

# Advantage Barca in Copa del Rey after OG seals win over Real



Barcelona players celebrate their winner in the 1-0 victory over Real Madrid at the Santiago Bernabeu, Madrid, Spain, on March 2, 2023.  
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A tenacious Barcelona frustrated Real Madrid to secure a 1-0 win over their bitter rivals in an ill-tempered Copa del Rey semi-final first leg on Thursday. The visitors defended superbly after Real centre back Eder Militao scored an own goal in the first half, managing to overcome the loss of key players like Robert Lewandowski, Pedri and Ousmane Dembele who missed the game due to injuries, Reuters reported. Barca earned a much-needed win after arriving in the Spanish capital under pressure having been knocked out of the Europa League and losing at lowly Almeria to

halt a seven-game winning streak in LaLiga. "We would have liked to have the ball more, to control the game a little more but we fought hard and competed in a high level. They had the ball but didn't create many chances. We got the advantage for the second leg and that's really important," Barcelona captain Sergio Busquets told TVE. Real Madrid started better and dominated the first 15 minutes, but Barcelona started to turn things around as they took control of the midfield and their defensive game plan worked brilliantly. Barca centre back Ronald

Araujo did a great job at right back to neutralise the threat of the dangerous Vinicius Jr and Karim Benzema was left alone up front. Real became frustrated and tempers flared before the hosts made the crucial mistake which gave Barca the winner. Madrid midfielder Eduardo Camavinga gifted a back pass to Ferran Torres who reacted quickly to slide the ball to Franck Kessie. His point-blank strike was saved but bounced off Militao and into the net. The assistant referee signalled offside but the VAR replay showed Kessie was fractionally onside and the goal stood.

Barcelona locked Real Madrid into an even tighter situation during the second half and although the hosts dominated possession, they rarely threatened to equalise. Real did not record a single shot on target despite having almost 70% of possession in the second half and Barca should have extended their lead in the 71st minute when a Kessie shot that beat the goalkeeper was blocked by Ansu Fati. Substitute Rodrygo had Real's best chance with a late long-range strike that flew narrowly wide of the post. The teams meet again in Barcelona on April 5 with

the winners to face Athletic Bilbao or Osasuna in the final. After the game, Barcelona head coach Xavi spoke to the press very candidly, claiming that despite the win and the good defensive performance, he did not like the way his team played. "The result is very positive. I'm happy with the work and solid defense. We minimized Real Madrid in their stadium. "We didn't know how to keep the ball, it was difficult for us to win duels on the field. We have defended well without the ball. We have fought well without the ball. The people are

supportive. I am satisfied, but we have to improve with the ball. I am satisfied with the result and not so much with the match. "Today we cannot boast. This is not the game we want. We want to generate more scoring chances. It is not the game we want. They dominated us with the ball. How do you take the ball from [Toni] Kroos and [Luka] Modric? They have to be valued and they're extraordinary". On Barcelona's 35-percent possession - their lowest since 2008/09, according to Opta - Xavi said: "It's not the percentage we're looking for. They are still favourites."

## Angry PL clubs to demand talks over Newcastle's Saudi ownership



● REUTERS

Premier League clubs have reacted with anger and a demand for clarity after Newcastle's chairman, Yasir al-Rumayyan, was described in a US court document as "a sitting minister of the Saudi government". It has led to Amnesty International calling for the league to re-examine the assurances given by Newcastle's owners that the Saudi state would not have control of the club, the Guardian reported.

There is dismay from the majority of clubs in the division who, the Guardian understands, will write to the league to outline their concerns. They want the matter to be an agenda item at the next shareholders' meeting on 30 March so that it can be discussed in detail.

The document filed this week raised fresh questions about the level of separation between the Saudi state and the Public Investment Fund (PIF), which bought an 80% stake in Newcastle in October 2021 and whose governor is Rumayyan.

A brief filed in a court case involving the PGA Tour and LIV Golf describes the PIF as "a sovereign instrumentality of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia" and Rumayyan as "a sitting minister of the Saudi government".

The arrival of new billionaire owners was always likely to upset clubs who saw on the horizon a far more competitive Newcastle and the prospect of the wealth at St James' Park inflating transfer fees and wages.

Since the takeover Newcastle have spent a net £241m on permanent signings. Under Eddie Howe they are fifth in the league and reached the Carabao Cup final, which they lost to Manchester United.

Many clubs were frustrated by the lack of communication over the Newcastle takeover, which led to their forcing out the league's then chairman, Gary Hoffman. More broadly, there has long been a determination to ensure financial fair play or profit and sustainability rules are enforced.

The PIF is chaired by the Saudi prime minister, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, with eight of the nine PIF board members listed on the fund's website as being a government minister or royal adviser. Rumayyan is the exception. Yet it is inconceivable that the league did not know he was a minister when it sanctioned the takeover - not least because the PIF's law documents make it clear that the governor must hold the rank of government minister.

Yet it is inconceivable that the league did not know he was a minister when it sanctioned the takeover - not least because the PIF's law documents make it clear that the governor must hold the rank of government minister. "I'm trying to get 8,000 girls into the sport. We need everybody to be doing that up and down the pitlane because 100% girls and women belong here equally as much as the men do."

## F1 is duty bound to raise awareness, says Hamilton

Formula One has to draw attention to issues in the countries it visits, Lewis Hamilton said in Bahrain on Thursday as drivers began a new season with tighter rules on what they can say.

The seven times world champion was asked about human rights in Bahrain and neighbouring Saudi Arabia, which hosts the second round, Reuters reported.

It was the first time he had faced the media at a grand prix since the re-wording of the international sporting code last December to require written permission to make or display "political, religious and personal statements or comments".

The new rules cover podium ceremonies and anthems but drivers can make statements "in their own space" such as social media and official news conferences in response to direct questions.



● planetf1.com

Hamilton has said nothing will stop him speaking out. "I've always felt that we have a responsibility and if the sport is going to go to these countries we are duty bound to raise aware-

ness and try to leave a positive impact in these places," he told reporters in the Mercedes hospitality at Sakhir. "That view has not always been shared within the

sport, whether its teams or people in high-powered positions, but more needs to be done without doubt. "Whether or not that will happen, time will tell." Asked about the human

rights situation in Bahrain and Formula One's impact, he said he was "not sure it's got better while I've been coming all these years." The Briton was speaking in a crowded room with only