

EPL block on club sponsor deals linked to owners

Solskjaer back under pressure, set to shake up Man United

Vieira's return nearly haunts Arsenal in 'draw' with Palace



Arsenal's Takehiro Tomiyasu, (left), challenges for the ball with Crystal Palace's Odsonne Edouard during an English Premier League soccer match between Arsenal and Crystal Palace at the Emirates Stadium in London, England, on Oct. 18. (AP)

Lacazette scores last-gasp equaliser

LONDON, Oct. 19, (AP): Arsenal fans were nearly haunted by the return of club hero Patrick Vieira.

Vieira was back this time as Crystal Palace manager and his team was just about to beat the Gunners at Emirates Stadium.

But Arsenal substitute Alexandre Lacazette made sure that wouldn't happen. He scored a dramatic late equalizer and the match finished 2-2 in the English Premier League.

The visitors were leading deep into injury time before Lacazette managed to turn home a rebound in the fifth minute of added time. The forward ran over to celebrate with Arsenal fans.

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Vieira's return to the club where he brought glory to Arsenal as captain ended in misery, with the Frenchman crouching down and pounding the turf.

Vieira was appointed manager of Crystal Palace in July and he has tried to bring attacking football to the club. But, so far, Palace has won only once out of eight matches despite impressing with his expansive approach and the team's pressing.

Palace came from behind to score twice in the second half after Arsenal took the lead through captain Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang in the eighth minute.

Vieira wouldn't have been impressed by the Arsenal defensive midfielders playing in his former position,

Venezia beat Fiorentina for 1st home win



Fiorentina's Alvaro Odriozola (left) and Venezia's Ridgesciano Haps battle for the ball during the Serie A soccer match between Venezia and Fiorentina at the Venice Pier Luigi Penzo stadium, Italy, on Oct 18. (AP)

Thomas Partey and substitute Albert Sambi Lokonga, whose mistakes led to both Palace goals.

Partey first lost possession cheaply in the 50th minute when striker Jordan Ayew stripped him of the ball. Palace striker Christian Benteke collected and cut inside before smashing past goalkeeper Aaron Ramsdale.

Then it was Lokonga's turn to lose the ball, which eventually made its way

to Odsonne Edouard. The Palace forward calmly stroked the ball home.

"It was a strange game," Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta said. "We dominated in the beginning. We deserved the goal and after that we lacked composure, belief and maturity. We gave a lot of balls away."

The result meant Arsenal was in 12th place in the table, and Palace 14th.

Vieira's spirit and desire to win en-

amored him with Arsenal fans during his spell at the club. The home supporters serenaded him in appreciation before and after the match. But Vieira, while happy to receive chants in his name, was clearly here to win.

Vieira signed a contract until 2024 as the replacement for Roy Hodgson, who stepped down at the end of last season after four years in charge of the south London club.

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Fiorentina, which had won three of four away matches, was reduced to 10 men when Riccardo Sottil picked up his second yellow card in the 77th minute.

Former Argentina goalkeeper Sergio Romero started for Venezia after signing on a free transfer a week ago, marking his first Italian league appearance in seven years. Romero was tested early on, producing a save on a dangerous shot from Giacomo Bonaventura.

LONDON, Oct. 19, (AP): Paul Pogba had seen enough. So had many disgruntled Manchester United fans.

"We need to find something. We need to change something," an exasperated Pogba said after United's late collapse in a 4-2 loss at Leicester in the Premier League on Saturday.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer didn't disagree.

"We need to look at the whole set-up and balance of the team," the United manager said, moments after Pogba's outburst. "And maybe something has to give."

It's that time once again - it seems to happen on two or three occasions per season - when United appears on the verge of a crisis and Solskjaer, a club great without the managerial resume to go with it, is called out as someone unfit to be leading England's biggest team.



Manchester United's manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer (left), during the English Premier League soccer match between Leicester City and Manchester United at King Power stadium in Leicester, England, on Oct 16. (AP)

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The plain statistics are United has won two of its last seven games in all competitions, has dropped to sixth in the Premier League, and is already out of the English League Cup. The team isn't in last place in its Champions League group only because Cristiano Ronaldo scored a 95th-minute winner against Villarreal last month.

The season is young - United has played only 11 games - but key issues haven't been fixed: An imbalanced midfield, an attack relying on individualism over any coherent plan, sloppiness in defense.

There's also a schedule that sees United face its hardest run of games so far. Back-to-back games against Atalanta in the Champions League - the first is on Wednesday at Old Trafford - come on either side of Premier League games against Liverpool, Tottenham and Manchester City.

Solskjaer, who has yet to win a trophy in nearly three years as United's manager, has been here before.

The last time he was under this much heat was December, after a loss to Leipzig that eliminated United from the Champions League. Solskjaer's team didn't lose any of its next 13 games.

In the 2019-20 season, a 1-0 loss at Newcastle in October extended United's winless run to five games and led to calls for Solskjaer to go. United drew 1-1 against Liverpool the next game, ending its fierce rival's eight-match winning run to open the league, and then lost only two of its next 14 games.

Solskjaer came under more pressure following a 2-0 home loss to Burnley in late January. United's players were jeered by their own fans, yet responded with a 19-game unbeaten run in all competitions.

"We've been through this before and come through stronger as individuals and as a team," Solskjaer said Tuesday. "I'm just looking forward to the

response now."

Can Solskjaer pull through again? Meanwhile, English Premier League clubs moved on Monday to prevent Newcastle immediately striking lucrative sponsorship deals with companies linked to its new Saudi ownership.

Clubs held an emergency meeting to impose a freeze on any of them agreeing to commercial arrangements with businesses their owners are associated with, a person familiar with the decision told The Associated Press. The person spoke on condition of anonymity to confirm details of a report published by The Guardian late Monday.

Newcastle was joined by Manchester City in resisting the move to prohibit clubs agreeing to related-party transactions, the person said.

But it passed with 18 votes in favor as Newcastle opposed and City abstained after it questioned the legality of the ban, another person said on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss a private meeting.

Since being bought by Abu Dhabi's Sheikh Mansour in 2008, City has amassed sponsorships from companies linked to the emirate with Etihad Airways having the naming rights to the stadium and appearing on team jerseys. City has insisted they are paying fair market value rather than inflated fees for sponsorship to provide revenue to allow the club to comply with financial regulations.

Premier League rivals are worried Newcastle will use friendly sponsorship deals with related parties to help it comply with financial fair play rules that are in place to prevent rich clubs from spending unchecked. Under league rules, clubs are allowed to make losses of 105 million pounds (\$144 million) over a rolling three-year period.

Iglesias gives Betis 1-0 win over Alaves

Espanyol blank Cadiz to keep momentum in Spanish league

MADRID, Oct. 19, (AP): Espanyol followed up its shock win against Spanish league leader Real Madrid with a 2-0 victory over Cadiz.

Raul de Tomas and Nico Melamed scored in each half to give Espanyol its third win in four matches. It was coming off a 2-1 win over Madrid before the international break.

The home victory moved the Barcelona club to 11th place.

Meanwhile, Cadiz's winless streak was extended to four matches. It is in 16th place.

De Tomas scored from close range in first-half injury time and Melamed added to the lead in the 65th with a shot that deflected in off a defender.

De Tomas also had a 57th-minute goal disallowed for offside.

Borja Iglesias scored in the 89th to give Real Betis a 1-0 win over Alaves for its fourth victory in five matches in all competitions.

The team coached by Manuel Pellegrini next faces Bayer Leverkusen in the Europa League on Thursday.

It was the second consecutive loss for Alaves after its shock win against defending champion Atletico Madrid. It stayed in second-to-last-place, one point better than winless Getafe.

Real Sociedad leads the league after nine rounds. Madrid, Atletico, Osasuna and Sevilla are three points behind with a game in hand.

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