

SPORTS

Guardiola opted to make no substitutions

City held by Palace, give Liverpool hope in EPL title race

LONDON, March 15, (AP) — Manchester City held a 13-point lead in the English Premier League two months ago. The next time the champions play, they could be in second place.

In the latest twist in the title race, City stumbled against Crystal Palace - again - by drawing 0-0 at an atmospheric Selhurst Park to give second-placed Liverpool further hope of reeling in Pep Guardiola's team and

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reclaiming the biggest prize in English soccer.

City extended its advantage to four points but Liverpool plays twice - the first against Arsenal on Wednesday - before City is next in action in the league, on April 2. Liverpool also has a superior goal difference.

The top two also meet at City's Etihad Stadium on April 10.

Palace was the last team to stop City scoring in the league - in a 2-0 win at the Etihad on Oct. 30 - and did so again, even if Patrick Vieira's team rode its luck.

Joao Cancelo and Kevin De



Lazio's Ciro Immobile celebrates after scoring with penalty against Venezia during the Serie A soccer match between Lazio and Venezia, at Rome's Olympic Stadium, in Rome, Italy, on March 14. (AP)

Bruyne struck the post for City in a match that was mostly one-way traffic except for some sporadic and dangerous counterattacks from Palace, mirroring what happened in the meeting of the teams 4 1/2 months ago.

Arguably the best chance of the game fell to City midfielder Bernardo Silva, who somehow managed to prod a shot wide from barely two

Immobile breaks scoring record in Lazio win over Venezia

ROME, March 15, (AP) — Ciro Immobile converted a penalty to become Lazio's all-time leading scorer in Serie A as the Rome club beat relegation-threatened Venezia 1-0. The victory enabled Lazio to

leapfrog Atalanta and Roma into fifth place, boosting its chances of direct qualification for the Europa League.

Immobile's second-half goal was his 144th in Serie A with Lazio, meters out following Jack Grealish's low center across the face of goal.

Guardiola opted to make no substitutions, saying he was happy with the way his team was playing despite frustration appearing to set in over the final 15 minutes.

And Silva remained bullish about City's position with nine games left. "Still a long way to go," the Portugal international said. "We are still in a good position. It's still better to be in our position than Liverpool's. They still have to play in our stadium as well. It's going to be exciting."

Liverpool has the better form, though. While the Reds have won their last eight games in the league, City has dropped points in three of

its last seven outings - after a 1-1 draw at Southampton in January and a 3-2 loss at home to Tottenham last month.

And Liverpool's superior firepower may yet prove the difference, with City again missing a cutting edge against Palace without an out-and-out striker in the team.

As for Palace, Vieira was just proud of how his players held their nerve against what he regards as one of "the best four or five teams in Europe."

"It was a team effort and our performance was really good," Vieira said. "When you play against the quality of players they have, you need a bit of luck at times and at times we were lucky but you also need to perform as well."

breaking a tie with Silvio Piola, whose 274 with Lazio and other teams from 1930-54 make him the league's overall record scorer.

Immobile had already surpassed Piola to become Lazio's top scorer

across all competitions.

It was a perfect warmup for Lazio ahead of the Rome derby next weekend.

Venezia remained three points from safety.



Manchester City's Riyad Mahrez (front right), jumps for the ball with Crystal Palace's Odsonne Edouard during the English Premier League soccer match between Crystal Palace and Manchester City at Selhurst Park stadium in London, on March 14. (AP)

Haynes scores unbeaten 83

Australia beat Windies to stay atop Women's WCup

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, March 15, (AP) — Rachael Haynes took another step in its inexorable progress to a seventh Women's Cricket World Cup title, beating the West Indies by seven wickets Tuesday to remain unbeaten after four group matches.

Backing up only two days after it beat host New Zealand by 141 runs, Australia rested leading bowlers Darcie Brown and Amanda-Jade Wellington and still bowled out the West Indies for 131.

Haynes' innings and her late, unbroken partnership of 74 with Beth Mooney (28) allowed Australia to reach its target with almost 20 full overs remaining.

The day began well for Australia in advantageous bowling conditions. Light rain delayed the start of play by 30 minutes without costing any overs and play began in heavy overcast and windy conditions.

There was an ominous sign for the West Indies batters from the very first ball when Megan Schutt bowled a

hooping inswinger to Deandra Dottin, helped by the wind. Schutt continued to swing the ball into the right-handers while Elysse Perry had the ability to take it away on both sides of the wicket.

Perry removed the West Indies first three batters - Dottin (16), Hayley Matthews (0) and Kycia Knight (0) - in an opening spell of eight consecutive overs and finished with 3-22.

Ashleigh Gardner helped dismantle the middle order, dismissing Shemaine Campbelle (20), Chedean Nation (0) and West Indies captain Stafanie Taylor, whose 50 from 91 deliveries led her team's recovery from the loss of Matthews and Knight to consecutive balls in the second over of the innings.

Australia's fielding remains a cut

above other teams at the tournament and its catching also is on another plane. Australia's huge depth allows it to rotate players at will, without losing any of its considerable strength.

"That's the beauty of our squad, we've got such great depth," captain Meg Lanning said. "Anyone who does come in makes an impact on the game. They're not just part of the team, they're able to change the game."

"I thought early wickets up front today made a difference in the game, put us in front and put them under pressure."

The early loss of Matthews and Knight was a blow to the West Indies from which they couldn't recover. The continued pressure applied later by the Australian spinners also made scoring difficult but Taylor ground out her half century with little support.

The West Indies, in turn, had Australia under some pressure when they dismissed Alyssa Healy and Lanning within the first four overs. But

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Haynes was immovable, posting her 17th half-century in one-day internationals and her fourth at a World Cup.

After a century against England in Australia's opening match and scores of 34 against Pakistan and 30 against New Zealand she is averaging 92 in the tournament so far.

The West Indies began the tournament strongly with wins over New Zealand and defending champion England but now have lost heavily to India and Australia.

"It wasn't the best batting performance from us," Taylor said. "I think we just didn't assess the conditions well and losing early wickets put a dent in the batting."

Australia leads the tournament by two points from the only other unbeaten side, South Africa, which has three wins from three games. It has matches remaining in the eight-team round-robin against India, South Africa and Bangladesh.



Haynes

Pakistan 'defy' Australia to reach 192-2 in second Test



Pakistan's Babar Azam (left), plays a shot while Australia's Alex Carey (right), and Travis Head watch during the fourth day of the second Test match between Pakistan and Australia at the National Stadium in Karachi Pakistan, on March 15. (AP)

Hosts still need an improbable 314 runs to win

KARACHI, Pakistan, March 15, (AP) — Captain Babar Azam's first test hundred in two years and Abdullah Shafique's 71 led Pakistan's resistance after Australia set up a huge target of 506 on day four Tuesday of the second test.

Babar was unbeaten on 102 off 198 balls and opening batter Shafique followed his maiden test hundred in the drawn first test with an undefeated 71 off 226 balls to take Pakistan to 192-2 at stumps. Pakistan still needs an improbable 314 runs to achieve a world record run chase on the last day or survive the remaining 90 overs to deny Australia taking a 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

Babar and Shafique defied Australia's reverse swing and Nathan Lyon's spin on a wearing pitch for well over four hours and raised a 171-run stand in almost two sessions.

Babar, who made his last test century in February 2020 against Bangladesh, raised his sixth test hundred when he top-edged a sweep for two runs late in the last session. It took him just over four hours off 180 balls with 12 fours.

"We have good momentum, but there are already rough patches on the wicket and it will be a big challenge for us tomorrow," Shafique said.

Babar and Shafique joined in the second over after lunch when Azhar Ali's labors for more than an hour to score 6 were undone by an lbw from Cameron Green. Video showed a spike coming off the gloves before it hit Azhar on the body, but he chose not to review.

Pakistan could have been 38-3 but Steve Smith spilled a straightforward catch in the slips when Shafique was on 20. It was Smith's third dropped catch in the test. Shafique also got a life on 33 when he was well short

of his crease but Green missed the stumps at the non-striker's end.

Babar hit Pakistan's first boundary of the innings in the 26th over by cutting Mitchell Swepson to the point boundary and then grew in confidence against the pace of Mitchell Starc, who was used in short spells.

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Shafique also opened up by pulling Pat Cummins to the midwicket boundary and lofting Lyon over long on for a six. Both batters carried Pakistan home without further damage, including the last overs with the new ball.

Pakistan's highest successful chase in test matches is 382-3 in 2015 when it beat Sri Lanka by seven wickets at Pallekele.

"We are still in a position to win the test match," Australia batting coach

Michael Di Venuto said.

"Yesterday, we got reverse swing going with the hard ball, but today (Babar and Shafique) got through that period and once the ball got softened they played very well."

Earlier, Australia extended its lead to 505 when Cummins declared the second innings at 97-2 after Marcus Labuschagne, on 44, played Shaheen Afridi back onto his stumps off a mistimed pull shot.

Afridi and Hasan Ali didn't allow first innings century-maker Usman Khawaja, 44 not out, and Labuschagne to score quickly in the half hour after Australia resumed on 81-1. The declaration came earlier than expected.

It was only the second time Australia declared both innings in a test in Asia; the other was in 1986 against India at Chennai.

It gave Australia almost two full days and a minimum of 172 overs to

take a 1-0 lead in the series at the fortress of Pakistan - National Stadium - where the home team has lost just two out of 44 test matches.

Those losses were against South Africa in 2008, and England in 2000.

Australia routed Pakistan for 148 in the first innings on day three in just under 4 1/2 hours after it declared its first innings at 556-9 by keeping Pakistan on the field under hot conditions for more than two days.

Benzema stays hot

Madrid keep momentum after PSG win

MADRID, March 15, (AP) — Karim Benzema stayed hot as Real Madrid kept momentum from its epic win over Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League with a 3-0 victory at Mallorca to extend its Spanish league lead.

Benzema scored twice and set up Vinicius Junior's goal to help give Madrid a 10-point lead over second-placed Sevilla ahead of the clásico against Barcelona on Sunday at Santiago Bernabé Stadium.

Benzema's double came five days after he scored a hat trick in less than 20 minutes to lead Madrid to the Champions League quarterfinals with a stunning comeback win over PSG.

Benzema has eight goals in his last five matches in all competitions and comfortably leads the Spanish league's scoring list with 22.

The match ended with concern over Benzema's fitness, though, as the French striker had to leave a few minutes from the end with what appeared to be a left leg injury. Madrid, which had already made all five substitutions, also lost forward Rodrygo and left back Ferland Mendy with injuries ahead of the match against Barcelona.

Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said it was too early to know the serious-

ness of their injuries.

Madrid has a 15-point advantage over third-placed Barcelona, which has a game in hand.

"It was important to win this match after our rivals lost points at the weekend," Madrid midfielder Federico Valverde said.

It was the fourth straight league victory for Madrid, whose unbeaten run in the competition reached eight matches.

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Mallorca has lost five in a row for its worst league streak since 2012. It sits in 16th place, two points above the relegation zone.

It was a rare Monday appearance for Madrid, which opened the scoring through Vinicius from close range in the 55th minute after a pass by Benzema. The Frenchman added to the lead by converting a penalty kick after a foul on Vinicius in the 77th, and sealed the victory with a header in the 82nd off a cross by Marcelo.

Mallorca, which had most of the good scoring chances early on, has lost 10 of its last 12 league matches against Madrid.

Sass claims 1st Iditarod victory

ANCHORAGE, Alaska, March 15, (AP) — Musher Brent Sass won the arduous Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race across Alaska on Tuesday as his team of 11 dogs dashed off the Bering Sea ice through a crowd of fans in downtown Nome.

Sass mushed down Front Street and across the finish line just before 6 a.m.

"It's awesome, it's a dream come true," Sass said before he was presented the prize-winning check of \$50,000, his beard and mustache partially encased in ice during the post-race interview.

"When I started mushing, my goal was to win the Yukon Quest and win the Iditarod. Checked them both off the list now," he said.

Sass said he was "super, super, super proud" of his dog team. "It's all on them."

They did an excellent job the whole race. I asked a lot of them, and they preformed perfectly," he said.