

Clasico concerns for Madrid as Modric, Bale sit out training

AFP | Madrid

Real Madrid face an anxious wait to see if Luka Modric and Gareth Bale will be fit for next week's Clasico against Barcelona after both players missed training on Tuesday.

Modric and Bale each did gym work indoors as they attempted to recover from injuries sustained playing in the Euro 2020 qualifier between Croatia and Wales on Sunday.

It leaves Madrid uncertain over the fitness of two key players, with the crunch La Liga game against Barca at Camp Nou fast-approaching on October 26.

Wales coach Ryan Giggs said Bale was struggling with pain in his calf towards the end of their draw with Croatia in Cardiff but suggested the problem was a cramp. Madrid confirmed that Modric sustained a thigh injury in the match.

"Following the tests carried out today on our player Luka Modric by the Real Madrid medical department, he has been diagnosed with a bruise in his right quadriceps," a club statement read. "His recovery will continue to be assessed."

Real Madrid, who sit top of La Liga, play away at Mallorca on Saturday and at Barcelona a week later, with an important Champions League group game away at Galatasaray in between.

Rodrigo fires Spain into Euro

Rodrigo Moreno ensures a Euro 2020 spot for Spain with his late equaliser against Sweden

● **Marcus Berg thought he had won the match for Sweden with his header before Rodrigo struck**

AFP | Stockholm

Spain sealed qualification for Euro 2020 with two games to spare on Tuesday after Rodrigo Moreno came off the bench to score a dramatic injury-time equaliser in a 1-1 draw with Sweden.

The 2008 and 2012 European champions needed only a point in Stockholm to guarantee automatic progress to the finals. Rodrigo ensured they got it, after Marcus Berg had headed Sweden into the lead early in the first half.

Rodrigo's 92nd-minute tap-in sparked jubilant celebrations on the touchline. It provided a dramatic conclusion to an otherwise fairly smooth campaign for Robert Moreno, who took over in June following the resignation of Luis Enrique.

"Qualification is a must for a team like Spain but achieving it still has value," said Moreno. "It releases the pressure and gives us time to work."

After drawing their last two matches, Spain are top of Group F on 20 points, five ahead of Sweden and six above Romania, who missed the chance to



Rodrigo Moreno of Spain celebrates after scoring his team's first goal

take second spot when Norway's Alexander Sorloth snatched a last-ditch 1-1 draw in Bucharest.

Finishing ahead of Sweden, Romania and Norway offers only a limited idea of how Spain will fare against Europe's elite.

There remain several question marks over key positions, not least in goal, where David de Gea started but was forced off injured in the second half, a worry for his club Manchester United ahead of their meeting with Premier League leaders Liverpool this weekend.

De Gea appeared to have pulled a muscle in his right leg after making a clearance and

was replaced by Chelsea's Kepa Arrizabalaga, who had started Saturday's 1-1 draw Norway.

"He said at half-time he wanted to continue," Moreno said. "It's a pull in his adductor. We will have to assess the damage."

New era for Spain

Suspensions for Sergio Ramos and Sergio Busquets meant there was not a single player in the starting line-up who had played in the Euro 2008 and 2012 triumphs, or the World Cup in between.

Moreno is furthering Spain's attempt to usher in a new era. Barca's 16-year-old sensation

Ansu Fati could be an option against Malta and Romania next month.

Fati became the second youngest player to represent Spain under-21s on Tuesday night, coming on for the final 10 minutes of Spain's 2-0 win over Montenegro.

For the senior side, Villarreal's Gerard Moreno made his debut up front. Rodri and Inigo Martinez came in for the banned Ramos and Busquets.

Spain made a strong start and should have taken the lead when Thiago Alcantara had only the keeper to beat, but failed either to finish or find Mikel Oyarzabal

waiting for a tap-in inside him.

Rodri and Moreno both went close but Sweden survived and then grew into the game, breaking Spain's rhythm and creating chances of their own.

De Gea made a brilliant diving save to stop Robin Quaison's header flying into the top corner. Then a neat touch from Berg set up Emil Forsberg who grazed the post.

Sweden stayed in the ascendancy after half-time and broke through in the 50th minute. De Gea palmed away Berg's header and then rose to deny Forsberg on the rebound but the ball spun up from his second save and Berg was well-placed to nod in the opener.

Kepa replaced the limping De Gea on the hour.

Spain had some joy from crosses, with Moreno and Oyarzabal both going close. But it looked like Sweden would hold on until Rodrigo, on for Thiago, struck.



David De Gea suffered an injury that could rule him out of Manchester United's Premier League clash with Liverpool on Sunday

Messi wins third straight Golden Shoe award

AFP | Beijing

Barcelona attacker Lionel Messi has been presented with the European Golden Shoe after ending the 2018-19 season as the leading marksman on the continent.

He won the race by scoring 36 times in 34 outings for the Camp Nou side last season as they regained their Primera Division trophy, with the 32-year-old once again their star performer.

It was the sixth occasion he has won the award and marked nine years after he first lifted the prize by scoring 34 goals during the 2009-10 campaign.

Kylian Mbappe of Paris Saint-Germain was the only player to push the South American close in the race, with the young French superstar having netted on 33 occasions for the Ligue 1 champions.

Completing the top three was



Lionel Messi poses with his family after receiving his sixth Golden Shoe award

Fabio Quagliarella of Sampdoria, who found the net 26 times to finish as Serie A's leading scorer.

Three players have dominated

ed the Golden Shoe over the course of the last decade, with the usual suspects of Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo joined by two-time winner Luis Suarez,

who is the only non-La Liga player to win the award - doing so jointly with Ronaldo in 2014 while still a Liverpool player - since the Portuguese did so with Manchester United in 2008.

Remarkably, the winner of the Golden Boot award in eight of the last nine seasons has scored at a rate of more than a goal per game. The one exception was Messi's 2018 triumph, when he netted on 34 occasions, having played 36 matches.

Messi will be hard pushed to match his previous exploits during the 2019-20 season, which has already been marked with two spells out with injury, restricting him to just one full 90-minute display in La Liga to date. The five-time Ballon d'Or winner, who was also recently awarded FIFA's The Best Male Player for 2018-19, marked that appearance with a goal against Sevilla.

Bahrain's Salwa Eid Naser nominated for Female World Athlete of the Year



Salwa Eid Naser of Bahrain crosses the finish line to win the Women's 400 Metres final (file photo)

TDT | Manama

Bahraini champion Salwa Eid Naser, has been selected as a nominee in the 2019 World Athletes of the Year.

She is one of the 11 nominees for Female World Athlete of the Year who were selected by an international panel of athletics experts, comprising representatives from all six continental areas of the IAAF, the IAAF said.

The nominations of 11 athletes reflects the remarkable

range of exceptional performances that the sport has witnessed this year, at the IAAF World Athletics Championships in Doha, and in the Diamond League and in road and cross country events.

Salwa was selected after she won world 400m title in 48.14, the third-fastest time in history. She also won the Diamond League title and three gold medals at the Asian Championships.

Salwa remains undefeated at 400m outdoors.

Murray overcomes Coppejans in Antwerp opener

Reuters | Antwerp

Former world number one Andy Murray began his European Open campaign with a battling 6-4 7-6(4) victory over unseeded Belgian Kimmer Coppejans in Antwerp on Tuesday.

The 32-year-old Scot, who is continuing his comeback after having career-saving hip re-



Andy Murray returns a shot

surfacing surgery in January, was stretched by the wildcard in the second set but held his nerve to prevail in an hour and 44 minutes.

Three-times Grand Slam champion Murray won 75% of points on his first serve and converted four out of six break points to overcome his opponent, who is ranked 158

in the world, for his first ATP level victory in Europe for 16 months.

Up next for Murray is either eighth seed Pablo Cuevas or Bolivia's Hugo Dellien.

Murray is hoping to regain full match fitness before he makes his much-anticipated Grand Slam return at next year's Australian Open.

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