

PSG still need time to rule in Europe: Blanc

Diminished Real Madrid exceptional: Benitez

PARIS, Oct 22, (Agencies): Real Madrid coach Rafa Benitez described his injury-hit team's performance in holding Paris Saint-Germain to a 0-0 draw at the Parc des Princes on Wednesday as "exceptional".

"We deserved to win the match. Given the circumstances the performance of the team was not good, it was exceptional," said Benitez after the Group A clash that failed to live up to expectations as a spectacle but edged both clubs a step closer to qualification for the last 16.

"I was convinced the team would play well and try to win the game. We had chances to win it, more than them, and decent control of the match against a team who are not easy to play against."

"As coach I am very satisfied with the performance of the players."

Real were without Gareth Bale, Karim Benzema and James Rodriguez for the trip to the French capital, along with Pepe, so their attacking potential was

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greatly reduced, although they could still call upon their all-time leading scorer in Cristiano Ronaldo.

The Portuguese superstar came as close as anyone to winning the game with a 72nd-minute volley that flew just wide, but the point keeps Real on course for qualification for the last 16 from Group A and makes them favourites to win the section.

They host PSG in the Spanish capital in a fortnight, with both clubs on seven points, four points clear of Malmo, who beat Shakhtar Donetsk 1-0 in Sweden in the night's other game.

Critics who label Benitez an overly defensive coach will point out that Madrid failed to score for the first time in 41 Champions League group games since a 2-0 defeat to Juventus back in 2008, when Bernd Schuster was in charge.

Meanwhile, Paris St Germain coach Laurent Blanc has urged patience after his side missed the chance to put down a big marker in a stalemate at home to Real Madrid in the Champions League on Wednesday.

The French capital club, who have never been champions of Europe, enjoyed most of the possession against the 10-times winners but were toothless up front and had to be content with a share of the points.

After three games they are level on seven points with Real in Group A but face the Spanish giants away in their next fixture so are unlikely to top the section.



Real Madrid's Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo reacts after missing a goal opportunity during the UEFA Champions League football match Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) vs Real Madrid, on Oct 21, at the Parc des Princes Stadium in Paris. (AFP)

Red Devils prepare for Van Gaal's test against Citizens

Arsenal eye win against Everton for top spot

LONDON, Oct 22, (RTRS): Manchester United and Manchester City must switch their focus from the Champions League to the Premier League when they meet at Old Trafford on Sunday in a derby that Louis van Gaal says will show whether United are true title contenders.

United face City after labouring to a 1-1 draw with CSKA Moscow in the cold Russian capital on Wednesday while City make the short trip across town basking in the glow of their late 2-1 home win over Sevilla.

United must be ready because their manager Van Gaal believes a win for his side is vitally important.

"We have to be more consistent so next week when we win against

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Manchester City then we can say 'OK, now we think maybe about title aspirations'," the Dutchman said after last week's 3-0 win over Everton.

However Arsenal could be top for the first time in nearly two years by the time the two Manchester clubs meet on Sunday if they beat Everton on Saturday evening.

Arsenal have been in electrifying form recently with three successive wins including a 3-0 victory over Manchester United and a 2-0 Champions League win over Bayern Munich, and now face an Everton side, eager to put last week's defeat by United out of their minds.

With nine matches played, City top the table with 21 points, followed by Arsenal and United on 19, with West Ham United a further two back on 17.

West Ham's credentials will come under the spotlight when they face champions Chelsea, who are 11th having won just three of their nine games so far, one of those being last week's 2-0 home win over strugglers Aston Villa.

Two managers will also come under even more intense scrutiny than usual — Jurgen Klopp, who will enjoy his first Premier League home match when Southampton visit Anfield and Sam Allardyce, in charge of his first home match as Sunderland's boss when they take on his old club Newcastle United in the Tyne-Wear derby.

Klopp, whose first game ended in a



Manchester United's Anthony Martial wins a header over CSKA's Zoran Tosic during their Champions League Group B soccer match between CSKA Moscow and Manchester United at the Arena Khimki Stadium in Moscow, Russia, on Oct 21. (AP)

0-0 draw at Tottenham Hotspur last week, will make his home debut against Rubin Kazan of Russia in the Europa League on Thursday, something of a dress rehearsal before Sunday's main act.

Allardyce, who briefly played for Sunderland in the early 1980s and managed Newcastle for eight months eight years ago, has a huge task ahead saving the bottom club from relegation.

Getting their first win of the season against their arch-rivals would be the perfect place to start after his first match ended in a 1-0 defeat at West Bromwich Albion last week.

Seventh-placed Spurs currently boast the longest unbeaten run in the league having gone eight games since their only loss, a 1-0 defeat at Manchester United on the opening day. They face Anderlecht in the Europa

League in Brussels on Thursday then travel to Bournemouth, crushed 5-1 at Manchester City last week without three key long-term injuries, Callum Wilson, Tyrone Mings and Max Gradel, all out for the season.

The clubs have only ever met once before when Bournemouth, then in the third tier, beat top flight Spurs 3-1 in an FA Cup fifth-round match in February 1957.

Inter face Palermo; Empoli, Genoa clash

Salah an issue, Roma visit Fiorentina

ROME, Oct 22, (AP): Mohamed Salah's move from Fiorentina to Roma has been a hot topic of debate ahead of an enticing matchup between the two clubs in Serie A this weekend.

FIFA opened a breach of contract investigation last month regarding Salah, which could result in the player being sanctioned and a transfer ban for Chelsea, which holds his rights.

Fiorentina challenged Chelsea's right to let the Egypt winger join Roma on a season-long loan in August. Salah scored nine goals in all competitions over the second half of last season on loan at Fiorentina, which claims it had an agreement to extend his stay.

"The matter is certainly not over", Fiorentina chief executive Sandro Mencucci said this week. "FIFA will decide if Salah's behavior was fair or not. If it wasn't fair then he can be sanctioned as FIFA deems fit".

FIFA typically takes months to rule on contractual breach claims. If

Palermo vs Inter beIN SPORTS 15HD, 13HD, 16HD
21:45 local (Saturday)
Juve vs Atalanta beIN SPORTS 14HD
17:00 local (Sunday)
Chievo vs Napoli beIN SPORTS 14HD
22:45 local (Sunday)

proven, sanctions include four-month bans for players and one-year bans on clubs registering new players.

"Everyone has their own view. But we don't have anything to do with this case", Roma sporting director Walter Sabatini responded. "Salah won't be banned because even the minimal reasons don't exist to do so".

Salah has scored four goals in eight Serie A matches for Roma, which is one point behind surprise leader Fiorentina.

Inter Milan, which is level on points with Roma, visits Palermo on Saturday and could take the provisional lead before

'Some made the wrong choices'

Allegri slams selfish Juve players

TURIN, Italy, Oct 22, (AFP): Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri slammed the selfish players whose misses heaped unwelcome pressure on the Italian champions following a scoreless draw with Champions League rivals Borussia Monchengladbach on Wednesday.

After beating Manchester City (2-1) away and dominating Sevilla in a 2-0 win last time out, Juve, last season's beaten finalists, were fully expected to claim their third consecutive win to keep City at arm's length.

But a determined performance from the revived Bundesliga side, City's last-gasp 2-1 win over Sevilla at the Etihad Stadium and a string of misses in Turin means Juve's lead on Manuel Pellegrini's side at the top of Group D has been cut to just one

point.

After frustrating the Bianconeri in Turin, Andre Schubert's side will finally causing an upset when the Italian champions visit in their next Champions League outing next month.

Certain to be given a tough game by City in Turin in their penultimate game before Juventus then travel to Sevilla, it is a prospect Allegri appears to have already considered when he emerged angry and pointing the finger at unnamed players after Wednesday's fixture.

"We had three situations in which

we had players that were better placed in goalscoring positions," said Allegri, who in an earlier interview with Mediaset claimed some players "made the wrong choices because they were selfish".

He added: "Maybe they didn't see they were there, but these are things we have to improve on. We had to deal with a lot of counter attacks, and then if you make a bundle of errors,

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winning becomes difficult. "We're making too many mistakes in the final 30 metres of the pitch and not scoring enough."

It is the second successive game Juve have failed to find the net, following a scoreless draw in the 'Derby d'Italia' away to Inter Milan at the San Siro on Sunday.

"I would have preferred to win", Silvio Berlusconi said, before being asked about Milan's poor start. "I'm not commenting. You know the story. When you win you talk, when you lose you keep quiet".

Milan has won just three matches under new coach Sinisa Mihajlovic, and striker Mario Balotelli remains questionable due to a groin injury.

On Sunday, Milan hosts a Sassuolo side that is surprisingly in fifth place. Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri was widely criticized for putting forward Paulo Dybala on for only the final 10 minutes of a 0-0 draw with Borussia Monchengladbach in the Champions League on Wednesday.



Allegri

with 20 goals, followed by Napoli with 18 and Fiorentina with 15.

The only scoreless matches were Carpi-Napoli in Week 5 and Inter-Juventus last weekend.

In 1985, by contrast, Hellas Verona won the league with eight scoreless draws in 30 matches.

AC Milan is struggling in 13th place and was submerged into more misery with a 1-0 loss to Inter in a friendly derby Wednesday.

Prized midfielder Geoffrey Kondogbia scored his first goal since joining Inter in the Trofeo Luigi Berlusconi, an exhibition created to honor the father of Milan president Silvio Berlusconi.

Comfortable lead

Bayern shoot for 1K victory

BERLIN, Oct 22, (Agencies): Bayern Munich can become the first club to celebrate its 1,000th Bundesliga victory when it hosts Cologne on Saturday.

Bayern had its 12-match winning streak in all competitions ended by Arsenal in the Champions League on Tuesday but at home it holds a comfortable seven-point lead ahead of Borussia Dortmund.

Bayern claimed yet another record last weekend as it became the first side to start the Bundesliga with nine wins. Such is the side's dominance in recent seasons that history books are providing the yardstick by which its achievements are measured.

Borussia Moenchengladbach reserve team coach Andre Schubert was only supposed to be a stop-gap solution when he took over from Lucien Favre at the Bundesliga strugglers last month but after four straight league wins and a Champions League draw, the players may be dancing to his tune a while longer.

The 44-year-old was put in charge after Favre resigned in September following a miserable start to the season that saw Gladbach lose five straight.

Schubert has steadied the ship, leading them to four consecutive league victories and saw them earn their first point in the Champions League with a goalless draw at Juventus on Wednesday despite the absence of several players,

Hoffenheim vs Hamburg beIN

SPORTS 4HD

21:30 local

Bayern vs Cologne beIN SPORTS

15HD, 14HD

16:30 local (Saturday)

including winger Patrick Herrmann, through injury.

Victory over Schalke 04 on Sunday would further improve his chances of earning a long-term contract and club bosses are eager to ride the new-found success under the little-known coach for as long as it lasts.

"I have often said that Andre is doing a great job. But we want to find a new coach in our own time and we are currently orientating ourselves", said Gladbach sports director Max Eberl following their draw in Turin.

"The new coach could also be Andre Schubert. I never ruled that out."

Only days earlier, Eberl had hinted Schubert was their only candidate, saying: "Andre's work is outstanding and argument enough. We are currently not negotiating with other coaches".

Gladbach finished third last season under Favre but lost their way at the start of the current campaign following the departure of Germany internationals Max Kruse and Christoph Kramer in the close season.

'We're not at our sharpest'

Lloyd scores in 85th minute, US ties Brazil

SEATTLE, Oct 22, (AP): Leave it to Carli Lloyd to come through for the United States women and keep them from suffering their first home defeat in more than a decade.

Lloyd scored in the 85th minute and the World Cup champions pulled out a 1-1 tie with Brazil on Wednesday night after trailing from the opening moments in the latest stop on the American's victory tour.

She got her foot to a cross from defender Meghan Klingenberg and the shot beat goalkeeper Luciana, deflected off the underside of the crossbar and into the net. The US was on the verge of suffering its first home loss in more than a decade.

"Overall I think it's a good build up. Obviously we're coming off a World Cup win but we're not at our sharpest," Lloyd said. "We're kind of rebuilding and there are a lot of new faces out there. ... Overall I think it's good stuff and we can build off it and these are the teams we want to play against."

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The Americans extended their home unbeaten streak to 101 matches, their last loss coming on Nov 6, 2004, against Denmark in Philadelphia during a post-Olympic victory tour after the 2004 Athens Games.

And it was Lloyd making sure the streak continued. Lloyd was the Golden Ball winner at the Women's World Cup as the most outstanding player and capped the championship with the fastest hat trick in tournament history in the final against Japan. Lloyd has a career-high 17 goals this season.

She was in the right place against the Brazilians to finally capitalize after the US missed a number of chances earlier.

"I thought we got better in the second half and created a lot more chances and got stronger," US coach Jill Ellis said.

Brazilian defender Monica scored on a



Rafaelle #4 of Brazil heads the ball against Carli Lloyd #10 of the United States at CenturyLink Field on Oct 21, in Seattle, Washington. (AFP)

header off a corner kick in the third minute. The header beat goalkeeper Hope Solo and was the earliest goal allowed by the US in at least two years.

Alex Morgan had two good chances in the first half, missing wide on a header minutes after the opening goal and later had a left-footed volley saved by Luciana. Megan Rapinoe had a scoring chance in the 69th minute off a counterattack but her left-footed shot was easily saved.

The match against Brazil was the fifth game of the US victory tour after winning the Women's World Cup this summer just a couple hours north in Vancouver, British Columbia. The two sides will play Sunday in Orlando, Florida.

It was also the next stage of evaluation for the US as Ellis begins to look at options for the January training camp from which the roster for Olympic qualifying will be selected. Ellis got a look at a few new faces to the national team pool with NWSL MVP Crystal Dunn playing 72 minutes, and Jaelene Hinkle and Samantha Mewis coming on in the second half.