

La Liga: Benzema bags two penalties as Madrid defeat Elche

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Online Desk: Karim Benzema netted two penalties as Real Madrid breezed to a 4-0 win over rock-bottom Elche on Wednesday to cut the gap on La Liga leaders Barcelona back to eight points. Carlo Ancelotti's team did not play at the weekend because of their involvement in the Club World Cup in Morocco, which they presented to supporters at the Santiago Bernabeu.

It was Madrid's second trophy of the season, after the European Super Cup, but if they are to add La Liga to their haul they have a big job on their hands. Marco Asensio opened the scoring and veteran midfielder Luka Modric rounded off the rout on an easy night for Los Blancos. "Here nothing is impossible," Eduardo Camavinga told DAZN, pledging to fight for the title until the end of the season. "We saw it last season in the Champions League and we will play until the end."

The French midfielder said he was happy to return to his usual position in midfield after a spell on the left of the defence. "I like playing as pivot more, I'm not a full-back, I played there to help the team," he added. "Today I was a pivot and I am happy." Madrid were without winger Vinicius Junior, suspended, while Eder Militao returned after injury, forcing Antonio Rudiger to drop to the bench.

Bottom of the table visitors Elche, with only one win all season, were ideal opponents for Madrid to face to resume their league campaign against. Pablo Machin's side offered the hosts a guard of honour before the game and it only got more comfortable for Los Blancos from there. Marco Asensio put the Spanish champions ahead after eight minutes with a fine individual goal, driving into the area and stroking into the bottom corner. Benzema had an effort saved by Edgar Badia and then nodded a good chance off target, but he didn't have to wait long.

The French forward's header was handled by Enzo Roco in the area after half an hour and Benzema sent Badia the wrong way from the spot. Rodrygo earned Madrid a second penalty before half-time when he beat Diego Gonzalez and was clumsily felled. Having fired his first into the top right corner, this time Benzema chose the top left and although Badia went that way he could not claw it out. Benzema's brace took him to 11 league goals for the season, three short of leader Robert Lewandowski at Barcelona.

Madrid strolled through the second half, saving their stamina for what on paper will be a far more testing game on Saturday at Osasuna. Ballon d'Or holder Benzema sent another good chance wide after the break and was unable to complete his hat-trick as Ancelotti brought him off in the 77th minute. Benzema has only recently returned from injury the Madrid coach was taking no chances.

Modric smashed home Madrid's fourth goal shortly afterwards, driving into the top left corner from just inside the box to round off the rout. "We had a good game, with a lot of control and opened the scoring early through Asensio," Ancelotti told DAZN. "It was a good game at an important moment in the season."