

Steely Juventus shut down Barcelona with 0-0 draw, advance into semi-finals

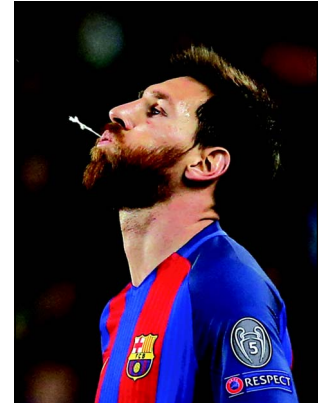
'Unbeatable' Juventus aim to hand Gianluigi Buffon his first tournament title



Barcelona's Neymar looks dejected after the match. —Reuters



Juventus' Gianluigi Buffon celebrates with teammates after the match.—Reuters



Barcelona's Lionel Messi —Reuters

CATALUNYA, APRIL 20 /—/ Barcelona failed to produce another miraculous Champions League comeback as Juventus held out for a 0-0 draw at the Camp Nou on Wednesday to reach the semi-finals 3-0 on aggregate. The Spanish champions had overcome a 4-0 first leg deficit against Paris Saint-Germain in the last 16 with a dramatic 6-1 win back on home soil. But Juventus showed why they boast the best defensive record in the competition as Lionel Messi, Luis Suarez and Neymar were blunted as the Italians gained revenge for their defeat in the 2015 Champions League final. Juventus joint holders Real Madrid, Atletico Ma-

drid and Monaco in Friday's semi-final draw. 'Unbeatable' Juventus can finally hand goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon an elusive Champions League title after making five-time winners Barcelona 'cry' on their way to a spectacular Champions League semi-final exit on Wednesday. Those were the headlines splashed across the front pages a day after rock-solid Juventus followed their impressive 3-0 first-leg win over the Spanish giants with a defensive masterclass that held Barca to a frustrating scoreless draw at the Camp Nou. As Juve celebrated a 3-0 aggregate win at a stunned but appreciative Nou Camp,

Barcelona — who beat Juventus on their way to triumph in 1996 — crashed out of the competition after seeing stars Lionel Messi, Luis Suarez and Neymar fail to find the net over 180 underwhelming minutes. 'Fly Juve Fly' was the front page headline on Italy's biggest-selling sports daily La Gazzetta dello Sport, which included a vignette showing teary-eyed Barca star Neymar being comforted by former club defender Dani Alves. Carriere dello Sport used the same dramatic picture of Alves and Neymar to fully illustrate the Brazilian starlet's disappointment. 'You made them cry,' screamed Carriere's headline, while for Turin-based

Tuttosport Juventus are simply 'Unbeatable'. Even Barcelona, Paulo Dybala's impressive brace and Giorgio Chiellini's 55th minute header in Turin last week, had to agree. 'Compliments to Juventus for reaching the semi-final,' the Catalan club wrote on its official Twitter page. To which Juventus replied: 'Thank @FCBarcelona, it is an honour to beat such a great opponent.' Juve go into Friday's semi-final draw along with Real Madrid, Monaco and Real Madrid — all of whom have faced Massimiliano Allegri's men in recent European campaigns. For Barca defender Gerard Pique, though, the Italians

showed enough over the two legs to merit another tilt at the trophy they last won in 1996 with a 4-2 penalties victory over Ajax. Messi then Gianluigi Buffon's palms for the first time on the half-hour mark. At the other end, Higuain threatened again when he just couldn't get enough power on Miralem Pjanic's dinked cross. Juventus had another big chance after a perverted lack of protection from referee Bjorn Kuipers

spilled over as he was booked just before half-time. Juventus also had the first big chance of the second half as Cuadrado fired across Ter Stegen but wide of the far post. Ter Stegen was then forced to turn behind another driven effort from the Colombian. Messi was being forced to come deep in search of possession, but he briefly had Juventus hearts in mouth with a low effort that was deflected inches wide. Barca boss Luis Enrique forlornly turned to Paco Alcacer from the bench as the hosts played with four forwards for the final half hour. Messi had another big chance after a rare Buffon handling error from a corner, but unfortu-

nately for Barca it fell on his right foot and the Argentine fired well over. Sergi Roberto was Barca's unlikely hero with the 95th minute goal that sealed the 6-1 win over PSG six weeks ago. He nearly delivered another important and rare goal, but when the right-back's effort flew inches wide 20 minutes from time so did Barcelona's hopes. Juventus comfortably saw out the final stages to register their eighth clean sheet in 10 Champions League games this season. And the only negative news of the night for the Bianconeri was a yellow card for Sami Khedira, who will rule the German international out of the first leg of their semi-final.

GAME NOTES

Kashyap crashes out in prequarters of China Masters

CHANGZHOU (CHINA), APR 20 /—/ Former Commonwealth Games champion shuttler Parupalli Kashyap fought hard before going down in the men's singles pre-quarters of the USD 150,000 China Masters Grand Prix Gold, here on Thursday. Kashyap lost 10-21, 22-20, 13-21 to former World No. 6 and third seed Qiao Bin of China in a contest which lasted an hour and 16 minutes at the Olympic sports center. The tournament was Kashyap's return to competitive badminton after recovering from a shoulder injury. He had suffered the injury during the Premier Badminton League (PBL) in January.

Sindhu moves to No. 3; Srikanth, Praneeth gain

NEW DELHI, APR 20 /—/ Rio Olympics silver medalist PV Sindhu today climbed up two places to be at No. 3 in the latest BWF ranking released today. Sindhu, who had slipped to number five last week, earned two spots on the basis of making the quarterfinals of the recently-concluded Singapore Open Super Series. The 21-year-old Sindhu had reached a career-best World No. 2 two weeks ago. London Olympics bronze medalist Saina Nehwal also jumped up a place to be ranked eighth.

In-form KKR look to add to Gujarat's misery

KOLKATA, APR 20 /—/ High on confidence following a hat-trick of victories, two-time champions Kolkata Knight Riders would look to continue their winning streak when they face struggling Gujarat Lions in a battle between the top and bottom-placed teams of the



ongoing IPL, here tomorrow. With two home and two away wins from five matches, in-form KKR are on a roll, quite contrast to the campaign of Gujarat who finished the league stages on top last season but are yet to find their rhythm this year with just one victory out of five. There has been no individual hero for KKR in their journey so far and every player is looking each other. That has been only helped them overcome hurdles but played a key role in their smooth campaign. But for the Suresh Raina-led Gujarat Lions, nothing is going right, be it their batting or bowling, especially the spin department which has let down the team badly. Struggling to find a set opening pair in the absence of an injured Chris Lynn, KKR for once had a disastrous start in their chase of 170 in Delhi as they were reduced to 21 for three inside three overs. Any other team would have succumbed under pressure but not KKR, who put up a 110-run fourth wicket stand between Manish Pandey (89 not out from 47 balls) and Yusuf Pathan (59 from 36 balls) to set up the four-wicket win. Pandey has been in the form of his life as he struck a second unbeaten half-century of the season

to seal the chase, finishing off the game with a flat six. After spending a three-day welcome break, KKR now would be back to relish Eden's home comfort in two successive matches in three days time, including a marquee Sunday showdown against the Virat Kohli-led star-studded Royal Challengers Bangalore.

With the team getting well and enjoying a winning momentum, there may not be any need to tinker KKR's line-up but in hindsight it is perplexing to see star Bangladeshi all-rounder Shakib Al-Hasan warming the bench. Andre Russell's replacement Colin de Grandhomme has failed to make much impact from three games and Shakib may give a better overseas option to skipper Gautam Gambhir. Their smooth campaign so far, notwithstanding, KKR would be worried about the

form of Suryakumar Yadav, who has failed to deliver with the bat at the crucial number six position. For the Lions to roar, their top-heavy batting order must first win in unison against a consistent KKR bowling attack. Spin trio of Sunil Narine, Kuldeep Yadav and Yusuf Pathan conceded a combined 63 runs from nine overs and took key wickets of David Warner, Shikhar Dhawan and Deepak Hooda to choke Surisers Hyderabad to a 17-run defeat in their last match here. Finding a winning combination would be the priority for Raina as overseas players, especially Dwayne Smith and Aaron Finch has disappointed the team so far. Jason Roy and James Faulkner may give Raina a better option while it won't be a bad idea to promote the talented Jharkhand opener Ishan Kishan up the order. Another big setback for the Lions has been the hamstring injury to their star West Indies all-rounder Dwayne Bravo, who returned with 17 wickets from 15 matches last season. The

team also desperately looked up to the batsman as the star all-rounder looked jaded and out of sorts after returning to action following the rest advised by BCCI's medical team after the long home Test series. Jadeja leaked the most runs (4-0-57-0) as RCB posted a huge 213/2 in their 21-run win. While chasing, Jadeja consumed 22 deliveries for his 23 runs, even as the next batsman, Ishan, looked promising in his fiery 29 off 16 balls. Gujarat Lions, however, can take positives from Kerala uncapped pacer Basil Thampi's promising bowling, who got his maiden IPL wicket in the prized wicket of Chris Gayle. KKR lost to Gujarat Lions on both occasions last season but this year a Twenty-20 record 184-run undefeated opening stand between Lynn and Gambhir had handed the Kolkata outfit a comprehensive 10-wicket win in the first leg.

Teams from):  
Kolkata Knight Riders: Gautam Gambhir (capt), Sunil Narine, Manish Pandey, Piyush Chawla, Nathan Coulter Nile, Colin De Grandhomme, Rishi Dhawan, Shikhar Dhawan, Shikhar Hasan, Sheldon Jackson, Ishank Jaggi, Kuldeep Yadav, Chris Woakes, Chris Lynn, Sunil Narine, Manish Pandey, Yusuf Pathan, Ankit Rajpoot, Suryakumar Yadav, Robin Uthappa and Umesh Yadav.  
Gujarat Lions: Suresh Raina (Captain), Akshdeep Nath, Shubham Agarwal, Basil Thampi, Dwayne Bravo, Chairag Suri, James Faulkner, Aaron Finch, Manpreet Gony, Ishan Kishan, Ravindra Jadeja, Shadab Jakati, Dinesh Karthik, Dhaval Kulkarni, Shivul Kaushik, Praveen Kumar, Brendon McCullum, Munaf Patel, Pratham Singh, Jason Roy, Pradeep Sangwan, Jaydev Shah, Shelly Shaurya, Nathu Singh, Dwayne Smith, Tejas Baroka and Andrew Tye. (PTI)



KKR captain Gautam Gambhir, Sunil Narine and Suryakumar Yadav inspect the pitch in a practice session at Eden Garden in Kolkata

Barca can turn Euro pain to Clasicos gain: Luis Enrique

BARCELONA, APRIL 20 /—/ Barcelona boss Luis Enrique insists his final season in charge can still end in glory despite bowing out of the Champions League at the quarter-final stage to Juventus. Juventus held onto their 3-0 first leg lead to progress to the last four by blunting Barca's star-studded attack in a 0-0 draw yesterday.

Neymar left the field in tears, but around the Camp Nou there was appreciation for Barca's valiant effort by the near 100,000 crowd. 'It's a sad night, but we tried until the last minute and that was recognised by the fans at the end,' said Enrique, who will step down at the end of the campaign. 'This is (a) team that never gives up, that fights for every title, doesn't relax and always accepts the challenge. 'It is a joy to belong to a club like this.' Barca travel to face eternal rivals Real Madrid in El Clasico on Sunday realistically needing to win to maintain their hopes of a third straight La Liga title. Madrid led by three points at the top of the table, but also have a game in hand. 'Barca have a team built to compete, to win trophies and to face every challenge. 'It is clear we are very hurt to be eliminated from a competition that excites us so much, but now comes a key game against the leaders and a direct rival. 'We have to get ready to compete and I am sure we will do that.' Barca will be without Neymar at the Bernabeu



Barcelona manager Luis Enrique could end his final season trophyless

through suspension and the Catalans will need Lionel Messi back in top form as the Argentine was off target with the only two clear chances the hosts created yesterday. 'We had 13 or 14 shots, but I think only one was on target, which are the ones that tend to do damage,' added Enrique. Juventus are now in the last four for the second time in three years under coach Massimiliano Allegri.

However, he believes they are far more equipped to win the Champions League for a third time than when they last lost to Barca in the final two years ago. The self-belief of the team has grown a lot,' said Allegri. 'There are only two players who started tonight who started the final in Berlin. 'That says a lot of how well the club has recruited. 'We are desperate to go through, he told Bein Sports Spain. 'Little by little we started to create chances, but they built a mountain. It wasn't to be. 'And Pique also called on the Barca players to reward the fans' support at full-time with victory in the Clasico. 'That the fans were still singing needs to be remembered. I think it is one of the few times I have seen the Camp Nou like this in a defeat. It moved me and makes me proud,' he cried. 'We will go to the Bernabeu to compete and try to win. 'In the last few years it has been good to us. We are not in our best moment, but we can win. (AFP)

Player like Dhoni should always be respected, says Raina



KOLKATA, APR 20 /—/ He was one of Mahendra Singh Dhoni's trusted lieutenants during the best days of Chennai Super Kings and not only a player, but also a captain. But he also feels disappointed in the manner he was removed from Rising Pune Supergiant's captaincy. 'I was disappointed. He has done so well for the country as well as for the IPL teams. He should be respected every time. It's about not me saying, it's the world saying.' Raina told PTI in an interview. Dhoni has so far scored only 61 runs in five games with a strike-rate of 87 and that has invited criticism from all quarters. 'Having shared the dressing room with him (for India and CSK), you know what goes through

when one faces hardships. He (Dhoni) should be respected as a player. In any profession, be it as a player or a journalist, you need to be respected. Even a player, however short his career span may be, wants to earn respect.' Asked whether it is affecting Dhoni, he said, 'I don't think. He's back among runs. Hope he will do well better than the two matches. We have only played five matches. After sometime the picture will be clear. He should bat up the order and bat long. He's a world class finisher.' Raina earned his eight-year stint with CSK as the 'best experience'. 'The time I spent with Chennai Super Kings will always remain special. We have won so many trophies, be it IPL or Champions

League T20. When I was very young, it gave me a great learning opportunity by being among all the legends.' Raina, who was the man-of-the-match in the order and bat long. He's a world class finisher.' Raina earned his eight-year stint with CSK as the 'best experience'. 'The time I spent with Chennai Super Kings will always remain special. We have won so many trophies, be it IPL or Champions