

# Haaland Strikes as City Hunt Down Arsenal

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TDT | Manama

**E**rling Haaland once again made the difference as Manchester City defeated Arsenal 2-1 at the Etihad Stadium, cutting the gap at the top of

the Premier League to three points and tightening a title race that is now finely poised.

The Norwegian striker scored the winner in the 65th minute of a high-quality contest, rescuing City after a costly Gianluigi Donnarumma error allowed Kai Havertz to equalise shortly after Rayan Cherki's brilliant opener. The result marked Arsenal's second straight defeat with only five matches remaining. City, with a game in hand, continue to build momentum in pursuit of what would be a seventh Premier

Rayan Cherki spreads his arms after firing City ahead



Celebrations after the winning goal

League title in nine years. Arsenal remain top, but the setback

significantly reduces their margin for error in the chase for a first league title since 2004. Buoyed by strong recent form,

including victory over the Gunners in last month's Carabao Cup final, City started brightly. Haaland forced an early save

from David Raya and saw another effort blocked as the hosts applied early pressure. Cherki also looked lively, and

City's dominance paid off in the 16th minute. After a Rodri cross was only partially cleared, the French midfielder dribbled past two defenders and finished superbly into the bottom corner.

City's lead lasted just two minutes. From a throw-in situation, Donnarumma hesitated on a clearance, and Havertz reacted quickest as the ball ricocheted off him and rolled into the net. It was the German's first league goal since February 2025, also against City, and it briefly shifted momentum.

The game-winning moment came in the 65th minute. City broke down the left through Nico O'Reilly, with Rodri helping the ball into the danger area. It evaded defenders before Haaland controlled it in the box, turned sharply, and finished clinically for his 23rd goal of the season.

The Gunners pushed late for an equaliser. Gabriel saw a header deflected onto the post by O'Reilly, adding to their frustration. Tensions also rose during a heated exchange involving Gabriel and Haaland.

Deep into stoppage time, Havertz had one final chance but headed over from Leandro Trossard's cross, sealing Arsenal's defeat.

Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta admitted his side had "lost an opportunity in terms of the result," but insisted it is still "game on," pointing to City's game in hand and the narrow gap at the top.

Pep Guardiola described the match as "a good advert for the Premier League," adding that outcomes at this level come down to "fine margins."

## Rybakina outclasses Muchova to win Stuttgart WTA title

AFP | Stuttgart

**A**ustralian Open champion Elena Rybakina picked up her second title of the year as she outclassed Karolina Muchova 7-5, 6-1 to win the WTA Stuttgart indoor clay-court tournament yesterday.

Top seed Rybakina, 26, snatched a tight opening set with two breaks against her seventh-seeded Czech opponent after 53 minutes on court in Germany.

The Kazakh never looked back in the second set rushing to a 5-0 lead as Muchova struggled with her serve, sealing victory and the 13th title of her career after 1hr 18 min.

Rybakina, who finished runner-up at Indian Wells last month, regained the title she won two years ago and drives off with a second Porsche



Elena Rybakina

sports car -- the coveted prize awarded to the champion in Stuttgart.

Muchova had lead Rybakina 2-1 in previous meetings heading into the title match having won their most recent clash on hard court in Brisbane in January.

Rybakina had a relatively smooth run this week dropping only one set and dispatching her toughest opponent world number six Mirra Andrejeva by the same score

## Rabiot fires AC Milan to verge of Champions League return

AFP | Milan

**A**drien Rabiot boosted AC Milan's bid to return to the Champions League with the only goal in yesterday's 1-0 win at Verona, which moved his team back up to second in Serie A.

France midfielder Rabiot swept home the only goal in the 41st minute at the Stadio Marcantonio Bentegodi to give Milan an eight-point cushion on Como and Roma in fifth and sixth.

The 31-year-old calmly netted his sixth league goal of the season after snatching possession in midfield and exchanging passes with Rafael Leao, for the only real highlight of a largely drab encounter.

"The important thing is winning and getting the points we need to achieve our objectives, but we made a lot of mistakes today. We could have played a



AC Milan's French midfielder #12 Adrien Rabiot celebrates scoring his team's first goal

lot better," said Rabiot.

"We need to stay focussed on qualifying for the Champions League."

Milan took advantage of Como falling to a surprise defeat at Sassuolo on Friday and Roma

drawing with Atalanta on Saturday night, and with five matches remaining in the season, the Rossoneri are all-but sure of a top four finish.

The seven-time European champions have had no conti-

mental football this season after a disastrous previous campaign which led to Massimiliano Allegri retaking the reins as coach last summer.

Allegri said on Friday that he has already started planning for next season with Milan's management, and after Saturday's win the 58-year-old again ruled himself out of the vacant Italy job.

"No-one has contacted me (from the Italian Football Federation), and all my thoughts are on Milan: we've started something together and we'll continue it together," said Allegri.

Verona's fifth straight defeat means almost certain relegation, as Paolo Sammarco's team are bottom of the division and 10 points behind Cremonese, who sit just outside the drop zone and drew 0-0 at Torino in the day's early fixture.