

Messi, Suarez braces as Barcelona cruise



Barcelona's Messi (R) celebrates with teammate Suarez (Picture courtesy: AP)

Barcelona
Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez produced a finishing masterclass as Barcelona launched a second-half blitz at Real Betis to extend their lead at the top of the La Liga table to 11 points.

Ivan Rakitic started the ball rolling as the hour-mark approached while Messi and Suarez joined him on the scoresheet within the next 10 minutes.

The Argentina international saved his best for the last 10 minutes, adding a superb individual effort and then setting up Suarez for his second in similar fashion to help Barca claim a sixth successive league win courtesy of a 5-0 romp.

Betis gave as good as they got for long periods, but their hopes of adding to a return of three LaLiga victories in four were dashed in devastating style on a night when Ernesto Valverde's men belatedly found their cutting edge at the Benito Villamarin Stadium.

A tight first half started in promising fashion for the home side as Andres Guardado whistled a left-footed effort just wide of the far post with Barca keeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen at full-stretch.

In a frenetic opening, an off-balance Suarez blazed over with the visitors stepping up the tempo, and keeper Antonio Adan had to make his

first save from Rakitic's 27th-minute drive.

With clear-cut chances at a premium, Messi fired into the side-netting from a Suarez pass four minutes later with neither side able to find the required quality in the final third to make the breakthrough.

Messi's fortunes took a turn for the worse two minutes before the break when, as he fell after being hauled to the ground by Fabian Ruiz Pena, the midfielder accidentally caught him in the back of the head with his knee.

Sergio Busquets tried his luck from long range in stoppage time, but once again Adan saved comfortably to ensure the sides remained locked

together at half-time.

Betis resumed brightly to put the Catalans under early pressure and Ter Stegen needed two attempts to claim Fabian's 58th-minute shot at his near post, but they fell behind seconds later after Barca mounted a pacy counter-attack.

Suarez's superbly-timed pass on halfway sent Rakitic clear of the Betis rearguard and he drew Adan before slotting the ball underneath him to open the scoring. (PA Sport)

Vuelta a San Juan Gaviria clinches opening stage



Fernando Gaviria (C) celebrates

Pocito, Argentina
Fernando Gaviria won the opening stage of the Vuelta a San Juan Sunday with a perfect leadout from his Quick-Step Floors team, which watched as other squads fought for the front inside the final kilometre and then dropped the Colombian sprinter off with 200 metres to go.

Gaviria took care of business from there, easily distancing the competition at the line.

Bahrain-Merida's Niccolo Bonifazio was second, with Bora-Hansgroh's Matteo Pelucchi in third.

"The sprint was very fast and very complicated because in the final kilometres were a lot of teams that wanted to win, so it was very complicated to try to win this stage," Gaviria said in the post-race press conference.

"I was lucky because I have a

very strong team, a very big team, and we've beaten the other teams in the same conditions, so the sprint was very beautiful and also the victory was very beautiful."

The field brought the day's breakaway back with 19km to go and then swept up any further breakaway attempts as teams fought for supremacy over the final 174km closing circuit.

With two kilometres to go, Bora-Hansgrohe came forward to set up the sprint for Pelucchi, but they weren't the only team with designs on the stage. UnitedHealthcare briefly shot to the front with several riders, then it was Lotto Soudal's turn inside the final kilometre.

But all of the efforts were for naught as Quick-Step was simply biding their time before launching their Colombian speedster to the line. (Cyclingnews)

Memphis, Lyon down PSG

London
Memphis Depay condemned 10-man Paris Saint-Germain to only their second Ligue 1 defeat of the season following a superb stoppage-time strike for Lyon.

Nabil Fekir opened the scoring for the home side with a brilliant free kick after just two minutes before Layvin Kurzawa drew PSG level on the stroke of half-time.

The league's runaway leaders were reduced to 10 men shortly before the hour mark after Dani Alves was shown a straight red card for dissent.

But PSG looked set to keep Lyon at bay only for substitute Depay to strike in the third minute of injury time with a remarkable 25-yard winner.

PSG travelled to Lyon on Sunday night without star man Neymar after the Brazil international was sidelined

with a thigh injury.

And the visitors, who hammered Dijon 8-0 on Wednesday, were trailing within 95 seconds following Fekir's long-range set piece.

Fekir spotted Alphonse Areola off his line, and the midfielder took advantage of the PSG goalkeeper's questionable positioning to beat him at his near post.

Matters then got worse for PSG when Kylian Mbappe left the field of play on a stretcher.

Mbappe was chasing on to a through ball from Marco Verratti, but was taken out by Lyon goalkeeper Anthony Lopes.

Lopes got enough of the

ball to ensure he would not be given his marching orders, but Mbappe was unable to continue and his game was over before the half-hour mark.

An off-colour PSG looked set to be heading into the break behind only for Kurzawa to rifle home an equaliser in the third minute of injury time of the opening period.

Alves floated the ball into the penalty area and

Kurzawa was there to hammer home an exquisite left-footed volley from 12 yards.

The visiting side emerged from the interval chasing the victory, but they were a man down with 57 minutes gone after Alves was sent off.

Referee Clement Turpin was poised to issue the former Barcelona defender with a booking following a rash tackle on Tanguy Ndombele, only to change his mind following Alves's over-zealous protest to the original yellow card.

Alves' teammate Verratti was fortunate to remain on the pitch after he knocked the red card out of Turpin's hand. (PA Sport)



Marcelo (R) of Lyon competes with Edinson Cavani from Paris Saint-Germain (Picture courtesy: Xinhua)