

No Messi, no Neymar as PSG suffer first loss of season

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The Daily Morning Voice Online Desk: Paris Saint-Germain, without World Cup winner Lionel Messi and Neymar, lost for the first time in any competition since March 20 last year when they were defeated 3-1 at Lens on Sunday. “Lens deserved their win,” said PSG coach Christophe Galtier. Lois Openda scored one and set up another as Lens, who have only lost once in Ligue 1 this season, closed the gap on PSG at the top to four points after 17 rounds. “We are happy to be four points behind,” said Lens coach Franck Haise. “This victory proves that we can beat anyone in this championship.”

PSG’s last loss was more than nine months ago when they fell 3-0 at Monaco in Ligue 1, although that still left them 12 points clear at the top of the table. On Sunday at Lens, PSG were without Messi and suspended Brazilian Neymar, but Kylian Mbappe, the Golden Boot winner in Qatar, received a rousing welcome from the Lens fans as he warmed up. Galtier said he hoped French fans would give Messi a similar reception. “He’s going to join us on January 3, in 48 hours,” said Galtier. “I hope Leo will be well received. He won the most beautiful trophy by being very good. We know he’s a great and decisive player so we hope he’ll be well received obviously.” “Kylian worked hard,” said Galtier. “He showed a very good attitude.” “Leo and ‘Ney’ were not there but that is no excuse.”

Lens took the lead after five minutes when PSG goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma blocked an effort from Massadio Haidara to Przemyslaw Frankowski who scored. Hugo Ekitike replied three minutes later, swinging hard as Brice Samba dived to gather a cross and driving the ball through the Lens goalkeeper’s grasp. Lens took control after 28 minutes. Seko Fofana won possession on the edge of his own box, drove through a couple of challenges then measured a pass between the PSG central defenders to Openda. The Belgium sprinted clear, and squeezed a shot under Donnarumma. Lens pressed from the start of the second half and in the 48th minute won possession deep in the PSG half. The ball reached Openda in the box, his backheel left the defence flat-footed and allowed Alexis Claude Maurice to take a touch and score from close range.