

Cristiano Ronaldo and Gareth Bale were both rested and Real Madrid hardly broke sweat as they beat Malaga

# Isco leads Real to Malaga win

Isco scored a stunning free kick to break the deadlock

## Madrid

**Cristiano Ronaldo** and Gareth Bale were both rested and Real Madrid hardly broke sweat as they beat Malaga 2-1 on Sunday to climb to third in La Liga.

Isco scored one and set up another at La Rosaleda in a comfortable victory for a much-changed Real side, following Wednesday's last-gasp Champions League win over Juventus.

Diego Rolan grabbed a consolation for Malaga with the last kick of the game but the result was never in doubt.

As well as Bale and Ronaldo, Luka Modric and Raphael Varane were left out by Zinedine Zidane, with the all-important Champions League semi-final against Bayern Munich looming next week.

But Isco did his chances of a start in Germany no harm at all by bending in a free-kick that both Ronaldo and Bale would have been proud of, and then generously teeing up Casemiro when he might easily have finished himself.

After scoring his first Real goal in nine appearances against his former club, Isco held his hands up apologetically, and he enjoyed a warm reception from the Malaga fans when substituted in the second half.

Victory means Los Blancos leapfrog Valencia, who were beaten by Barcelona on Saturday, but remain four points behind Atletico Madrid in second.

Malaga, meanwhile, stay bottom and are all-but doomed, sitting 14 points behind 17th-placed Levante, who had earlier been beaten 3-0 by Atletico.

Fernando Torres stole the show at the Wanda Metropolitano, marking the announcement of his Atletico departure with his 100th La Liga goal off the bench.

Six days after confirming he will be leaving his boyhood club at the end of the season, Torres rolled back the years with a volleyed finish, reminiscent of the 34-year-old in his prime.

"Fernando is an icon here," Atletico

coach Diego Simeone said.

"Whether he is scoring goals or not, winning titles or not, he has a place in the club that has been earned by respect, hard work and having an identity with the club. That will not change because of one more goal."

Torres' grievance this term has been a lack of playing time and he was a substitute again, replacing Antoine Griezmann, who was also on target. Angel Correa opened the scoring in the first half.

A comfortable victory cuts the gap behind leaders Barcelona back to 11 points and restores some momentum for Atletico, with their Europa League semi-final against Arsenal less than a fortnight away.

The result also guarantees Simeone's side a place in the Champions League for a sixth consecutive season.

"Barcelona's season is tremendous," Simeone said. "We will try to get closer to them and if we can't get closer, we will congratulate them." (AFP)



Red Bull's Daniel Ricciardo celebrates with his shoe after winning the race

## Horner sees no reason for Ricciardo to leave

### Shanghai

**Red Bull** hope they can convince Daniel Ricciardo to stay with them after giving the Australian a winning car in Sunday's Chinese Grand Prix.

The victory, from sixth on the starting grid, was a morale-booster for the 28-year-old after a frustrating start to the season and comes as he is deciding his next career move.

Out of contract at the end of the year, Ricciardo has been linked in media speculation to Ferrari and Formula One champions Mercedes.

"I think Daniel's happy in the environment. If we can give him a car like we did today, why would he want to be anywhere else?" Red Bull team boss Christian Horner told reporters in Shanghai.

"He had the energy store failure in Bahrain, he had a turbo failure here yesterday, losing him important track time," recognised the Briton.

"You get to a point where you think 'what next?'. But it's a great confidence booster for him, to get this result

now in this point in the year. Everything is wide open."

Mercedes, the dominant team in Formula One for the past four seasons, have yet to win in three races.

Ferrari won in Australia and Bahrain with four-times champion Sebastian Vettel, who may not relish the prospect of his former Red Bull team mate joining him at Maranello.

Red Bull's future engine partner remains uncertain, however, with the team mulling whether to continue with Renault or switch to the Honda units now being used by the energy drink company's Toro Rosso outfit.

The Honda engine, while seemingly much improved this year after three years of failure in the back of a McLaren, remains behind rivals on power.

Red Bull have made clear since last year that they want Ricciardo to stay alongside 20-year-old Dutch driver Max Verstappen, a hot prospect whose race on Sunday was marred by needless overtaking errors. (Reuters)

## Pele confident Neymar can lead Brazil at WC

### Dubai

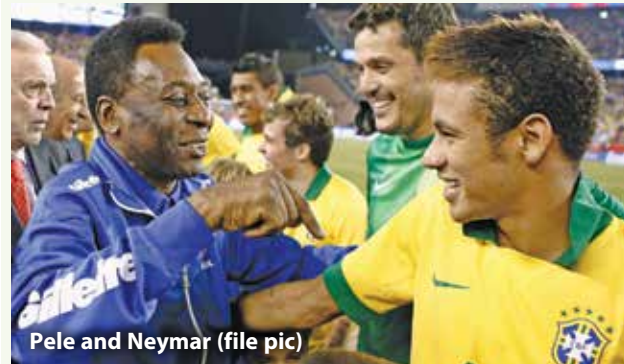
**Brazilian legend** Pele says he is confident about Brazil's chances at the upcoming World Cup and expects injured star Neymar to be fully fit to lead the side in Russia.

Speaking to AFP in Dubai, the 77-year-old, who has been in ailing health recently, put his faith in Paris Saint-Germain striker Neymar's ability to recover from

a fractured foot in time to lead Brazil to a possible sixth global football title.

"We don't know exactly what is going to happen, but I think for the World Cup he's going to be in shape because his injury is not so bad," said Pele, the only person to have won the World Cup three times as a player.

"I wish he has the same luck I had in the World Cup." (AFP)



Pele and Neymar (file pic)