

# Perfect start for Barca



Barcelona's Lionel Messi (L) runs with the ball besides Eibar's defender from Spain David Junca (C)

**Madrid**

Lionel Messi added four more goals to his soaring early season tally as a much-changed Barcelona maintained their 100 percent start to La Liga by routing Eibar 6-1 on Tuesday.

Paulinho and Denis Suarez also netted for the second consecutive game as Barca stretched their lead at the top of La Liga to seven points over Real Madrid, who host Real

Betis on Wednesday.

Barca boss Ernesto Valverde heavily rotated his side for the first time since taking charge with six changes from Saturday's hard-fought 2-1 win at Getafe.

And contrary to their fortunes last season, Barca's back-ups proved Valverde can take the luxury of resting some of his star names with Paulinho particularly impressive on his first start.

The hosts had goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen to thank early on for not falling behind though as he made a smart save when one-on-one with Sergi Enrich just four minutes in.

Messi opened the scoring in nonchalant fashion from the penalty spot on 21 minutes after Nelson Semedo had been felled by an ungainly challenge from Alejandro Galvez.

Paulinho's 40-million-euro

(\$48 million) signing from Guangzhou Evergrande was one of a series of moves that drew stinging criticism for Barca's board following Neymar's world-record departure for Paris Saint-Germain.

However, after coming off the bench to score the winner at Getafe, Paulinho powered home his second Barca goal from Suarez's corner seven minutes before half-time. (AFP)

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