

SPORTS
sports

Atletico stun Juventus

Atletico spoil Cristiano Ronaldo's return to Madrid for the Champions League last-16, first leg tie

● **Diego Simeone's triple change inspires 'brave' Atletico Madrid to impressive win over Juventus**

AFP | Madrid

Cristiano Ronaldo's Champions League mission with Juventus stalled on Wednesday as Atletico Madrid secured a deserved 2-0 victory from a thrilling first leg at the Wanda Metropolitano.

Ronaldo returned to the Spanish capital, where he enjoyed unprecedented success in this tournament with Real, but it was their rivals celebrating at the final whistle as goals from Jose Gimenez and Diego Godin put Atletico within sight of the quarter-finals.

"We are not through yet," Atletico coach Diego Simeone said. "There is another match to play and we know we will have to suffer."

"Fortunately we didn't concede a third," said Juventus boss Massimiliano Allegri. "Because 2-0 is a result that can be turned around. We're not dead yet."

But this was a victory that Simeone's side fully deserved. Antoine Griezmann had hit the



Atletico Madrid's Jose Gimenez (second from left) scores against Juventus

crossbar while VAR twice intervened, correctly, in Juve's favour, cancelling a penalty for a foul on Diego Costa and then ruling out an Alvaro Morata header just before Gimenez struck.

While Juventus tried to preserve the stalemate, Atletico were bold. Simeone introduced Morata, Thomas Lemar and Angel Correa, all around the hourmark, and his daring paid off. "I showed balls," Simeone said.

Juve are certainly not dead and buried, particularly given Costa and Thomas Partey will both be suspended for the return

in Turin after each picked up yellow cards.

But the failure to score an away goal, and their clear inferiority in the second half does not bode well for any hopes of a comeback.

"They don't give you chances," said Allegri. "They make you play badly."

Defeat in the last 16 for either team would be unthinkable, for Atletico, who know the final will be played here, at their own stadium, on June 1, the perfect chance to wrestle the trophy off Real in the very city they share.

Ronaldo subdued

And for Juventus, whose wait for Europe's premier prize has now entered its 23rd year, when expectations are higher than ever given they now boast the tournament's most prolific ever player.

Ronaldo, though, endured a disappointing night, suffocated from the outset by a typically relentless Atletico backline.

Perhaps it was frustration that made him wave five fingers in the direction of the baiting Atletico crowd, presumably to sig-



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His best contribution was an early, driven free-kick from 30 yards, that had to be pushed over by Jan Oblak, and the dummy-shot before it, that exposed Costa as encroaching, for which he received his yellow card.

Costa was his bristling self and almost won a penalty when referee Felix Zwayer thought he was tripped by Mattia de Sciglio. But VAR showed he had not only exaggerated the contact but also extended his run into the area.

The rest of the half was tricky but Atletico had two golden opportunities early in the second. First, Griezmann volleyed Costa in behind but the Spaniard side-footed wide with only Wojciech Szczesny to beat.

Lassana Diarra released by PSG

AFP | Paris

Former French international midfielder Lassana Diarra has been released from the remainder of his contract by Paris Saint-Germain, the club announced.

Diarra, 33, signed for PSG in January last year on a deal through to the end of this season.

He made 15 appearances in the second half of last season but has played just four times in the current campaign under coach Thomas Tuchel, most recently in October.

Stokes, Buttler rested from England T20 series against West Indies

AFP | London

Ben Stokes and Jos Buttler will be rested from England's Twenty20 series against the West Indies, selectors announced.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Sam Billings and batsman Dawid Malan return to the 14-man squad for the first time since last year's tour of Australia and New Zealand.

Stokes and Buttler were both involved in the Test series in the West Indies and are playing in the ongoing one-day international series which ends on March 2.

Mbappe starts for PSG against Montpellier

AFP | Paris

Angel Di Maria scored a sumptuous free-kick and Kylian Mbappe was also on target as Paris Saint-Germain continued their relentless march towards another French title by hammering Montpellier 5-1 on Wednesday.

With Neymar and Edinson Cavani still absent, Layvin Kurzawa also scored for PSG at the Parc des Princes, while two own goals completed the rout.

Florent Mollet had equalised at one point in the first half for the visitors before they crumbled in a rearranged fixture that had initially been postponed in early December due to disruption caused by "yellow vest" anti-government protests in France.

As they warm up for the second leg of their Champions



PSG's Kylian Mbappe (R) vies with Montpellier's Petar Skuletic

League last-16 tie against Manchester United on March 6, PSG are now a huge 15 points clear of second-placed Lille, and still have a game in hand as they race to a sixth Ligue 1 title in



seven seasons.

"It came down to patience, and quality, and a bit of luck as well," said PSG coach Thomas Tuchel after his side maintained their perfect home record in the league this season.

It was also their ninth win by a margin of at least four goals in the current campaign.

"It was not our best performance, but with our attacking quality it was a deserved victory," added Tuchel.

Sterling winner caps late Man City comeback

AFP | Gelsenkirchen, Germany

Raheem Sterling sealed a dramatic 3-2 Champions League win for 10-man Manchester City at Schalke on Wednesday as the English champions scored twice in the last five minutes.

Sterling tucked away the winner at the Veltins Arena in the 90th minute just after substitute Leroy Sane fired home a stunning free-kick for the Premier League leaders against his former club in the last 16, first leg.

"I waited for my chance and wanted to shoot from there as I had previously scored from that position and it restored our confidence," a delighted Sane told broadcaster DAZN after his equaliser.

"We will not go far in this competition unless we improve

PEP GUARDIOLA
MANCHESTER CITY MANAGER

Schalke led 2-1 at half-time as the video assistant referee (VAR) twice intervened to award penalties, both converted by Nabil Bentaleb, cancelling out Sergio Aguero's opener in Gelsenkirchen.

City were in real trouble with 22 minutes left when Nicolas Otamendi, who gave away the controversial first penalty, was sent off for a second yellow card before Sane's moment of brilliance and Sterling's winner.



Manchester City's English forward Raheem Sterling scores the winning 2-3 goal in front of Schalke's German goalkeeper Ralf Faehrmann

Sanad kids show football skills

TDI | Manama

Young footballers from Sanad were the most recent engagers of the recently-launched 'Al Firjan Playgrounds' programme.

In their visit to Sanad area, former national football team stars Mohammed Juma'a Bashir and Khalid Jassim Al Nusuf, joined by Bahrain Olympic Committee's Mohammed Salman, met the kids at the playgrounds and presented them with some of their experiences while explaining the idea of the programme.

The team also performed a short practice session for the kids, which was conducted by programme supervisors Hamad Mohammed and Mohammed Sulaiman. Late on, the 62 youngsters received footballs as incentive gifts donated by BOC.

This gesture was well admired by the kids and their youngsters who thanked BOC and the team for their efforts to activate the project, and expressed their motivation to continue playing football and hoped to represent one of the national clubs and the national team in the future.

BCC excel in CBA's ETS league

TDI | Manama

BCC defeated Pak Arab Zalmi by 92 runs in the ETS Div A T25 league organized by Cricket Bahrain Association.

Batting first BCC posted 270 runs. Adnan Butt top scored with 73 runs. Adil Hanif supported with 56 runs. In reply Pak Arab Zalmi could

only manage 178 runs. Ali Dawood claimed 2 wickets for BCC

BDS Bassali defeated Exelon Young Boys by 82 runs in another fixture. Batting first BDS posted 222 runs. Hammad Shakeel posted 66 runs for BDS. Zeeshan Abbass claimed 2 wickets for Young Boys. In reply Exelon Young Boys could only manage

140 runs. Abdul Basit claimed 4 wickets for BDS Bassali.

Indian Blue defeated Climax Zalmi by 6 wickets. Batting first Climax Zalmi posted 137 runs. Younis claimed 3 wickets for Indian Blue. In reply Indian Blue chased target for loss of 4 wickets. Nishant top scored with 34 runs for Indian Blues.