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Barcelona draw blank in Lyon

● **Lionel Messi and Barcelona were frustrated in a 0-0 draw in Lyon in the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie**

● **Valverde finds positives as Barcelona failing to take chances and leave tie open**

● **Barcelona thwarted by Lyon's fortitude and their own poor finishing**

AFP | Lyon



Barcelona's Lionel Messi surges past Lyon's defender Ferland Mendy (left), Lucas Tousart (second left), Marcelo (third left) and Housseem Aouar

Barcelona coach Ernesto Valverde shrugged off his team's struggles in front of goal after they were held to a 0-0 draw away at Lyon in the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie on Tuesday.

The Spanish side had most of the chances at the Groupama Stadium, with Luis Suarez firing just wide in the second half, although it was Lyon who came the closest when Martin Terrier hit the bar early on.

Lionel Messi and co. were once again left frustrated on the road at the business end of the competition, and have now gone six away matches without winning in the Champions League knockout rounds, scoring just a single goal in that time. It is a run that goes back three years.

Desperate to end Real Madrid's recent European dominance, Barca must now finish

the job when the teams meet again at the Camp Nou on March 13, but Lyon remain in the tie.

Barcelona's form needs to improve between now and then, though -- they have drawn four of their last five matches in all, and have scored just once, from a penalty, in their last three outings.

"We played good football, but you have to hit the target as well, and we didn't," Valverde said.

"We are on the right road, though, and the tie is still up in the air. We will try to win it in front of our fans."

He added: "I am not happy with the result, but I am happy with the performance and with what we created.

"We didn't score, but that is how it is. It is not easy to win

away from home in the Champions League."

The visitors -- who started with Sergi Roberto in midfield rather than the out-of-form Philippe Coutinho -- had good reason to be wary of their hosts, who have excelled in big games this season.

Lyon still unbeaten in Europe

Bruno Genesio's team had taken four points from a possible six against Manchester City in the group stage and recently won at home to Paris Saint-Germain in Ligue 1.

They are still unbeaten in Europe this season, although this was their sixth consecutive draw.

"It's a satisfying result because it leaves us with a chance

for the second leg, and we didn't concede. If we can score at the Camp Nou we'll have a chance of going through," said Genesio.

He admitted that he had hoped for an even better performance, but Lyon were missing their World Cup-winning captain Nabil Fekir due to suspension here.

It was the 21-year-old Terrier who surprisingly started in his place, and he delivered the most exciting moment of the first half for the crowd of almost 58,000 with a thunderous strike from 20 yards out in the ninth minute that was tipped onto the bar by Marc-Andre ter Stegen.

The same player later shot over at the end of a fantastic move, while Housseem Aouar had earlier been denied by the



Barcelona have drawn four of their last five matches in all championships

goalkeeper, but it was Barcelona who enjoyed the longer spells of possession.

Ousmane Dembele -- one of two Frenchmen in the away line-up -- came closest for them in the first half, although their best chances came after he had been replaced by Coutinho midway through the second period.

Suarez came within inches of breaking the deadlock 20 minutes from time, firing narrowly wide from Jordi Alba's cutback. He has now gone 16 away matches without scoring in the competition.

Coutinho had a powerful shot beaten away by Anthony Lopes, with the Lyon goalkeeper also frustrating Messi and Sergio Busquets as Barcelona dominated but departed without a potentially precious away goal.

"It is a little bit of a disappointment, but there is still the second leg to come and we hope to do better," said defender Clement Lenglet.

At least they extended their unbeaten record against Lyon to seven matches, but there remains hope for the French club ahead of the return.

Taha to manage top coaching programme

TDT | Manama

Bahrain Olympic Committee (BOC) Olympic Academy director Dr Nabeel Taha has been once again selected by the Coaching Association of Canada to manage the Level 4 National Coaching Programme, organized by the academy.

This was announced as Supreme Council for Youth and Sports assistant secretary general and Bahrain Olympic Committee (BOC) secretary general Abdulrahman Askar received World renowned coaching educator and applied sport scientist Istvan Balyi at the committee offices in Seef, in presence of Taha and academy executive coordinator Mahmood Yateem.

Askar welcomed the Canadian professor and commended his efforts in coordination with the academy to qualify large number of national coaches. Askar also noted the successes achieved by the programme in developing high-standard coaches in different sports.

During the meeting, Balyi presented Taha with the mandate issued by the Coaching Association of Canada, as the latter will have full authority to run the next edition of the programme in its Level 4.

Balyi also reviewed the importance of the programme and the Bahrain Olympic Committee's efforts in the field of physical literacy and long-term sports planning.



Members of the Lexus GS and Lexus IS fan clubs at the popular Drag & Drift nights at the Bahrain International Circuit (BIC). Members were welcomed with hospitality and challenging competitions as well as the chance to experience their cars on the world renowned drag strip during the event hosted by Ebrahim K. Kanoo. The all new Lexus ES and IS were available for guests to test drive and the sporty F-sport versions of both cars were also on display for closer viewing

Strongest Bahraini Championship to begin today

TDT | Manama

The 2nd Strongest Bahraini Championship, taking place under the slogan #Be_a_Beast, will kick-off today at Bahrain International Circuit (BIC).

Ahmed Al Shaikh, President of the event's High Organising Committee and Manager of HH Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa Media Office, stressed that the Committee is looking forward to writing a new chapter in successes in the second

edition of the championship which will be held under the patronage of HH Shaikh Khalid, First Deputy President of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports, President of Bahrain Athletics Association and Honourary President of Bahrain Sports Federation for Disabilities.

The event will conclude on Saturday and the proceeds will be donated to support cancer patients as the event is part of HH Shaikh Khalid's humanitarian and sports initiatives.

Al Shaikh's remarks came during the press conference which was held at the BIC's Media Centre to shed lights on the latest organisational development of the Championship. Speaking during the conference were Ahmed Jamsheer, Head of the Arbitration Committee of the Championship and Shareef Al Mahdi, CEO of the BIC, while it was overseen by Fawaz Al Abdullah. The event was attended by many media representatives and participants in the Championship.

Bayern frustrate Liverpool

● **A frustrating night for Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp ended in a 0-0 draw against Bayern Munich in the Champions League**

AFP | Liverpool

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp admitted an underwhelming 0-0 draw against old foes Bayern Munich on Tuesday was not what he "dreamed of", but remained confident of progressing to the quarter-finals of the Champions League.

Sadio Mane wasted the best chance when the Senegalese forward fired wide during an open first 45 minutes, but a cagey second half left it all to be decided when the sides meet again in Munich on March 13.

However, without the talismanic presence of Virgil van Dijk through suspension and the injured Joe Gomez and Dejan Lovren, Liverpool at least did not concede an away goal despite fielding a make-shift central defensive pairing of Brazilian midfielder Fabinho and Joel Matip.

"It's not the result or the game we dreamed of," said Klopp. "It is not a game we will remember in 30 years. It's the result we have and we will work with that."

"It was a clean sheet without the big man (Van Dijk). A lot of people wouldn't have expected that. The defending was good. A lot of things were really good, I'm not over the moon but I'm completely OK with the game."

That unfamiliarity in Liverpool's defence showed in the early stages as the hosts started nervously at the back.

Matip breathed a sigh of relief when he turned Serge Gnabry's driven cross towards his own goal only for the ball to bounce to safety off Alisson Becker's chest.

However, the Brazilian goalkeeper played his side into trouble moments later to put pressure on Matip and when he was dispossessed by Robert Lewandowski, Kingsley Coman fired into the side-netting.

Liverpool were also posing plenty of problems at the other end, although their final ball often lacked precision.



Liverpool's Egyptian midfielder Mohamed Salah (C) controls the ball under pressure from Bayern Munich's German midfielder Joshua Kimmich (L) and Bayern Munich's German defender Niklas Sule (R)