

Sports

Balotelli scores but Brescia fall to Napoli, Dzeko seals Roma win

Carlo Ancelotti's Napoli stay fourth with 12 points from six games

MILAN: Mario Balotelli scored his first goal for new club Brescia but the promoted northerners fell to a 2-1 defeat to Napoli yesterday as all the Italian teams in Europe warmed up with wins for next week's action.

Roma got back to winning ways beating Lecce 1-0 thanks to an Edin Dzeko goal, with city rivals Lazio also sealing all three points with a 4-0 hammering of Genoa. Italian international Balotelli headed in after 67 minutes in his second match for his hometown club having missed four games because of a ban he incurred with former side Marseille.

First-half goals from Dries Mertens and Kostas Manolas ensured Napoli took all three points after their midweek loss to Cagliari, to boost confidence ahead of their Champions League trip to Belgian club Genk.

Carlo Ancelotti's Napoli stay fourth with 12 points from six games, six behind league leaders Inter Milan who beat Sampdoria 3-1 on Saturday, before they play Barcelona in Europe. Inter have a maximum 18 points from six games — two ahead of Juve — after winning their first six league matches for the first time since the 1966-67 season. Champions Juventus beat SPAL 2-0 to stay second with Atalanta third — a point ahead of Napoli — after thrashing Sassuolo 4-1 on Saturday. Juve play Bayer Leverkusen on Tuesday with Atalanta's first ever Champions League home game against Shakhtar Donetsk.

'I'M SATISFIED'

Roma are fifth, a point behind Napoli, with Lazio a further point back in sixth. "Suffering is natural in these games if you don't kill it off with 3-0 and then concede a goal, it all opens up again," Ancelotti told DAZN.

"But all in all I'm satisfied. "We played an excellent

first half, the second was less impressive, but it was very hot and the players were tired." Balotelli carried his daughter Pia, who lives in Naples with her mother and was decked out in the Napoli colours, onto the pitch at the San Paolo Stadium.

Ancelotti's side went ahead after 13 minutes. Mertens connected with a Jose Callejon cross to blast in his 114th goal in a Napoli jersey — one shy of Argentine legend Diego Maradona's total from 1984 to 1991. Slovak Marek Hamsik leads both with 121.

Manolas thought he had scored on six minutes later but the goal was ruled out after a VAR review. The Greek defender did head in just before the break off a Mertens corner. Then in a nervy final half hour Balotelli got his head to a Sandro Tonali corner to serve notice to Italy coach Roberto Mancini of his ambitions to play Euro 2020.

It was his first goal in Italy in four years but Balotelli's losing streak to Napoli stretched to eight games — having never won while playing for both Milan clubs, Manchester City, Nice and now Brescia. Brescia slip to 14th in the table.

Elsewhere, both Roman clubs also warmed up for their Europa League games next week with wins after Serie A losses during the week. Dzeko's header, his fourth goal in six games, made the difference against promoted Lecce, whose goalkeeper saved an Aleksandar Kolarov penalty.

Lazio eased past Genoa largely thanks to Ciro Immobile, who scored the final goal and set up another, with Sergej Milinkovic-Savic, Stefan Radu and Felipe Caicedo also on target. Stefano Okaka claimed all three points for Udinese at home against Bologna, with AC Milan hosting Fiorentina later. —AFP



NAPLES: Napoli's Belgian forward Dries Mertens (L) challenges Brescia's Venezuelan defender Jhon Chancellor (R) during the Italian Serie A football match Napoli vs Brescia yesterday at the San Paolo stadium in Naples. — AFP

Astros clinch home field, Verlander gets 3,000th strikeout

ANAHEIM: Justin Verlander became the 18th pitcher in major league history to reach the 3,000-strikeout plateau on Saturday as the Houston Astros recorded a 6-3 victory over the Los Angeles Angels in Anaheim, Calif. Verlander (21-6), who fanned 12 batters to push his career total to 3,006, struck out Kole Calhoun in the fourth inning to hit the milestone. He also fanned Calhoun in the sixth for his career-high 300th strikeout of the season. The 36-year-old Verlander joined Gerrit Cole (316) as the only set of teammates to strike out at least 300 batters in a season since Randy Johnson (334) and Curt Schilling (316) accomplished the feat for the 2002 Arizona Diamondbacks. Josh Reddick belted a three-run homer and Jose Altuve also went deep and drove in three runs for the Astros, who have won 11 of their last 13 contests and clinched home-field advantage throughout the playoffs.

ROCKIES 3, BREWERS 2

Trevor Story hit a walk-off homer to lead off the bottom of the 10th inning, and host Colorado again put a dent in Milwaukee's division title hopes with a win in Denver. Milwaukee had a chance to tie the St. Louis Cardinals atop the NL Central after St. Louis lost to the Chicago Cubs. But the Rockies got a tying solo homer from Sam Hilliard off closer Josh Hader with two outs in the ninth and Story's 35th of the season off Matt Albers (8-6). Ian Desmond tripled and also went deep for Colorado, and Jairo Diaz (6-4) tossed one inning in relief to get the win. Eric Thames homered, and Ben Gamel and Orlando Arcia also had two hits for the Brewers. Milwaukee manager Craig Counsell was ejected in the ninth inning.

CUBS 8, CARDINALS 6

Ian Happ hit a pair of two-run homers to lead visiting Chicago past reeling St. Louis. The Cardinals have lost four straight games as their National League Central title quest stalled. They maintained a one-game lead with one game to play over the second-place Milwaukee Brewers. The Cardinals would host a one-game tiebreaker on Monday. Reliever Steve Cishek (4-6), the fifth of seven Cubs pitchers, earned the victory. Brandon Kintzler closed out the game for his first save. Cubs starting pitcher Cole Hamels worked four scoreless innings and struck out eight batters. In 19 innings against the Cardinals this season, he struck out 22 batters and didn't allow a run.

DODGERS 2, GIANTS 0

Hyun-Jin Ryu tossed seven strong innings and had an RBI single in the fifth as Los Angeles tied the franchise's all-time win record for a season (105) by blanking host San Francisco. Max Muncy homered to lead off the sixth inning to help the Dodgers win their sixth straight game and tie Brooklyn's win total in the 1953 season. Los Angeles remains one game behind the Houston Astros for the best record in the majors. Ryu (14-5) allowed five hits and struck out seven while lowering his ERA to a major-league-best 2.32.

ATHLETICS 1, MARINERS 0

Brett Anderson pitched five scoreless innings and the bullpen did the rest as Oakland edged Seattle to clinch home-field advantage for the American League's wild-card playoff game. Ramon Laureano hit a solo homer with two outs in the top of the third off Mariners left-hander Marco Gonzales (16-13) to account for the game's

lone run. Anderson (13-9), making his first start since Sept. 17 as the A's attempted to limit his innings to reduce the stress on his arm, allowed three hits, walked one and struck out three.

NATIONALS 10, INDIANS 7

Gerardo Parra's grand slam capped a nine-run second inning as host Washington beat Cleveland to clinch home field advantage for the National League wild-card game. The Nationals have won a season-high seven straight and will host either the Milwaukee Braves or the St. Louis Cardinals on Tuesday night. Washington collected 11 hits and five walks to win on a day that their starter, Patrick Corbin, lasted just 4 1/3 innings, surrendering six runs on seven hits while striking out eight and walking two.

METS 3, BRAVES 0

Pete Alonso broke the single-season rookie home run record when the New York slugger crushed a solo blast to center field in the third inning of a win over visiting Atlanta. Alonso's milestone 53rd homer — breaking a tie with New York Yankees slugger Aaron Judge, who set the mark in 2017 — came on a 2-1 pitch from Mike Foltyniewicz (8-6), who spun and lowered his head upon hearing the sound of bat hitting ball. Alonso dropped his bat, walked a few steps up the baseline and then raised his arms while looking toward the crowd and home dugout. Rene Rivera hit a two-run homer earlier in the inning for the Mets, who have won the first two games of the season-ending three-game set. Steven Matz (11-10) earned the win after allowing two hits and five walks while striking out seven over six innings.

RANGERS 9, YANKEES 4

Rougned Odor highlighted a six-run sixth inning with a grand slam and Texas beat visiting New York in Arlington, Texas. Texas rolled to its third win in the last 13 games by sending 11 men to the plate against Luis Cessa and Nestor Cortes Jr. in the sixth. The Rangers turned the game into a blowout when Odor hammered a 2-1 fastball over the center field fence. Odor reached 30 homers for the third time and hit his fifth career grand slam. Aaron Judge tripled and scored on a sacrifice fly by Brett Gardner in the top of the first as the Yankees did not homer for only the 23rd time this season. Didi Gregorius added a bases-loaded double with two outs in the ninth to score three.

ORIOLES 9, RED SOX 4

DJ Stewart hit a two-run home run, and Richie Martin, Renato Nunez and Trey Mancini added solo shots as Baltimore powered past host Boston. Martin and Mancini each had two hits and two RBIs as the Orioles put themselves in position to finish a three-game sweep in the regular-season finale Sunday. John Means (12-11) earned the win, allowing three runs on five hits with two walks and five strikeouts over five innings. Xander Bogaerts and J.D. Martinez homered for the Red Sox, who lost their third straight. Bogaerts had three hits.

TWINS 4, ROYALS 3

Nelson Cruz belted a leadoff home run in the eighth inning to help Minnesota defeat host Kansas City. Cruz is hitting .371 with nine home runs and 28 RBIs in 16 games against Kansas City this season, the most RBIs against the Royals by one player in Kansas City history. Twins starting third baseman Luis Arraez was carted off with an apparent right leg injury after a collision with first baseman Williams Astudillo. The Twins announced after the game that Arraez has a sprained right ankle, and X-rays were negative. Tyler Duffey (5-1), the sixth of eight pitchers the Twins used, picked up the win, despite giving up the second of Jorge Soler's two home runs. Soler took the American League lead in homers, having been tied at 45 with the Los Angeles Angels' Mike Trout, who is injured and out for the season.

PHILLIES 9, MARLINS 3

Bryce Harper belted a three-run home run and Zach Elfin tossed 7 2/3 strong innings as host Philadelphia breezed to a win over visiting Miami. Maikel Franco launched a two-run shot and Cesar Hernandez also went deep for the Phillies, who can secure their first winning season since 2011 with a victory in Sunday's series finale. Elfin improved to 3-1 against the Marlins this season after allowing three runs on six hits before leaving the game after surrendering a two-run homer to Neil Walker in the eighth inning. Caleb Smith (10-11) took the loss for Miami after striking out one and walking four in three innings.



ANAHEIM: Brian Goodwin #18 of the Los Angeles Angels hits a home run in the 1st inning against the Houston Astros at Angel Stadium in Anaheim, California. — AFP

BLUE JAYS 4, RAYS 1

Teoscar Hernandez homered, right-hander Trent Thornton struck out eight in five scoreless innings and Toronto defeated visiting Tampa Bay. The Rays already clinched an American League wild-card berth but the loss, combined with the Oakland Athletics' win over Seattle, means the Rays will have to travel to Oakland for the AL wild-card game Wednesday. Toronto's Cavan Biggio singled and has reached base safely in 28 consecutive games, a club record for a rookie. Russ Adams reached base in 27 straight games in 2005.

WHITE SOX 7, TIGERS 1 (GAME 1)

Reynaldo Lopez pitched eight-plus strong innings and Danny Mendick and Eloy Jimenez homered to lift host Chicago over Detroit in Game 1 of a doubleheader. Lopez (10-15) closed his season on a high note, scattering one run on five hits with one walk and nine strikeouts. Seeking his second complete game of the season, Lopez started the ninth inning but was lifted following Victor Reyes' leadoff single, one of Reyes' two hits in the game. Detroit opened the scoring with two outs in the first inning, as designated hitter Miguel Cabrera smacked a solo home run to left-center field. The home run was the 476th of Cabrera's career, moving him past Stan Musial and Willie Stargell and into a tie for 30th with Adrian Beltre on the major league all-time list.

TIGERS 4, WHITE SOX 3 (GAME 2)

John Hicks smacked a pinch-hit, three-run home run with one out in the ninth inning to help visiting Detroit defeat Chicago, earning a doubleheader split. Hicks connected against Chicago closer Alex Colome (4-5), who allowed three runs — two earned — and three hits in 2/3 of an inning. Colome struck out one en route to blowing his third save in 33 opportunities. Joe Jimenez navigated a one-out home run from Yoan Moncada in the bottom of the ninth to earn his ninth save.

DIAMONDBACKS 6, PADRES 5

Christian Walker hit two home runs, including his first career slam to cap a five-run seventh inning, and Arizona overcame a four-run deficit to defeat San Diego in Phoenix. Walker tied a career high with five RBIs in his second career two-homer game. Manny Machado hit a two-run homer, and Luis Urias and Eric Hosmer had solo homers for the Padres, who have lost five in a row. Arizona won its fourth straight game and matched a franchise record with 220 homers this season, first done in 2017.

REDS 4, PIRATES 2 (12 INNINGS)

Jose Iglesias' RBI double and reliever R.J. Alaniz's RBI single, both with two outs in the 12th inning, gave visiting Cincinnati a victory over Pittsburgh. The game was stuck at 2-2 from the fourth inning to the 12th. Then in the 12th, against Pittsburgh reliever Alex McRae (0-4), Kyle Farmer led off with a single. Phillip Ervin was hit by a pitch. Tucker Barnhart hit into a double play, with Farmer moving to third. Iglesias then doubled to center to bring in Farmer and make it 3-2. Alaniz, in his first major league plate appearance, singled to right-center to drive in Iglesias for a 4-2 lead. Alaniz (1-0) pitched the 11th and 12th innings for his first major league win. —Reuters

Real hold off Atletico in tight derby to grab top spot in Spain

MADRID: Real Madrid regained top spot in La Liga on Saturday after a goalless derby with Atletico that saw them move above surprise package Granada and maintain their small lead over a crowded chasing pack.

Unbeaten Real are a point ahead of promoted Granada and Atletico Madrid after Diego Simeone's side failed to break down their well-drilled local rivals, whose disciplined performance at the Wanda Metropolitano was deserving of at least the point they gained. "These matches with Atletico are very physical, this is one of the hardest grounds we have to visit during the season," Real captain Sergio Ramos told broadcaster Movistar. "It was difficult to create chances in attack because they leave such little space. The point does little for us though as we wanted the three even more."

Real are a further point ahead of fourth-placed Barcelona, who won a hard-fought clash at Getafe 2-0 thanks to goals from Luis Suarez and Junior, and Real Sociedad, who can themselves go top on Sunday if they beat a Sevilla side down in eighth but just five points behind Zidane's leaders. On a night of few clear-cut chances Atletico probably had the best opportunities but failed to test Thibaut Courtois in the Real goal, while the away side drew a couple of fine saves from Jan Oblak on their forays forward. The best came 15 minutes from the end, when the Slovenian stopper got down brilliantly to his left to palm away Karim Benzema's powerful header from a Nacho cross.

Just seconds before Atletico had come to within inches of opening the scoring when Saul Niguez met a corner with a header that flashed just past the upright. "It was a standard save for a goalkeeper," said Oblak.

"It was well-placed but I could see the ball and I hope it's always like that — the fewer goals we let in the better it is for everyone." Granada had moved temporarily top of La Liga before the derby after Antonio Puertas' first-half strike saw them squeeze past rock-bottom Leganes. Puertas crashed his long-range winner into an empty net after Juan Soriano had come charging out of his goal to close down Roberto Soldado just before the half-hour mark.

A remarkable counter-attack goal launched by Marc-Andre Ter Stegen and finished off by Luis Suarez put Barcelona on their way four minutes before the break at Getafe, and Junior's tap-in shortly after the restart made sure of Barca's first away win since April.

"This match was crucial for us to rid ourselves of the sensation of never being able to win away," said Valverde. "We didn't play well in the first half but once we took the lead they basically didn't have any chances." Ter Stegen is embroiled in a row with Bayern Munich captain Manuel Neuer over the Barca stopper's lack of opportunities with the Germany team. However he showed his class when he raced out of his goal to stop a Getafe attack before launching a pinpoint pass over the home side's dozing defence to Suarez, who calmly lobbed the opener over David Soria. "Sometimes when passes come off like this the goalkeeper is just clearing the ball. I don't know if that is the case here, but regardless he brings us a lot," added Valverde.

The win was Barca's second in a week as they attempt to recover from a miserable start that led to questions surrounding Valverde's future. Athletic Bilbao lost for the first time this season at home to crisis club Valencia, who bagged their second win of the season thanks to Denis Cheryshev's 27th minute strike.

'Los Che' had been sent into turmoil when owner Peter Lim sacked Marcelino Garcia Toral earlier in the month. But despite player and fan anger at Lim's decision, two draws and now a win after their shock victory at Chelsea in the Champions League have them in ninth on nine points. — AFP



Matches on TV (Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Manchester United v Arsenal FC 22:00
beIN SPORTS HD 2

ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE

Parma Calcio 1913 v Torino FC 21:45
beIN SPORTS