

Juve deepen Man City crisis, Barcelona into Champions League knockouts

AFP – Manchester City's crisis continued with a 2-0 defeat away to Juventus in the Champions League on Wednesday, while Pep Guardiola's old club Barcelona beat Borussia Dortmund to clinch a spot in the knockout stage of Europe's elite club competition.

Arsenal, AC Milan, Atletico Madrid, Lille, Feyenoord and Stuttgart were also victorious, but City's latest loss in a miserable run will dominate the headlines.

The 2023 European champions succumbed in Turin as Dusan Vlahovic put Juventus ahead early in the second half when goalkeeper Ederson was unable to keep out his header.

Ilkay Gundogan was denied an equaliser by a fine Michele Di Gregorio save, before Weston McKennie made it 2-0 with a fine acrobatic finish in the 75th minute.

The result leaves Juventus on 11 points with two games left, a tally that is expected to be enough to guarantee them at least a place in the knockout phase play-offs.

City, meanwhile, have now won just once in 10 in all competitions, with seven defeats in that time.

With just eight points, they currently sit 22nd in the standings, in which the top 24 advance to the knockouts. Their next game will be crucial, as they travel to a Paris Saint-Germain side who sit a point beneath Guardiola's men.

"We have to get points, we'll go to Paris to try and do that and the same goes for the final match at home (to Club Brugge)," Guardiola told Amazon Prime in Italy.

Barcelona are second in the standings with 15 points, behind only Liverpool, after beating Dortmund 3-2 in a thriller in Germany, with Ferran Torres their hero.

Raphinha fired Barca ahead with his 17th goal of the season, early in a remarkable second half.

Serhou Guirassy equalised with a penalty on the hour mark, but substitute Torres put Barca back in front on 75 minutes, converting the loose ball after Fermin Lopez's shot was saved.

Guirassy scored again for a quick equaliser, only for Torres to strike once more and win the game for Barca with five minutes left.

Barcelona's tally leaves them, like Liverpool, ideally placed to finish in the top eight, which means direct progress to the last 16 without having to go through the play-offs.

– Saka stars, Arsenal cruise –

Arsenal are third in the standings on 13 points after easing to a 3-0 win over Monaco in London.

Bukayo Saka scored twice, putting the Gunners ahead in the first half and making it 2-0 on 78 minutes as the hosts pounced on disastrous Monaco defending.

Saka then turned provider for the late third, with substitute Kai Havertz credited with the final touch.

Mikel Arteta's team are one of six sides on 13 points, with Lille also on that tally after edging Sturm Graz 3-2 in France thanks to a fine late winner from Hakon Haraldsson.

Lille were 2-0 up through Osame Sahraoui and Mitchel Bakker, only for goals by Otar Kiteishvili and Mika Biereth to bring the Austrian champions back level.

However, Icelandic midfielder Haraldsson secured Lille's

fourth win of the campaign.

Atletico eased to a 3-1 victory over Slovan Bratislava, with Antoine Griezmann scoring twice after Julian Alvarez had opened the scoring with an excellent strike.

David Strelec pulled one back for the Slovaks, who are one of three teams already eliminated having lost six games out of six. The others are RB Leipzig and Young Boys.

– Milan grab late winner –

Milan defeated Red Star Belgrade 2-1 at San Siro with Tammy Abraham grabbing the winner three minutes from time.

Rafael Leao had put Milan ahead only for Nemanja Radonjic to equalise for the Serbian side, who have lost five of their six games and are surely heading out.

Benfica edged closer to a play-off spot with a 0-0 draw at home to Bologna of Italy, who have scored just one goal in six games and will go no further.

Feyenoord stayed on course to go through after beating Sparta Prague 4-2 in Rotterdam, with Gernot Trauner, Igor Paixao, Anis Hadj Moussa and Santiago Gimenez netting their goals.

Stuttgart kept alive their hopes of progress by coming from behind to beat Young Boys 5-1.

Lukasz Lakomy put Young Boys ahead but Angelo Stiller levelled before Enzo Millot, Chris Fuehrich, Josha Vagnoman and Yannik Keitel all scored in the second half.

The next round of Champions League games is scheduled for January 21 and 22, with the league phase concluding the following week.

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