

Real beat luckless Atletico, stay one point behind Barca

Real Madrid are again within one point of Spanish leaders Barcelona after winning 3-2 against crosstown rivals Atletico in a action-packed Primera Liga derby.

Goals from South Americans Kaka, Marcelo and Gonzalo Higuain gave Real their third successive win at troubled Atletico, who are third from bottom.

Real had defender Sergio Ramos sent off Saturday night and went to pieces at the end. Diego Forlan and Sergio Agüero pulled late goals back for Atletico, but Real just managed to hang on.

'It was a close game,' said Higuain, 'but I think that we deserved to win.'

Atletico defender Antonio Lopez said that 'a draw would have been a fairer result, given all the chances that we had.'

The whites now have 25 points from 10 games, just one point less than Barcelona, who thrashed Mallorca 4-2 earlier Saturday.

Kaka gave Real the lead after just five minutes with a powerful high drive, after Atletico midfielder Cleber Santana had clumsily lost the ball.

Marcelo made it 2-0 for Real from a tight angle in the 25th minute, after being set up by Karim Benzema. Higuain seemed to have settled the issue by make it 3-0 in the 74th, after robbing the ball from the naive Luis Perea.

But Forlan pulled a goal back straight away for Atletico, Agüero made it 3-2 with 11 minutes to go - and suddenly 10-man Real were in trouble.

Spain keeper Iker Casillas had to make a point-blank save in injury-time from Agüero to prevent Atletico from snatching what would have been a well-deserved point.

Earlier Saturday, Pedro Rodriguez was the hero as Barcelona caned Mallorca 4-2 Saturday to stay on top. The little winger shot Barca ahead after 12 minutes, then restored their lead in the 41st minute after Jose Carlos Nunes had equalized for Mallorca.

Barca coach Josep Guardiola raised eyebrows by relegating Xavi, Andres Iniesta and Lionel Messi to the subs' bench. He explained the changes by saying: 'I wanted players who were fresher, because the journey to Kazan (on Wednesday, a 0-0 draw in the Champions League) was long and tiring.'

Barca made an uncertain start. In the 12th minute, however, a classy backheel from Zlatan Ibrahimovic set up Pedro, who calmly made it 1-0 with his trusty left foot.

Just eight minutes later, Mallorca defender Nunes took advantage of some sloppy Barca defending to head in a shock equalizer.

Barca again seemed unsure of themselves but resumed control by scoring two somewhat fortunate

goals just before half-time.

In the 41st minute, Pedro made it 2-1 after a series of rebounds in the 6-yard area. Three minutes later, Thierry Henry scored his first goal of the season, pushing the ball home after Sergio Busquets had headed across the Mallorca goal.

The second half only came to life at the end. Four minutes from time, Mallorca right-back Josemi pulled down Ib Rahimovic for a clear penalty, which was converted by Messi, who had just come on for Pedro.

In injury time, Alhassane Keita pulled back another consolation goal for Mallorca, who remain sixth.

Earlier Saturday, Deportivo Coruna had moved up to fourth with a 2-0 win at Getafe, despite having two men sent off.

Riki and Sergio Gonzalez were sent off for Deportivo, whose goals were scored by Mista and Luis Filipe.

Veteran Mista headed Deportivo ahead after 14 minutes, on a centre from man-of-the-match Luis Filipe. Thirteen minutes later Deportivo striker Riki received a harsh yellow card for handball and was sent off.

Getafe were unable to take advantage of their numerical superiority, and Luis Filipe made it 2-0 in the 59th minute after being set up by Mista.

Veteran Sergio was sent off 19 minutes from time, leaving Deportivo with nine men, but Miguel Angel Lotina's team had few problems in holding out for an important win.

Deportivo now have 19 points from 10 games, the same as third-place Sevilla, who are at home to Villarreal on Sunday. They are now one point above Valencia.

Sunday's other early game was a lively 2-2 draw between relegation candidates Tenerife and Malaga, which takes Malaga off bottom place at the expense of Xerez.

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