

Sports

Lewandowski hits 4; Bayern Munich win 7-goal thriller

Augsburg miss the chance to top the table

BERLIN: Robert Lewandowski netted four goals - including the decisive added-time penalty - as defending Bundesliga champions Bayern Munich survived a fight-back by Hertha Berlin to seal a nervy 4-3 win on Sunday. Lewandowski, voted European footballer of the year on Friday, scored twice to put Bayern 2-0 up early in the second half only for Hertha to score three times to make it 3-3 with time almost up. However, the Poland hot-shot then converted a 93rd-minute spot kick to seal the win which lifts Bayern to fourth in the table.

The victory got Bayern back to winning ways after their record 23-match winning streak was ended by a 4-1 defeat at Hoffenheim last Sunday. Yet the European champions again looked jaded at the Allianz Arena while Hertha finished the stronger. Fresh from their 3-2 victory over Borussia Dortmund on Wednesday in the German Super Cup, Bayern gave a first start to US junior international Chris Richards, 20, at right-back. In the build-up, Bayern announced the signing of defensive midfielder Marc Roca from Espanyol to replace Thiago Alcantara who has joined Liverpool.

Hertha fight back

Bayern made a nervy start as Hertha's Colombia striker Jhon Cordoba beat Manuel Neuer on 15 minutes with a fierce strike, but he was offside. Thomas Mueller headed the ball in the Hertha net on 36 minutes, but the VAR ruled he was offside. Lewandowski first struck on 40 minutes when he fired home the rebound after Hertha goalkeeper

Alexander Schwolow had saved his initial header. It was Lewandowski's 100th Bundesliga goal for Bayern at Munich's Allianz Arena. It was 1-0 at the break, but the Poland star doubled his tally six minutes into the second half when he turned through 180 degrees to fire home after Richard's pass. Hertha pulled a goal back when Cordoba struck with a header on 59 minutes from a free-kick by Matheus Cunha, who has been called up by Brazil.

The 21-year-old Cunha then made it 2-2 after dribbling past Jerome Boateng, then beat David Alaba and Benjamin Pavard before firing past Neuer on 71 minutes. Bayern again pulled ahead when Mueller met Alaba's free-kick and served up a tap-in for Lewandowski on 85 minutes. There was still time for Hertha replacement Jessie Ngankam to header an equaliser past Neuer on 88 minutes. However, Lewandowski netted the decisive spot kick just before the whistle after being pulled down by Berlin defender Maximilian Mittelstaedt.

Augsburg miss top spot

Earlier, second-placed Augsburg missed the chance to top the table as they were held to a goalless draw at Wolfsburg, who had a first-half goal disallowed. Having beaten Union Berlin and shocked Borussia Dortmund in their opening German league games, a third straight win would have sent Augsburg top ahead of RB Leipzig, who routed bottom side Schalke 4-0 on Saturday. With coach Heiko Herrlich missing on the sidelines due to a lung problem, Augsburg's attack failed to find the net at Wolfsburg,



MUNICH: Hertha Berlin's Colombian forward Jhon Cordoba (right) and Bayern Munich's German defender Jerome Boateng vie for the ball during the German first division Bundesliga football match FC Bayern Munich vs Hertha Berlin on October 4, 2020. —AFP

who have drawn their opening three league games. The hosts had a first-half goal by midfielder Josip

Brekalo ruled out as the VAR spotted striker Wout Weghorst offside in the build up. —AFP

Liverpool, United lick wounds after humbling defeats

LONDON: Liverpool became the first reigning English champions to concede seven goals in a league match since 1953 and Manchester United were thrashed 6-1 as inquests started after a humiliating day for England's two most successful clubs. Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side thought they had grabbed the headlines for all the wrong reasons against Tottenham on Sunday but Jurgen Klopp's team upstaged them in a scarcely credible 7-2 defeat against Aston Villa.

Klopp can argue Liverpool's defeat is a bizarre one-off after an impressive start to the season but United appear to be in deep trouble as the international transfer deadline looms. Liverpool, who romped to the title by 18 points in the 2019/20 campaign, went into their match at an empty Villa Park with a 100 percent record in the league this season.

They were missing first-choice goalkeeper Alisson Becker through injury and were also without Sadio Mane and Thiago Alcantara, who have both tested positive for coronavirus, but were still expected to have too much for their opponents.

But Villa forward Ollie Watkins scored a first-half hat-trick and Jack Grealish had a hand in five goals as Liverpool's high line was torn apart by the home side's counter-attacking. "It was unexpected but it happened tonight," said Klopp, whose side lost just four league matches over the previous two seasons.

"We put all our rubbish things and mistakes in one game and hopefully we can start again." The Liverpool boss said he was desperate to get his players back on the training pitch but they are now heading off for an international break before gathering again for a tough-looking challenge at table-topping Everton. "I would love to have a training session tomorrow and Tuesday and to talk about it, but the boys go back off to international duty," Klopp said. "Hopefully they come back healthy and we use the two days to prepare for Everton."

United woes

While Liverpool will hope their result is an anomaly, there is plenty of evidence that United have lost their way. The Old Trafford club have not competed for the Premier League title since Alex Ferguson retired in 2013 but hopes were high after they finished third last season.

That optimism has been misplaced, with United soundly beaten 3-1 at home by Crystal Palace and incredibly



BIRMINGHAM: Aston Villa's Brazilian midfielder Douglas Luiz (hidden) vies with Liverpool's Portuguese striker Diogo Jota during the English Premier League football match between Aston Villa and Liverpool at Villa Park in Birmingham on October 4, 2020. —AFP

fortunate to escape with a 3-2 victory at Brighton last weekend. But they sank to a new low at an echoing Old Trafford on Sunday as Harry Kane and Son Heung-min ran riot, scoring two goals apiece against the home side, who were reduced to 10 men after the first-half sending-off of Anthony Martial.

Former United defender Gary Neville, now a TV pundit, described their performance as "an absolute shambles" as they matched their 6-1

loss to Manchester City in 2011. United's players were fortunate there were no supporters in the ground to witness the rout. Club captain Harry Maguire apologised to fans in an Instagram post, saying the performance was "unacceptable" and Marcus Rashford said there were no excuses. Solskjaer took the blame for the humiliation, which once again raises major questions about whether he is the man to restore the club to their former glories. —AFP

Barca held by Sevilla; drop first points of the season

MADRID: Barcelona dropped their first points of the season on Sunday as Sevilla made a statement of intent in La Liga's title race by drawing 1-1 at Camp Nou. Luuk de Jong gave Sevilla an early lead and while Philippe Coutinho leveled two minutes later, the visitors were arguably the better side in a frantic contest.

The draw brings an end to Ronald Koeman's perfect start as Barca coach but he might not be too displeased with a point, even if his team also had chances to snatch a winner. "We were less energetic than in the first two games but that also depends on the opposition," said Koeman. "They have defended well." Real Madrid are three points ahead of Barcelona but having played a game more, after their 2-0 win over Levante earlier on Sunday sent them to the top of the table.

Goals from Vinicius Junior and Karim Benzema sealed victory for the reigning champions, who have now won three games on the bounce. Neither Madrid nor Barca are expected to be busy on the last day of the transfer window on Monday, with both clubs finding themselves financially restricted by the coronavirus pandemic. But some players

could be allowed to leave and it was noticeable that Koeman left Ousmane Dembele on the bench, even as his team searched for a winner. Koeman preferred to bring on the youthful duo of Francisco Trincao and Pedri.

"Things can happen," said Koeman afterwards when asked about Dembele. "Right now he's a Barca player, let's see. There is one day left, players can come in or go out." Antoine Griezmann also offered very little down the right but the Frenchman will be given more time under Koeman. Luka Jovic was dropped to the bench by Zinedine Zidane and not brought on, but he is expected to stay after the departure of Borja Mayoral to Roma. De Jong put Sevilla in front after eight minutes as Barcelona failed to react to a short corner and then failed to clear, the ball sitting up nicely for the striker to smash in.

'We had to suffer'

But the lead lasted less than two minutes, a brilliant, curved ball over the top by Lionel Messi causing panic in the Sevilla defense, where Jesus Navas slid to intercept but only teed up the resurgent Coutinho to finish. Messi sent a bending shot past the far post and Ansu Fati hit straight at the goalkeeper but Sevilla were the ones in the ascendancy.

Barcelona struggled to get out from the back under pressure from Sevilla's high press and Ronald Araujo almost scored an own goal, spared by the post after Youssef En-Nesyri's run down the left. Trincao and Pedri were both thrown on by

places back. Andre Villas-Boas' Marseille have not won in the four matches since they beat Paris Saint-Germain last month while Lyon's winless run already stretches to five matches in the six-game-old season. The hosts have drawn four of those matches and struggled to break down Marseille even though the away side played most of the match with 10 men following Dmitri Payet's 19th-minute red card for a high challenge on Leo Dubois.

Marseille had taken the lead thanks to talisman Payet's smart finish just three minutes before he was sent off, but Houssem Aouar leveled from the penalty spot just before the half hour mark and that's how the scores remained. Aouar, who was set to be leaving in the summer transfer window which closes on Monday, thought he had also



BARCELONA: Barcelona's Brazilian midfielder Philippe Coutinho (right) scores during the Spanish League football match between FC Barcelona and Sevilla FC at the Camp Nou on October 4, 2020. —AFP

Koeman and Trincao might have won it after being put through by Messi late on. But Sevilla goalkeeper Bono made the stop to earn his team a deserved point. Madrid, meanwhile, registered a third clean sheet in four games to see off Levante as Vinicius and a late strike from Benzema sealed victory.

"We had to suffer," said Zinedine Zidane. "We had chances in the second half to kill the game and that would have made it different. We suffered a lot because they also had chances." Zidane's team have become something of a defensive juggernaut after their solidity and resilience formed the basis of their successful title bid last term. —AFP

scored the winner with 14 minutes remaining only to see his goal ruled out for what looked like a soft foul on Marseille keeper Steve Mandanda.

"In the circumstances it's a good point which gives us some confidence," said Villas Boas. "I'm happy because the players gave everything, we rediscovered the spirit that we had last season." Earlier Rennes clung on to top spot in Ligue 1 after scrabbling to a 2-2 home with Reims which allowed Lille to move level on points with the leaders with a 3-0 win at Strasbourg. Rennes were leading at the break and were set to go back clear in first place but Boulaye Dia barged through the home defense before slotting home the goal that would give Reims a point in the 66th minute. —AFP

Napoli no-show lets, Milan, Atalanta pull clear; Inter held 1-1

MILAN: Napoli risk a 3-0 forfeit for failing to turn up for their Serie A clash against Juventus amid a row over coronavirus protocol in Italy on Sunday, allowing title rivals Atalanta and AC Milan move top of Serie A ahead of Inter Milan who were held at Lazio. Gennaro Gattuso's Napoli had been top of the league going into weekend's action with two wins in as many games as they target a third Serie A title and first in 30 years.

But Eljif Elmas and Piotr Zielinski's positive coronavirus tests forced the southerners into home isolation on the instructions of health authorities in the Campania region. The Lega Serie A insisted all the health protocols were in place for the match to safely go ahead as scheduled for Turin at 1845 GMT.

"(Napoli president Aurelio) De Laurentiis asked me to postpone the match, I replied that there are regulations to be respected," Juve president Andrea Agnelli told Sky Sport Italia. "A 3-0 win? I always prefer to win on the field." Agnelli added whose side had four points after two games as they chase a 10th title in a row. Amid the turmoil, Andrea Pirlo's champions prepared their game as usual, naming a starting list, despite solid indications of a Napoli no-show for the third game of the season.

The Juventus bus pulled into the Allianz Stadium an hour beforehand, with the players remaining in their tracksuits on the pitch, along with referees and a handful of supporters under the rain. The match was eventually abandoned 45 minutes after its scheduled start time, with Napoli's fate now depending on a meeting of Italian league officials today. "Honestly, there are people who are competent to deal with situations and problems of this type," said Inter Milan coach Antonio Conte.

Serie A runners-up Inter were held 1-1 in a bad-tempered game against Lazio in Rome where both teams finished a man down. Lazio played the final 20 minutes without last season's top Serie A scorer Ciro Immobile, who was sent off for hitting out at Arturo Vidal, with Inter's Stefano Sensi also seeing red with minutes to go. But Conte was happy to take a point from the Stadio Olimpico before the Milan derby. Lautaro Martinez's first-half goal was cancelled out by Sergej Milinkovic-Savic's header ten minutes into the second half.

13 goals in three games

Atalanta are top of the table with a maximum nine points alongside AC Milan, two points ahead of Sassuolo and Inter. Atalanta crushed Cagliari 5-2 in their first game in Bergamo this season, bringing their tally to 13 goals in three games played. Luis Muriel opened the scoring after seven minutes with Papu Gomez blasting in the second from a distance just before the half hour mark, for his fourth goal in three games. Uruguayan defender Diego Godin pulled a goal back for Cagliari on his debut since moving from Inter. But Mario Pasalic and Duvan Zapata also scored in a five-minute spell before the break, with Sam Lammers completing the rout after Joao Pedro scored.

Joao Pedro reduced the deficit for the Sardinians after the break but Sam Lammers marked his first home game with an impressive solo effort with nine minutes to go. "The score could have been much bigger," said Gasperini. "Now the (international) break interrupts this momentum. Hopefully we'll pick up where we left off." AC Milan beat promote Spezia 3-0 to extend their unbeaten run to 15 games. Portuguese Rafael Leao scored two-second half goals, the first off a Hakan Calhanoglu free-kick just before the hour. —AFP

Marseille and Lyon's struggles continue as Rennes stay top

PARIS: Marseille and Lyon continued their shaky starts to the season on Sunday with a 1-1 draw that leaves both sides languishing in mid-table in Ligue 1. Marseille are 10th on nine points following the draw at the Groupama stadium while Rudi Garcia's Lyon, who reached the semi-finals of last season's Champions League, are two points and four