

Photo of the Day



Cameron Burrell trains in Houston, Texas. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Havertz stars as Chelsea cement hold on fourth place

LONDON: Chelsea cemented their grip on fourth place in the Premier League as Kai Havertz struck twice to seal a 2-0 win over struggling Fulham on Saturday. Thomas Tuchel's side warmed up for Wednesday's Champions League semi-final second leg against Real Madrid with a ruthless display at Stamford Bridge.

Havertz netted in each half to lift Chelsea six points clear of fifth-placed West Ham in the race to qualify for next season's Champions League via a top-four finish. Chelsea are looking up not down after they closed the gap on third-placed Leicester to just two points with four games left.

"We were spot on. It was what we demanded from ourselves. We showed the pride we are capable of, to do it in between two big games," Tuchel said. "We knew Fulham gives everyone a hard time. I'm beyond happy. There was no lack of concentration."

Havertz's seventh and eighth goals of an underwhelming first season at Chelsea were a welcome sign the German playmaker is finally emerging from his funk. Since arriving from Bayer Leverkusen, Havertz has endured a bout of coronavirus and a host of difficult performances that raised doubts about his desire.

But the 21-year-old thrived in the false nine role against Fulham in an indication he could still have a part to play in Chelsea's bid for a memorable end to the season. "For sure, this is what we want if someone gets his chance. He scored two decisive goals and he was involved along with Timo Werner," Tuchel said.

Just as significant as Havertz's improvement, Chelsea remained rock solid at the back and have kept 17 clean sheets in 23 games under Tuchel. The German coach's only worry was the sight of the influential



LONDON: Chelsea's German head coach Thomas Tuchel (left) celebrates with Chelsea's Scottish midfielder Billy Gilmour after the English Premier League football match between Chelsea and Fulham at Stamford Bridge in London on Saturday. — AFP

Mason Mount being treated for a back injury which he played through before being taken off in the closing stages.

"I hope really that Mason is not a big thing and hopefully he can fully recover for Real Madrid," Tuchel said. Chelsea have been revitalized by Tuchel since he replaced the sacked Frank Lampard in January. The former Paris Saint-Germain boss arrived with Chelsea languishing in ninth place, but he has led them back

into the top four and earned an FA Cup final date with Leicester in May.

The icing on the cake for Tuchel would be reaching the Champions League final, with Chelsea hosting Real on Wednesday as they look to capitalise on the 1-1 first-leg draw in Madrid. Third-bottom Fulham sit nine points from safety with four games remaining and look set for relegation to the Championship.

Havertz hits his stride

It was 42 years since Fulham last won at Stamford Bridge, but they almost snatched a shock lead when Antonee Robinson's 20-yard rocket was tipped over by Edouard Mendy. Chelsea responded to that threat with a superbly crafted opener in the 10th minute.

Thiago Silva's long pass was beautifully controlled by Mount and the midfielder slipped a pin-point ball through to Havertz, who slotted a composed finish into the far corner. Fulham weren't out of the hunt and Ademola Lookman's low drive was pushed away at full stretch by Mendy.

Hakim Ziyech's shot was well saved by Fulham keeper Alphonse Areola before Mendy alertly parried Ola Aina's strike after it took a wicked deflection off Reece James. But Havertz was beginning to hit his stride at last and he doubled Chelsea's lead in the 49th minute. Ben Chilwell's long pass picked out Havertz and he glided away from two defenders to find Werner. Werner played a deft pass through to Havertz and he capped the flowing move with a clinical finish. For all his critics in an uneven season, the much-maligned Werner is the first player to register double figures for both goals and assists in his debut season for Chelsea since Eden Hazard in 2012-13. — AFP

Selby to face Murphy in world snooker final

LONDON: Former winners Mark Selby and Shaun Murphy will meet in the final of this year's snooker World Championship after coming through tough semi-finals on Saturday. Selby saw off Stuart Bingham 17-15 in a match that was paused with Selby leading 16-15 to allow Murphy and Kyren Wilson to complete their match at Sheffield's Crucible Theatre.

Selby broke the deadlock when his match resumed when a plant set up a break of 41 only to lose position. And a lucky red allowed qualifier Bingham to lay a snooker which set him up for a break of 59. With all the reds off the table, Bingham lost position but laid a snooker behind the black. But Selby made a superb escape and eventually laid a brilliant snooker on the green that saw Bingham give away several fouls that left his opponent in front. Selby, a three-time world champion, then cleared to the pink to complete a 17-15 win.

Earlier Murphy, the 2005 world champion, defeated Wilson 17-12 in another all-English contest having been 10-4 behind earlier in the best of 33 frames match. Murphy, who won the final three frames of the morning session to draw level at 12-12, was unstoppable in the evening as he reeled off five consecutive breaks of over 50 apiece.

His 78 put him ahead for the first time in the match since the opening frame before an unlucky in-off by Wilson paved the way for a break of 91 that saw Murphy go two frames ahead. Wilson's missed black let Murphy in to make a break of 117 before his 77 left him one frame away from victory at 16-12 come the mid-session interval. An extended safety exchange after the match resumed ended with Murphy making a decisive break of 58. — AFP

Montreal hold Columbus, Real Salt Lake beat Kansas City

LOS ANGELES: CF Montreal stretched their early unbeaten run in the fledgling Major League Soccer season on Saturday, playing to a goalless draw against MLS Cup champions Columbus Crew. Coach Wilfried Nancy said Montreal, hosting the match in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, as Canadian teams continue to be shut out of their home grounds because of the coronavirus pandemic, could have come out with a big win.

Despite multiple opportunities, they couldn't get a shot past Columbus keeper Eloy Room. "We could have scored three goals," Nancy said. "We had the possibility to be better but we didn't finish. But, again, I'm happy with what I saw." Mustafa Kizza had a solid chance in the 26th minute but fired right at the feet of Room. Room dived to save a shot in injury time from Finnish substitute Lassi Lappalainen. Meanwhile Montreal keeper Clement Diop was never severely tested.

The Crew, who drew 2-2 against Monterrey of Mexico in CONCACAF Champions League play on Wednesday, made five changes to their starting lineup and failed to generate a shot in the first half. But they thought they had snuck out the victory late when Bradley Wright-Phillips found the back of the net only for the effort to be ruled offside.

"We showed some good character today," Crew coach Caleb Porter said. "We bent but didn't break. Good teams, on a day where we're clearly not sharp, not playing our game, not creating chances, you have to find a way to hang on and we certainly hung on."

Elsewhere, Jesus Medina and Valentin Castellanos both scored as New York City FC downed 10-man Philadelphia Union 2-0. Anton Tinnerholm set up Medina's early opener for NYCFC, who have won twice since losing at DC United in their season opener.

Philadelphia, winners of the Supporters' Shield last season as the team with the best regular-season record, saw Jose Andres Martinez sent off upon video review for an elbow toward Castellanos' head in the 15th minute.

Martinez was already scheduled to miss the Union's quarter-final, second-leg clash Atlanta United in the CONCACAF Champions League because of yellow card accumulations and will now miss their next MLS match at Chicago next Saturday. The Union take a 3-0 lead into their Champions League second leg clash with Atlanta tomorrow.

Fans return in Salt Lake

Real Salt Lake welcomed fans back to their Rio Tinto stadium with a 3-1 victory over Sporting Kansas City. Rubio Rubin struck twice as Real Salt Lake scored three straight goals after Alan Pulido opened the scoring for Sporting with his first goal of the 2021 season.

With up to 10,000 fans allowed now under local health and safety protocols, Salt Lake announced a crowd of 9,842. They created a rowdy atmosphere, but it was Sporting who struck first when Khiry Shelton fired a cross through the penalty area and Gianluca Busio skipped over the ball to give Pulido plenty of time to finish.

Real Salt Lake pulled level before halftime as substitute Andrew Brody whipped in a cross that Damir Kreilach headed in. Rubin fired the hosts ahead in the 52nd with a shot between the legs of Sporting goalkeeper John Pulskamp. He bagged his second goal in the 77th, eluding two defenders on the way to beating Pulskamp. — AFP



LOUISVILLE: Medina Spirit #8, ridden by jockey John Velazquez, leads the field around the first during the 147th running of the Kentucky Derby at Churchill Downs on Saturday in Louisville, Kentucky. — AFP

Baffert makes history as Medina Spirit wins 147th Kentucky Derby

WASHINGTON: Medina Spirit won the 147th Kentucky Derby Saturday at Churchill Downs, giving trainer Bob Baffert a record seventh victory in the US flat racing classic. Puerto Rican jockey John Velazquez piloted Medina Spirit to the front early and held on to win the first jewel of US racing's Triple Crown for the fourth time as overwhelming pre-race favorite Essential Quality finished fourth.

"I cannot believe he won this race," Baffert said of 12-1 shot Medina Spirit, who was second in his previous start in the Santa Anita Derby on April 3. "He won this race. That little horse, it was all guts." Velazquez said he and Baffert had decided to take Medina Spirit to the front early, and the strategy paid off. "Johnny had him in a perfect spot, and if you have him on the lead he'll fight."

Mandaloun, a 26-1 shot trained by Brad Cox and ridden by US-based French jockey Florent Geroux, applied the most pressure in the final straight, but settled for second ahead of Hot Rod Charlie, trained by Doug O'Neill and ridden by another US-based Frenchman, Flavien Prat. The bigger disappointment for Cox, trying to become the first Louisville-born trainer to win the Kentucky Derby, must be the failure of Essential Quality.

Unbeaten in five prior starts, the gray colt owned by Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum's Godolphin stables left the global racing and breeding powerhouse still seeking a Kentucky Derby win after 12 attempts. Baffert moved out of a tie with legendary trainer Ben Jones for most career Kentucky Derby wins. His six prior winners of the 1 1/4-mile race for 3-year-olds at Churchill Downs included Triple Crown winners Justify and American Pharoah.

Baffert admitted he didn't have the same kind of expectations for Medina Spirit that he had for those greats. "I'm so spoiled bringing these heavy duty horses here," he said. "But that little horse has such a heart." The Triple Crown chase resumes on May 15 with the Preakness at Pimlico in Baltimore, and concludes June 5 with the Belmont Stakes in New York. — AFP