

SPORTS
sports

'Special' farewell for Robben, Ribery as Bayern win title

● Bayern Munich won Bundesliga with decisive goals from Arjen Robben and Franck Ribery

● Victory leaves Bayern two points ahead of Dortmund

AFP | Berlin

Franck Ribery hailed a "special" moment as he and Arjen Robben both scored in their final game at the Allianz Arena yesterday to wrap up a 5-1 win over Eintracht Frankfurt and a seventh successive Bundesliga title.

"It was a special moment, but also a difficult one," Ribery told Sky.

"These were my last moments at the Allianz Arena, with the fans and with my team, after being here for 12 years."

"There is a time for everything and you have to accept it."

The fairytale farewell for club icons Robben and Ribery saw Bayern end an unusually tight title race two points ahead of rivals Borussia Dortmund, who beat Borussia Mönchengladbach 2-0.

"You couldn't write a better finale than that," said Bayern coach Niko Kovac.

Nine points behind Dortmund in December, Bayern lost just one game be-



(Front row, L to R) Bayern Munich's Dutch midfielder Arjen Robben, Bayern Munich's Brazilian defender Rafinha and Bayern Munich's French midfielder Franck Ribery lift the trophy as Bayern Munich players celebrate

tween January and May as they bounced back to be crowned German champions for the 29th time in their history.

Robben and Ribery, who will both leave the club at the end of the season, came off the bench against Frankfurt to score Bayern's fourth and fifth goals and end Dortmund's hopes of pulling off a final day miracle.

Their departure marks the end of a glistening decade of success for Bayern, who are now set for a major squad overhaul ahead of next season, having already signed World Cup winners Benjamin Pavard and Lucas

Hernandez.

Kingsley Coman gave Bayern a dream start, slotting home a Thomas Mueller through ball after just four minutes.

There was brief hope for Dortmund as both they and Frankfurt scored either side of half-time.

After Gladbach dominated the first half, Jadon Sancho smashed in the opener for Dortmund, and Reus doubled the lead after the break.

In Munich, Sebastian Haller bundled in a shock equaliser at a corner just after the break, but Bayern responded furiously, and David Alaba restored the lead in

a matter of minutes.

Dortmund's hopes lay in tatters when Renato Sanches blasted the ball in from close range to score his first Bundesliga goal and put Bayern 3-1 up.

Ribery and Robben each came off the bench to standing ovations in the second half, and Ribery danced through the Frankfurt ranks to seal the title on 72 minutes, before Robben completed a fairytale afternoon with a 78th minute tap-in.

Leverkusen secure top four spot

The defeats for Gladbach and

Frankfurt saw Bayer Leverkusen sneak into the fourth Champions League spot behind RB Leipzig, as they won 5-1 away to Hertha Berlin.

Valentino Lazaro cancelled out Kai Havertz's opener but Julian Brandt and a Lucas Alario hat-trick ensured a comfortable win for Leverkusen.

Third-place RB Leipzig lost 2-1 to Werder Bremen, 40-year-old Claudio Pizarro grabbing the winner after Nordin Mukiele had equalised Milot Rashica's opener.

Leipzig-bound coach Julian Nagelsmann will leave Hoffen-

heim without European football, meanwhile, after Mainz came from behind to snatch a late 4-2 win and knock Hoffenheim down to ninth.

Daniel Brosinski and Jean-Paul Boëtius cancelled out first-half goals from Ishak Belfodil and Andrej Kramaric, before Boëtius and Jean-Philippe Mateta snatched the win in injury-time.

Wolfsburg will join Gladbach and Frankfurt in the Europa League after a Wout Weghorst hat-trick and goals from Robin Knoche, Daniel Ginczek, Elvis Rexbechaj and Josip Brekalo saw them thrash Augsburg 8-1.

Julian Schieber picked up a consolation goal for Augsburg before a Kevin Danso own-goal completed the rout.

At the other end of the table, Stuttgart held Schalke to a 0-0 draw, and Nicolai Müller's late goal was not enough for relegated Hanover, as Rouwen Hennings and Kenan Karaman fired Fortuna Düsseldorf to a 2-1 win.



Bayern Munich secured seventh league title in a row

Zidane the boss as Bale set for final game at Real

Gareth Bale

AFP | Madrid

Zinedine Zidane hinted yesterday that Gareth Bale could make his last appearance for Real Madrid on Sunday after saying he would make changes this summer ahead of the final match of their miserable La Liga season.

Bale fell out with Zidane towards the end of the Frenchman's first spell in charge and their relationship has quickly soured again, with the Wales attacker starting just five times since the coach's return in March and left out completely for Real's last two matches against Villarreal and Real Sociedad.

Zidane said Bale would be in the squad against Real Betis on Sunday but, asked by reporters if it would be his last game for Madrid, he said: "I don't know, I can't tell you. It's the season finale and next year there are going to be changes. But I don't know what is going to happen."

Madrid face Betis at the Santiago Bernabeu in their final match of a campaign that will see them finish third, behind both Barcelona and Atletico Madrid, and trophyless after being knocked out of the Copa Del Rey by Barca and the Champions League by Ajax.

Zidane has pledged to make changes once the campaign is over, with several players including Bale expected to be sold, and defended his right to make the big calls.

"It's my decision," Zidane told reporters. "That is clear as water. I'm the coach and I will always do what I want to do. If not, I'll leave."

"For signings and those sorts of things we have people who work on them but we work together."

De Bruyne has no sympathy for Liverpool over narrow title miss

AFP | London

Manchester City star Kevin De Bruyne understands Liverpool players being disappointed at falling just short of winning the Premier League title but he does not

have any sympathy for them.

The 27-year-old Belgian midfielder says simply his side were better than Liverpool.

De Bruyne says no one would have felt sorry for City when they lost to Tottenham Hotspur in the Champions League quarter-final.

"No," he said this week

when asked did he have sympathy for Liverpool.

"It's a remarkable effort but it means that we were just better than them in the end."

"I don't feel sorry for them because I don't think they'd feel sorry for us."

"I don't think anybody felt sorry about the way we went out of the Champions League."

He played a less influential role than in City's 2017/18 title triumph, starting just 11 league matches with bit parts in eight others due to two serious knee injuries and then a hamstring problem.

De Bruyne, who had a superb 2018 being named City's player of the 2017/18 season and then

sparkled for Belgium as they finished a best ever third in the World Cup, says Liverpool feeling sore is understandable.

"I know how they feel because you're going to feel disappointed," said De Bruyne, who is fit for selection for the Cup final.

"We'd feel the same if it happened to us. But we're still competitors. We want to win as much as they do but I can understand the feelings they have."

De Bruyne, whose high point in what he admits has "not been the most fun season" has come off the pitch with his second son being born, is a great believer in football being played through emotions.

For me football is still a game of emotions. I don't like how people try to take emotions out of the game, because what it's about is having fun, enjoying. If you win you're happy, if you lose you are sad. And that's what it's all about

KEVIN DE BRUYNE

