

Messi jeered as PSG suffer another home defeat

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Online Desk: Paris Saint-Germain suffered a second home defeat in a row Sunday, falling 1-0 to Lyon as their World Cup winning superstar Lionel Messi was jeered by a section of supporters. After losing 2-0 at home to Rennes two weeks ago, it was Lyon's Bradley Barcola who inflicted the latest loss for PSG at the Parc des Princes.

The goal by Barcola — who had come on as replacement for injured Amin Sarr — made up for a missed penalty by Alexandre Lacazette in the first half. It is the Parisians' fifth Ligue 1 loss this season, all of them in 2023, and leaves Christophe Galtier's side just six points ahead of both second-placed Lens and Marseille in third. The night started in controversial circumstances.

As the team line-ups were announced over the loudspeaker, whistling greeted Messi's name in one part of the stadium. Fans in another area, however, shouted in response "Messi". Messi, 35, is nearing the end of his two-year contract with the Paris club. Talks have begun on a possible renewal but he has also been linked with a return to Barcelona.

In two seasons, the veteran has played 67 matches with PSG including Sunday's game against ninth-placed Lyon and scored 29 goals. "The whistles, I find that hard," said Galtier. "Leo is a player who gives a lot and who has given a lot since the start of the season." He added: "With a stroke of genius, Leo is able to deliver the right ball, to provide an assist, to score a goal. I never once thought about taking him off."

PSG midfielder Danilo acknowledged the team had hit "a difficult phase" which they had to find a way out of, given their rivals were closing in. "We have to wake up. The title is not guaranteed at all, there are still a lot of matches," he said on Prime Video. "There are lot of things to change, not just the mindset, but it's not up to me to say what." PSG have been severely hampered by injuries, with Neymar recovering from ankle surgery and their defence decimated.

On Sunday, PSG called up 17-year-old central defender El Chadaille Bitshiabu but he was overawed, giving away the ball too often. Kylian Mbappe failed to pull off a repeat of his late scoring heroics as he had done in recent games against Strasbourg and Brest. "We can't expect everything from Leo and Kylian," said Galtier. "It's our eighth defeat in 2023, it's far too many."

Next up for PSG is a trip to Nice who are undefeated since January 2 before a crucial home clash with second-placed Lens. Lens will be hopeful of delivering a further blow to their Qatar-owned rivals whose season is threatening to implode after a Champions League exit at the hands of Bayern Munich and a French Cup loss to bitter rivals Marseille.

— 'Two faces of Monaco' —

Monaco kept up their push for a Champions League spot with a rollercoaster 4-3 home win over lowly Strasbourg. Monaco trailed 2-1 at the interval despite taking an 18th-minute lead through Vanderson. Lebo Mothiba and an own-goal by Chilean defender Guillermo Maripan gave Strasbourg the edge. Eliesse Ben Seghir and Edan Diop, both just 18 years old, and Youssouf Fofana then hit three goals inside an 11-minute spell in the second half to give Monaco a 4-2 lead. Habib Diallo's stoppage-time strike was only a consolation for Strasbourg.

Monaco have 57 points, just three behind third-placed Marseille who were held to a 1-1 draw by Montpellier on Friday. "As I told the players, we saw two faces of Monaco tonight," said Monaco coach Philippe Clement. "We started well and for 25 minutes, we were good. But then the aggressiveness fell away and Strasbourg came back and scored twice. At half-time, I was very angry. I didn't recognise my team."