

Chelsea go top as Brighton earn first win at Villa



Tammy Abraham of Chelsea shoots to score
AFP | London

Chelsea climbed to the top of the Premier League for the first time in more than two years with a convincing 2-0 win at Newcastle, while Brighton survived late penalty controversy to secure their first ever victory at Aston Villa yesterday.

Frank Lampard's side moved above Leicester on goal difference thanks to Federico Fernandez's first-half own goal and Tammy Abraham's strike after the interval.

Chelsea are unbeaten in nine games in all competitions and have not lost in their last six league matches.

With five clean sheets in their last six matches in all competitions, Chelsea's third successive league victory was the perfect way to start a hectic period leading up to Christmas.

Maurizio Sarri was in charge the last time Chelsea were in pole position in the Premier League in September 2018.

But Lampard's squad are more formidable than his pre-

It's not an easy game. We played well in patches and the result is key in these games. The Premier League is tough, relentless, and we dealt with the challenge of the game very well

FRANK LAMPARD

decessor's fragile team and a serious title challenge looks increasingly possible.

Chelsea's pressure was rewarded in the 10th minute when a short corner caught Newcastle flat-footed.

Mason Mount whipped in a low cross and Fernandez turned it into his own net under pressure from Ben Chilwell at the far post.

With Lampard's men monopolising possession, Timo Werner should have doubled their lead from Mount's pass, but the German forward scuffed his shot wide from 10 yards.

Gabriel "Fly" wants a crack at BRAVE CF 45's Dumar Roa

Dumar Roa challenged by Gabriel "Fly" for Featherweight world title belt



Gabriel "Fly"

Dumar politely accepts the challenge

TDI | Manama

Gabriel "Fly" was set to compete at BRAVE CF 45's main event, but was forced to pull out due to covid-19. The Brazilian grappler was set to take on Colombia's Dumar Roa before contracting the virus prior to leaving Brazil. He was replaced by Ian Entwistle, who got close to submitting Roa, before succumbing to an injury. "Corazon de Leon" has shown amazing submission defense and earned his win.

It was Dumar's second straight victory against a top opponent under the BRAVE CF banner - he had previously knocked out former world champion Abdul-Kareem Al-Selwady. Riding high after these two wins, Roa was challenged by "Fly", who wants their bout to take place with the BRAVE CF Featherweight world title belt on the line.

Colombia and Brazil have been two of the greatest homes for BRAVE Combat Federation, hosting six events in total (four in Brazil and two in Colombia), and Gabriel wants to see a clash between both countries for the Featherweight strap.



Dumar Roa



Gabriel "Fly" and Dumar Roa know each other from the time they shared the mats in the build-up to BRAVE CF 26, when both of them fought in Bogota, Colombia

"Four events in Brazil, two in Colombia. Brazilian and Colombian fans deserve to (see a) fight for a world title. We are ready to represent our countries and Latin America in a great fight for the world title of the fastest-growing global organization in the world", said Gabriel on his social media profiles.

Dumar politely accepted the challenge, as the duo knew each other from the time they shared the mats in the build-up to BRAVE CF 26, when both of them fought in Bogota, Colombia.

"I'm ready to fight anyone you bring to me. If that's Gabriel, I'm ready to fight him. Let's go "Fly", let's do this".

Muharraq surge late to defeat Bahrain Club in BBA Cup

TDI | Manama

Muharraq defeated Bahrain Club 102-84 last night to get their campaign underway on a positive note in the 2020/2021 Bahrain Basketball Association (BBA) Cup, which is being played at Zain Basketball Arena in Um Al Hassam.

The victors used strong fourth quarter to turn away a solid challenge from their opponents, whom they outscored 30-13 in the period.

That helped Muharraq blow a close fight wide open en route to securing their 18-point triumph.



Muharraq's Bader Malabes attempts to drive past Bahrain Club's Abbas Jawadi during their game yesterday

The game marked the first appearance in Muharraq colours for newly signed veterans and former national team stars Hussain Shaker and Ahmed Abdulaziz, who were among the club's new high-profile additions during the off-season. The other two, Kuwayed brothers Mohammed and Younes, did not play last night.

Muharraq clinched their first win in the cup's Group A, which also comprises Bahrain Club, Al Ettihad, Nuwaidrat, Isa Town and defending league champions Al Ahli.

Meanwhile, in yesterday's other game, Al Hala defeated Riffa by default, as the Riffa team did not show up for the

game. That gave both Hala their first win in Group B, joining Manama and Al Najma. Manama beat Samahej while Najma outplayed Sitra.

This stage of the BBA Cup, which is the first competition of the 2020/2021 national basketball season, is being played in a single round-robin within each group, with the top two teams qualifying for the semi-finals.

Each club is allowed one foreign player in the tournament, while none of Bahrain's national team players are competing. Teams are encouraged to give their younger players experience in this level of competition.

Depleted Real Madrid pinned back by Villarreal

AFP | Madrid

A patched-up Real Madrid had to hang on for a 1-1 draw at in-form Villarreal yesterday, handing Barcelona and Atletico Madrid the chance to capitalise in La Liga.

Mariano Diaz gave Real Madrid the lead after just 105 seconds but Zinedine Zidane's team faded at La Ceramica and Villarreal claimed a deserved point through Gerard Moreno's second-half penalty.

"It feels like a small reward," said Zidane. "We deserved more today for the game we played. I'm annoyed because of the effort from the boys."

Mariano was almost sold last summer but had to stand in for Karim Benzema, who is injured, and Luka Jovic, who tested positive for coronavirus on Friday.

Sergio Ramos, Eder Militao and Casemiro were all missing following the international break, leaving Nacho Fernandez and an unfit Raphael Varane to fill in at the back, while Martin Odegaard made a rare start in midfield.

Given the absentees, a draw may not worry Zidane too much, particularly against a buoyant Villarreal side who sat second at kick-off after four victories on the bounce.

But another slip means Madrid have now won only three of their last seven games in all competitions, with a crucial visit to Inter Milan to come in the Champions League on



General view inside the stadium during the match

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of their last seven games in all competitions could only be won by Real Madrid

Wednesday.

If Atletico Madrid beat Barcelona they will move three points clear of their city rivals, with a game in hand, and nine ahead of Barca.

Mariano had not started for Real Madrid since May 2019, when he again scored early against Villarreal after just 83 seconds.

He was not far behind this

time, heading in Dani Carvajal's cross after Villarreal's defence had stopped for an offside on Lucas Vazquez that never materialised.

Villarreal increasingly took charge of the game, their slick passing giving a sense of control but few chances, the best of them in the first half falling to Dani Parejo, who nodded over.

But Madrid appeared to tire as the match wore on and Villarreal's pressure turned more threatening in the last 20 minutes, with Moreno flashing wide from the angle and then Parejo missing the target from a cutback.

The equaliser was late but deserved, as Thibaut Courtois flew out to meet a through ball for Moreno but arrived second and fouled the striker with his hands.



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