

## Vardy, Mahrez score as Leicester see off Watford

**London**  
**J**amie Vardy and Riyad Mahrez fired Leicester to a routine 2-0 win over Watford as Claude Puel's powers of recovery continued.

Winger Mahrez maintained his fine form with a third goal in six games after Vardy's first-half penalty put the Foxes ahead.

Leicester moved up to seventh in the Premier League while Watford's struggles continued with Marco Silva's side having won just once in 11 games.

The Foxes still needed a fine Harry Maguire block on Andre Gray to clinch victory but boss Puel has now lost just four of his 18 games in charge.

He took over in October, as Leicester's third manager of 2017, after Craig Shakespeare was sacked while the club were in the bottom three.

The Hornets are 10th but they are just four points above the relegation zone.

Despite Watford's energetic start they relied on stand-in

goalkeeper Orestis Karnezis, in for the injured Heurlho Gomes, to keep them level early on.

Vardy shrugged off Molla Wague and forced Karnezis into a smart stop before the Greece international blocked Wilfred Ndidi's close-range strike.

Watford's only win in their previous 10 league outings came in a 2-1 victory against Leicester on Boxing Day and their fragile defending underlined a lack of confidence.

But they survived the early scares and Kasper Schmeichel gathered Abdoulaye Doucoure's low drive after 19 minutes.

Leicester's early promise waned as a scrappy game struggled to ignite but Troy Deeney almost opened the scoring after 33 minutes when he finished low past Schmeichel, only to be ruled marginally offside. (PA Sport)



Jamie Vardy of Leicester celebrates

## Arsenal dismantle Crystal Palace 4-1

**London**  
**A**rsenal eased to a 4-1 victory over Crystal Palace on Saturday as Alexis Sanchez was left out of the squad ahead of his expected move to Manchester United.

Gunners boss Arsene Wenger said that the Chile international could be involved if the deal had not been completed, but he was again omitted. Unlike last week, however, when Arsenal lost 2-1 at Bournemouth without the forward, his teammates made light work of his absence here against a poor Palace side.

The hosts were four goals up inside the opening quarter of the game, with Nacho Monreal, Alex Iwobi, Laurent Koscielny and Alexandre Lacazette all hitting the target.

Luka Milivojevic struck a consolation for visitors as Wenger's side won their first match of 2018 to move within five points of the Premier League top four.

Mesut Ozil and Jack Wilshere both shone in a side which could soon boast more attacking options, should Henrikh Mkhitaryan join as part of the Sanchez deal, while Borussia Dortmund officials confirmed an enquiry had been made about Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang.

That sort of firepower was not required to beat an out-of-sorts Palace, who could hold out for just six minutes at the Emirates Stadium.

Iwobi had the game's first chance, but saw his shot tipped over by Palace goalkeeper Wayne Hennessey and from the resulting corner Monreal arrived unmarked to head home Granit Xhaka's delivery with ease.

The second goal was not long in coming as Monreal turned provider for Iwobi and the Nigeria international stretched out to steer a low cross past the helpless Hennessey.

Roy Hodgson watched on glumly as Arsenal added another from their next corner as the static Palace defence allowed Monreal to drift it at the back post and cross for the fit-again Koscielny to bundle in a third.

Arsenal were in complete control and it showed with the superb move which led to them moving four goals ahead at the midway point of the first half.

Wilshere picked up the ball in plenty of space and fed Ozil, whose deft flick was perfect for Lacazette to slot home his first goal since the 3-1 defeat to Manchester United on December 2. (Esn)

# Chelsea cruise past Brighton

**London**

**E**den Hazard moved past the 100 career league goals milestone with two strikes as he orchestrated Chelsea's 4-0 win over Brighton & Hove Albion at the AMEX stadium.

Hazard and teammate Willian had the reigning Premier League champions two goals ahead within six minutes before the Belgium playmaker added another and Victor Moses netted near the end to take them above third-place Liverpool in the table.

Seagulls boss Chris Hughton, yet to see his side take a point from any of the top six, reverted to a back five against the Blues -- but it was soon apparent they would not be breaking their duck just yet.

Only three minutes had elapsed when Moses reached the byline and his cut-back found its way to Hazard, who sidestepped Lewis Dunk before firing home.

And three minutes later Hazard and Michy Batshuayi combined in a blur of backheels before Willian provided the finish from just inside the area.

It was a stunning goal and ruthless stuff from a Chelsea side who had scored only once in their previous four matches.

They were hit by injuries to four players as well as bans for Alvaro Morata and Pedro following Wednesday night's chaotic FA Cup tie against Norwich.

But for a spell the Blues looked as though they would score every time they went forward with Hazard leading the charge, teeing up first Willian and then Batshuayi whose efforts were saved by Mathew Ryan.

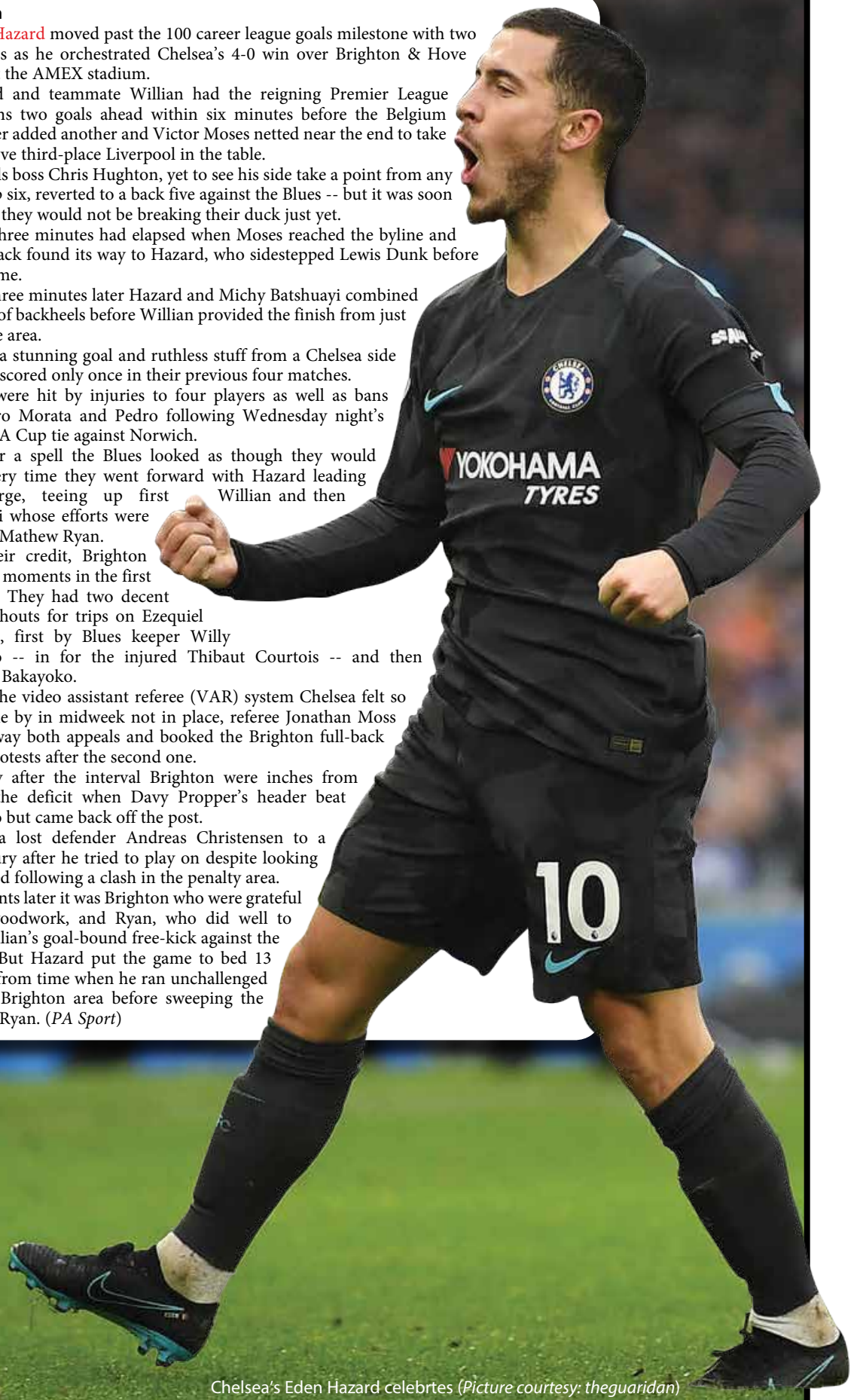
To their credit, Brighton had their moments in the first half, too. They had two decent penalty shouts for trips on Ezequiel Schelotto, first by Blues keeper Willy Caballero -- in for the injured Thibaut Courtois -- and then Tiemoué Bakayoko.

With the video assistant referee (VAR) system Chelsea felt so hard done by in midweek not in place, referee Jonathan Moss waved away both appeals and booked the Brighton full-back for his protests after the second one.

Shortly after the interval Brighton were inches from halving the deficit when Davy Propper's header beat Caballero but came back off the post.

Chelsea lost defender Andreas Christensen to a head injury after he tried to play on despite looking very dazed following a clash in the penalty area.

Moments later it was Brighton who were grateful to the woodwork, and Ryan, who did well to palm Willian's goal-bound free-kick against the upright. But Hazard put the game to bed 13 minutes from time when he ran unchallenged into the Brighton area before sweeping the ball past Ryan. (PA Sport)



Chelsea's Eden Hazard celebrates (Picture courtesy: theguardian)