

Ronaldo hits double as Real crush Alaves

Madrid
Cristiano Ronaldo, Gareth Bale and Karim Benzema were on the scoresheet as a Real Madrid side shorn of several stars continued their impressive form with a 4-0 victory over Alaves.

Ronaldo took his 2018 goal tally to 12 with a brace either side of a cool finish from Bale, whose long-term future at Madrid has been the subject of speculation this week.

Ronaldo could have completed his hat trick after Bale won a last-minute penalty, but

the Madrid captain instead allowed Benzema -- who like Bale has had to deal with growing criticism -- to take the kick and he fired into the corner of the net.

With the brace, Ronaldo took his career tally in La Liga to 299 goals, though Madrid claim he's already reached his landmark 300. The discrepancy is a 2011 goal that is officially credited to Pepe after Ronaldo's free kick deflected off of the defender's back. But Real Madrid have always credited the goal to Ronaldo in their own records.

The result means Zinedine Zidane's men have now accumulated 18 points from their last seven

games, during which run they have scored 29 goals, to boost their hopes of getting back into the top two in La Liga.

It took a while for the defending champions to break Alaves' resistance though, with the in-form visitors showing the qualities which had seen them win four of their previous six games to escape the relegation zone.

The hosts dominated possession in the first half but, perhaps missing the influence of key quintet Luka Modric, Toni Kroos, Marco Asensio, Sergio Ramos and Marcelo, found it difficult to create chances.

Benzema slipped with only the goalkeeper to beat following a four-on-one breakaway while Bale had two half-chances but could not find the back of the net either.

Reports in Spain claimed this week that Bale has "run out of credit" at the Bernabeu, but he almost answered his doubters with an audacious overhead kick which went just wide.

The Wales international's second opportunity came after he intercepted an attempted pass by Fernando Pacheco just outside the six-yard box, but the Alaves keeper managed to save his own blushes. (PA Sport)

India beat SA, seal series 2-1

Real Madrid's Cristiano Ronaldo celebrates (Pic courtesy:realmadrid)

Cape Town
Bhuvneshwar Kumar kept his calm and defended 19 runs in the final over as India defeated South Africa by seven runs in the third and final Twenty20 International at the Newlands in Cape Town yesterday. With the thrilling victory, India won the three-match series 2-1.

India was in control of the match before debutant Christiaan Jonker decided to give the visitors a late scare. Jonker smashed 49 off 24 balls before falling to Bhuvneshwar in the final ball of the match. Jonker, who hit two sixes and five fours, took South Africa closer to the challenging target, but failed to take them home as they managed 165/6 in chase of 173.



Team India celebrate (Pic courtesy: BCCI)

Bhuvneshwar (2/24) took two South African wickets, while Hardik Pandya (1/22), Jasprit Bumrah (1/39), Shardul Thakur (1/35) and Suresh Raina (1/27) chipped in with a wicket apiece.

South Africa found it tough to negotiate India bowler from the start as they lost opener Reeza Hendricks

(7) to Bhuvneshwar in the third over. The second wicket came after 6.2 overs but the hosts could add just 35 more to the score.

The Proteas were reduced to 45/2 when Raina dismissed David Miller in the tenth over. Miller hit a six and two fours for his watchful 24 off 23 balls. It was skipper JP Duminy who changed

the scoring rate with two successive sixes off Axar Patel in the 12th over, soon after Thakur dropped Heinrich Klaasen in the previous ball.

But it did not cost India much as Pandya got rid of Klaasen (7) in the 13th. Jonker then kept the hosts in the hunt, hitting Raina for consecutive fours in the next over. (TOI)

Bayern's winning run ends with draw

London
The Bayern Munich juggernaut was slowed by stubborn Hertha Berlin on Saturday as the Bundesliga leaders' 15-match winning run came to an end with a goalless draw.

The dominant hosts failed to find a way past a resolute Hertha rearguard as Bayern failed to win for the first

time in any competition since late November. Jupp Heynckes' men had won 11 league games in a row and scored at least two goals in every match they have played since Christmas, including five against Besiktas in the Champions League in midweek, but found Hertha's Norwegian goalkeeper Rune Jarstein in impressive form.

The point extended Bayern's lead at the top of the table to 20 points, although the likes of Bayer Leverkusen, RB Leipzig and Borussia Dortmund can cut that lead later this weekend. The numbers have little meaning now, though. The title is all but Bayern's and has long been so.

Bayern fielded their attacking big

guns, with Robert Lewandowski, Arjen Robben, Franck Ribery and Thomas Muller all starting, but a Hertha side who have won just once this year proved too tough a

nut for them to crack Lewandowski was looking to score in a club record 12th consecutive home game, but Jarstein denied him on a number of occasions. (PA Sport)



Action from Bayern v Hertha Berlin (Pic courtesy: fcbayern)