

18 Alex Zanardi 'condition stable' but fears of brain damage



19 Atletico Madrid eye Champions League as Getafe stumble again in race for top four



19 Mancini tells Balotelli to 'wake up'



Arsenal stunned by Brighton late show

Wolves first side to make a move on the top four



BRIGHTON: Arsenal's French-born Ivorian midfielder Nicolas Pepe (2L) scores the opening goal during the English Premier League football match between Brighton and Hove Albion and Arsenal at the American Express Community Stadium in Brighton, southern England. —AFP

LONDON: Neal Maupay played the villain twice over for Arsenal as the Frenchman netted a vital stoppage time winner for Brighton, while Wolves closed on the top four with a 2-0 win at West Ham on Saturday. In the first full weekend of English Premier League matches since the coronavirus shutdown in March, Arsenal's faint chances of a return to the Champions League next season faded further after blowing a 1-0 lead to lose 2-1.

The Gunners' cause wasn't helped by an injury to goalkeeper Bernd Leno, whose screams echoed round the empty Amex Stadium after an awkward fall provoked by a slight push by Maupay.

The German twisted his knee and pointed the finger angrily at Maupay as he was stretchered from the field. "I think he had a hyperextension of the knee and we have to assess the damage," said Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta. Nicolas Pepe put the visitors ahead in the 68th minute with a superb strike. But Arsenal's defensive frailties were exposed seven minutes later when Brighton defender Lewis Dunk stabbed home from

close-range. Adding insult to injury for Arsenal, deep into stoppage-time Aaron Connolly helped the ball on to Maupay and he kept his head for a fine finish.

Maupay and Matteo Guendouzi then had to be separated at full-time as tempers flared. "Some of their players need to learn what is humility, especially one of them. He was talking all game, he was saying bad things," said Maupay. "This is what happens when you talk too much on the pitch."

Arteta's side are languishing in 10th place, eight points adrift of the top four, and may not even qualify for the Europa League. "It is unacceptable in the way we lost the game. The fact we missed so many chances and we did not compete for the second goal," said the Arsenal boss.

Brighton's first win in 2020 moved them five points clear of the relegation zone. After seeing Arsenal, Tottenham, Manchester United

and Sheffield United fail to win on their return, Wolves were the first side to make a move on the top four. Substitute Adama Traore enlivened a sleepy encounter at the London Stadium with a brilliant run and cross to tee up Raul Jimenez to head home the opener 17 minutes from time.

Pedro Neto then crashed home a spectacular second on the volley as Nuno Espirito Santo's men moved level on points with Manchester United in fifth, just two points behind Chelsea.

Leicester remain well on course for Champions League football themselves next season, but Brendan Rodgers's men were denied a winning return by Craig Dawson's late equaliser for Watford in a 1-1 draw at Vicarage Road.

In a remarkable conclusion, England left-back Ben Chilwell's superb 90th minute strike seemed to have

handed the Foxes all three points. However, Dawson secured a vital point in Watford's challenge to beat the drop with an acrobatic effort three minutes later to score his first goal for the club.

A point edged third-placed Leicester eight clear of Wolves and United, while Watford move a point above the relegation zone. Bournemouth remain in the drop zone as they conceded twice in the first 23 minutes to lose 2-0 at home to Crystal Palace.

Luka Milivojevic and Jordan Ayew scored for the Eagles, who move up to ninth.

The stage is set for Liverpool to return for the first time since the top-flight hiatus when the title chasers make the short trip to city rivals Everton.

Jurgen Klopp's side, 22 points clear of second-placed Manchester City, need two wins from their remaining nine games to end their 30-year wait to be crowned English champions.

If the Reds beat Everton, they can wrap up the title with another victory against Palace at Anfield on Wednesday. —AFP

Torino and Parma play out draw in Serie A return

MILAN: Torino's Andrea Belotti missed a penalty as Serie A resumed on Saturday after a three-month coronavirus shutdown with his side drawing 1-1 at home with Parma as ten-man Verona held on to beat Cagliari 2-1.

Juraj Kucka grabbed a point for Parma with his 31st-minute leveller after Nicolas Nkoulou had nodded the hosts ahead after quarter of an hour behind closed doors at Turin's Stadio Olimpico.

But the first top-flight game in 103 days in Italy got off to a false start with a deflated ball having to be re-

placed after five seconds.

Before kick-off players and referees formed a circle to observe a minute's silence for the victims of COVID-19, which has killed over 34,500 people in Italy. Torino had a message on their shirts for health care workers: "Thanks to all our heroes."

Cameroon defender Nkoulou took the knee after heading in the opening goal, paying tribute to American George Floyd, whose death at the hands of police in Minnesota sparked worldwide protests over racial and ethnic inequality.

But Parma were soon on level terms with Ivory Coast forward Gervinho setting up Slovak Kucka to blast in the equaliser 16 minutes later.

Parma could thank goalkeeper Luigi Sepe for their point when, after already denying Simone Zaza at close range, the Italian stopper then pushed away Belotti's spot-kick just three minutes after the break.

Torino ended a six-match league losing streak with their first point since January 12, but stay 15th,



Tempers flared

three points above the relegation zone, with Parma in eighth place.

"This performance gives us an important signal, we are alive," said Torino coach Moreno Longo.

"We're satisfied with the performance but not the result. We played united as a team despite coming through a difficult period. "We think positive for the next game even if the path is long and difficult."

Four postponed games take place this weekend with Verona getting past Cagliari thanks to Samuel Di Carmine's first-half brace. Di Carmine headed in the first after 14 minutes, adding a second after 26 minutes.

Verona's Fabio Borini saw red harshly after 35 minutes, sparking Cagliari hopes of a first win in sixth months. And Giovanni Simeone pulled a goal back for the Sardinians when he connected with a Luca Pellegrini cross before the break.

But Verona held on to consolidate seventh place, one point off the Europa League places. Cagliari,

meanwhile, without a win since December 2 and playing their first game under new coach Walter Zenga, are 12th.

Atalanta hosting Sassuolo and Inter Milan facing Sampdoria at the San Siro. Champions Juventus return to their quest for a ninth consecutive title at Bologna on Monday, days after their Italian Cup final defeat to Napoli.

Maurizio Sarri's side hold a one-point lead on second-placed Lazio, while Inter Milan are third, nine points adrift of the leaders. In the battle for Champions League places Atalanta are fourth, three points ahead of Roma, with Napoli sixth a further six points adrift.

At the bottom of the table SPAL and Brescia occupy the last two places and look destined to play in Serie B next season.

But five teams look set to battle to avoid the final relegation berth with just three points between Udinese in 14th position and 18th-placed Lecce. —AFP