

Mbappe secures Real Madrid derby draw against Atletico

AFP- Kylian Mbappe secured Real Madrid a 1-1 draw against rivals Atletico Madrid which kept Los Blancos top of La Liga on Saturday. Julian Alvarez dinked home a controversial first half penalty for Atletico but Mbappe was in the right place at the right time to bundle home early in the second half on his first appearance in the tense derby clash.

Real Madrid lead second-place Atletico by a single point, with Barcelona, third, given the chance to cut the gap on the top two when they face Sevilla on Sunday.

“We have to continue on this path, we’re there in the fight and we will continue there until the end,” Alvarez told Movistar.

“I can’t say I wasn’t a bit nervous (with the penalty), but I was sure, I knew what I would do, and it was a great goal for the team.”

Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti opted to deploy his four key attacking players in Mbappe, Vinicius Junior, Jude Bellingham and Rodrygo Goes, in lieu of a more conservative approach.

The star names got stuck in, not always a given in a defensive sense, and the first half was a hard-fought, intense battle with few clear openings for either side.

Vinicius dragged a shot wide midway through the first half when he found a rare sight of goal for the hosts.

Atletico were upset when Real Madrid midfielder Dani Ceballos was only booked for an ugly challenge on Pablo Barrios, but it was the hosts who were left raging when referee Cesar Soto Grado pointed to the penalty spot.

Aurelien Tchouameni, covering at centre-back for Madrid with

Antonio Rudiger and Eder Militao out among others, clumsily trod on Samuel Lino's foot in the box.

After a VAR review Soto Grado awarded a controversial penalty to Madrid's frustration, with the incident happening after the ball had run past the duo.

Los Blancos attacked Spanish refereeing earlier in the week after they were upset by a decision in a shock defeat last weekend, bringing heavy scrutiny on the officials ahead of the derby.

Alvarez took the penalty, the first given against Madrid in La Liga this season, and cheekily executed a Panenka down the middle.

"Corruption in the federation," chanted Real Madrid fans in response, buying into their club's stance.

– Madrid battle back –

Madrid pulled level early in the second half when Rodrygo broke loose on the right of the box and crossed for Bellingham.

The England international's shot was blocked but Mbappe was on hand to turn home the rebound and score on his first Madrid derby appearance.

Bellingham twice came close to putting Madrid ahead, nodding against the crossbar from Vinicius' cross and then heading straight at Atletico goalkeeper Jan Oblak from a similar position, kicking the post in frustration.

Madrid played with far more fluidity in the second half and pegged Atletico back, forcing coach Diego Simeone into some defensive-minded changes, including withdrawing his son Giuliano who had a quiet game on the right wing.

Oblak made a smart save to deny Vinicius after the Brazilian

winger burst through the gap between two Atletico defenders and pulled the trigger from a tight angle.

The Slovenian goalkeeper also managed to keep out a dangerous free-kick from Rodrygo which was intended as a cross but almost flew in at the far post.

Oblak made a brave low stop from Mbappe in the 90th minute after Fede Valverde sent the French forward in behind the defence, and the two sides were left with a point apiece.

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