berra and Loic Damour had committed clumsy fouls.

However, strikes from Steven MacLean and an stoppage-time leveller from Craig Halkett sent the clash into extra-time. It was the Jambos who would progress in a fraught shoot-out, with Cosgrove and Niall McGinn blasting woefully over the bar and Joel Pereira saving Bruce Anderson's kick. — AFP

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