



Flamengo's goalkeeper Diego Alves (center left), Diego Ribas and Everton Ribeiro lift up the trophy as they celebrate with teammates the Brazilian soccer championship at the end of a match against Ceara at the Maracana stadium in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on Nov 27. Days after winning the Copa Libertadores championship, Flamengo won the national championship for the seventh time in its history. (AP)

Champions Flamengo win again with Bruno Henrique hat trick

Bruno Henrique got a second-half hat trick as Brazilian champions Flamengo came back from a goal down to beat Ceara 4-1 on Wednesday.

The Rio de Janeiro side are enjoying their best season in decades, having already wrapped up the league title and the Copa Libertadores, South America's equivalent of the Champions League.

However, they surprisingly went behind when Thiago Galhardo silenced the home fans at the Maracana stadium by putting the visitors ahead after 27 minutes.

Flamengo, though, roared back in the second half with three goals from Bruno Henrique and a last-minute fourth from Vitorino.

The result leaves Ceara in a precarious position just one point above the relegation zone with three games of the season remaining.

Athletico Paranaense beat Gremio 2-0 at home in Brazil's Serie A on Wednesday to boost their

chances of winning a spot in next year's Copa Libertadores.

The team from Curitiba scored a goal in each half, the first by Marcio Azevedo and the second by Maycon Nikao from the penalty spot, to take all three points from a Gremio side that had Diego Tardelli sent off midway through the second half.

The result takes Athletico to 59 points and level with Gremio, who are a place above them in fourth on goal difference.

The top six qualify for the Libertadores, the South American equivalent of the Champions League.

The small-town team that captured the world's attention when most of their players were killed in an airline crash three years ago were relegated from Brazil's Serie A on Wednesday, bringing an end to a heroic six-year run in the first division.

Chapecoense hit the headlines in November 2016 when their plane crashed on a trip to Colombia for

the final of the Copa Sudamericana, South America's equivalent of the Europa League.

All but six of the 77 people on board were killed, including almost all the players and backroom staff.

With the aid of loan signings and an outpouring of support from across the globe, the team quickly recovered to maintain top flight status in 2017 and 2018, both times managing to outperform bigger teams with more fans and larger budgets.

However, Chapecoense lost 1-0 at home to Botafogo on Wednesday, a result that condemned them to relegation from the Serie A for the first time since they joined the Brazilian football's elite in 2013.

Chapecoense have won just six of their games this season and with three matches remaining they cannot win enough points to stay up.

They join Avai, who were relegated earlier this month. Another two clubs will join them before the season ends on Dec 8. (RTRS)

Owner in conciliatory mood

Napoli 'all friends' again but fans reaction unsure

MILAN, Nov 28, (RTRS): Napoli coach Carlo Ancelotti and club owner Aurelio De Laurentiis insist that har-

home supporters.

A disciplined performance in Wednesday's 1-1 Champions League draw at Liverpool dispelled any doubts about the commitment of the players but they will have to wait until Sunday's Serie A match at home to Bologna to see if they have won over the public.

Although Napoli's fans are famous for their passion, they are also fickle and the average home attendance this season has been 32,592, a modest seventh in Serie A. And, despite their much-improved performance on Tuesday, they still extended their winless run to seven matches in all competitions.

The problem blew up after Di Laurentiis ordered week-long "ritiro" - a widely disliked practice dating from the 1970s where players are confined to a training camp or hotel - following a 2-1 loss to AS Roma on Nov 2.

The players refused to return to the camp following a Champions League match against Salzburg four days later, prompting the club to announce legal action against them. Italian media reported this week that the players would be fined between one quarter and one half of a month's wages.

Still, after Wednesday's performance, De Laurentiis appeared to be in a conciliatory mood.

"This was the perfect response," he said on Twitter, in his first public comments since the crisis broke out.

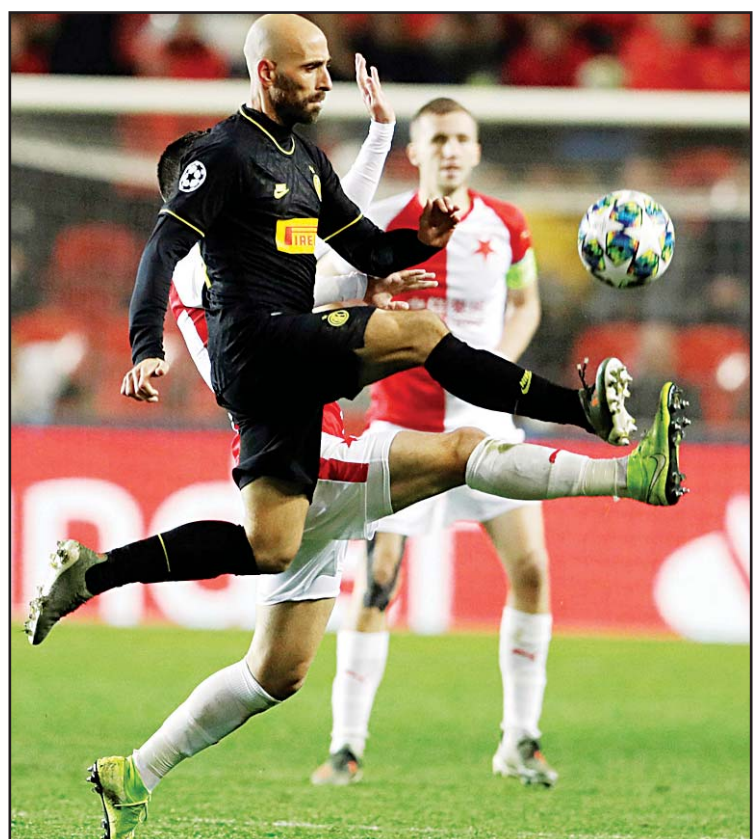
"Well done to the players and the coach. Now, we have to work hard and treat the next games as if they were against Liverpool. Today is not the day to talk about measures taken by the club against the players. We will resolve these issues between us without external pressure."

Ancelotti also insisted that Napoli would recover from a run which has seen them drop to seventh in Serie A table - far removed from their usual role as the main challengers to Juventus.

- Brescia vs Atalanta beIN SPORTS 4HD**
17:00 local (Saturday)
- Genoa vs Torino beIN SPORTS 4HD**
20:00 local (Saturday)
- Fiorentina vs Lecce beIN SPORTS 4HD**
22:45 local (Saturday)
- Juventus vs Sassuolo beIN SPORTS 4HD**
14:30 local (Sunday)
- Inter vs SPAL beIN SPORTS 4HD**
17:00 local (Sunday)
- Parma vs AC Milan beIN SPORTS 8HD**
17:00 local (Sunday)
- Lazio vs Udinese beIN SPORTS 9HD**
17:00 local (Sunday)
- Napoli vs Bologna beIN SPORTS 4HD**
20:00 local (Sunday)
- Verona vs Roma beIN SPORTS 4HD**
22:45 local (Sunday)
- Cagliari vs Sampdoria beIN SPORTS 4HD**
22:45 local (Monday)

mony has returned to the Serie A club following a tumultuous month but it remains to be seen whether they have regained the trust of their fans.

Napoli's San Paolo stadium was only one third full for their previous league game, in the early days of the crisis, when they were held to a 0-0 draw by Genoa in a lukewarm atmosphere amid insults and jeers from the



Inter Milan's Borja Valero (front), kicks the ball during the Champions League Group F soccer match between Slavia Praha and Inter Milan at the Sinobo Stadium in Prague, Czech Republic, on Nov 27. (AP)

Antoine heads back to Atletico in 'crunch' game for Barcelona

Resurgent Real eye top spot

BARCELONA, Nov 28, (RTRS): Antoine Griezmann has had a tough start to life at Barcelona but is finally showing signs of settling in as he prepares for Sunday's crunch clash at title rivals Atletico Madrid, his first game back at his old club since a bitter split.

The French striker was Atletico's top scorer and talisman for five years and appeared to show his loyalty to the club when he rejected a tempting offer to join Barca in 2018 and pledged his future to the Madrid side in a televised documentary.

But a year later he joined Barca for 120 million euros (\$132 million), prompting a legal complaint from Atletico after they emerged the Catalans had negotiated with Griezmann without their permission, leading to the club being fined a paltry 300 euros.

Griezmann might have been wondering if the move had been worth it as he has faced constant criticism for a slow start at the Camp Nou, scoring five times in 17 appearances.

He started on the bench in Wednesday's Champions League match with Borussia Dortmund but an injury to Ousmane Dembele presented him with a chance which he duly took.

Griezmann dovetailed with strike partners Luis Suarez and Lionel Messi in a flowing attacking display and provided a superb finish to a pass from Messi to round off a 3-1 win and end a run of six games without scoring.

The Frenchman's lack of chemistry with the two South Americans has been a big talking point but the trio are starting to click.

"A lot has been said about the



Barcelona's Frenkie de Jong (center), challenges for the ball with Dortmund's Manuel Akanji (left), during a Champions League Group F soccer match between Barcelona and Dortmund at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona, Spain on Nov 27. (AP)

- Celta vs Valladolid beIN SPORTS 6HD**
23:00 local
- Alaves vs Real beIN SPORTS 6HD**
15:00 local (Saturday)
- Sociedad vs Eibar beIN SPORTS 3HD**
18:00 local (Saturday)
- Mallorca vs Betis beIN SPORTS 3HD**
20:30 local (Saturday)
- Valencia vs Villarreal beIN SPORTS 3HD**
23:00 local (Saturday)

- Sevilla vs Leganes beIN SPORTS 3HD**
14:00 local (Sunday)
- Bilbao vs Granada beIN SPORTS 3HD**
16:00 local (Sunday)
- Espanyol vs Osasuna beIN SPORTS 3HD**
18:00 local (Sunday)
- Getafe vs Levante beIN SPORTS 3HD**
20:30 local (Sunday)
- Atletico vs Barcelona beIN SPORTS 3HD**
23:00 local (Sunday)

connection, especially when one of them doesn't score, but the best players always end up understand-

ing each other," said Barca coach

Ernesto Valverde after beating Dortmund.

"Luis and Leo understand each other perfectly because they have been playing together for a long time, and with time the three of them will learn to gel even better with each other."

Barca top La Liga on 28 points and have a game in hand on Atletico, who are fourth on 25 and in a dire run of form, winning once in their last six games in all competitions.

Real Madrid are second on 28 points and can go clear at the top for at least a day when they visit Alaves on Saturday in the middle of a resurgent run of five wins in seven games, in which they have scored 21 goals.

Berlin hitting reboot button with Klinsmann on board

BERLIN, Nov 28, (AP): Hertha Berlin has hit the reboot button and is counting on former United States coach Jurgen Klinsmann to launch its journey to becoming one of Germany's biggest clubs.

Helped by a newly hired extensive backroom staff, Klinsmann is being charged with waking the "sleeping giant" and putting Hertha in position to deliver on the promise following a \$250 million investment from new backer Lars Windhorst.

"For years now there have been great hopes in Berlin," Klinsmann said at his presentation this week. "People I've met on the streets - and I have a connection because my son was here - they said, 'Yeah, Berlin is waiting for something special. Berlin has the potential. Berlin is a sleeping giant. But somehow it just doesn't get going.'"

Klinsmann, who has been a Hertha

- Schalke vs Union beIN SPORTS 5HD**
22:30 local
- Hertha vs Dortmund beIN SPORTS 5HD**
17:30 local (Saturday)
- Paderborn vs Leipzig beIN SPORTS 6HD**
17:30 local (Saturday)
- Hoffenheim vs Dusseldorf beIN SPORTS 10HD**
17:30 local (Saturday)

member since 2004, has a long association with the club through his father Siegfried, who hailed from Eberswalde near Berlin and was a Hertha fan, and

- Bayern vs Leverkusen beIN SPORTS 5HD**
20:30 local (Saturday)
- M'gladbach vs Freiburg beIN SPORTS 5HD**
17:30 local (Sunday)
- Wolfsburg vs Bremen beIN SPORTS 5HD**
20:00 local (Sunday)
- Mainz vs Frankfurt beIN SPORTS 5HD**
20:30 local (Monday)

his son Jonathan, who was a reserve goalkeeper for Hertha from 2017 until this year when he moved to Swiss club St Gallen. Siegfried died in 2005.

Iraq to 'host' next Gulf Cup - AGCFF

DOHA, Nov 28, (KUNA): Iraq are to play hosts to the 25th Arab Gulf Cup championship in 2021, the Arab Gulf Cup Football Federation (AGCFF) said on Thursday.

"A request by the Iraqi Football Federation for hosting the forthcoming Gulf Cup tournament has been unanimously granted in principle," the AGCFF's Secretary-General Jassem Al-Rumeihi told a press conference.

The AGCFF will send the necessary hosting criteria to all Gulf football association next week, he said, adding that Iraq is entitled to hosting the event, which has not taken place in Iraq for 40 years.

The AGCFF chief pointed out that Iraq already holds 70-80 percent of the required criteria for hosting the Gulf sports gathering.