

NorthEast down Chennaiyin FC 3-0, qualify for play-offs

AGENCIES, CHENNAI: NorthEast United FC returned to winning ways with a 3-0 thumping over Chennaiyin FC in Chennai at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, here, on Monday.

It all started with a goal from Nestor Albiach early on before Jithin MS and Alaaeddine Ajaraie also got into the act in a first-half blitzkrieg. Chennaiyin FC had their moments in the second half but they failed to convert their chances. With this win, the Highlanders have gotten to 35 points from 23 games and qualified for the playoffs for the first time after the 2020-21 season.

ISL

NorthEast United FC showed great urgency from the first minute of the game, pushing bodies forward in search of the goal. Their early pressure saw Jithin MS force a save from Mohammed Nawaz in the fifth minute. A couple of minutes later, Nestor handed the lead to the Highlanders. It all started with Ajaraie, who found the Spaniard with a sensational flick. Nestor controlled the ball before slotting it into the bottom right corner of the net.

Things complicated for the Marina Machans as they conceded again in the 26th minute. The move began with Mohammed Ali Bemammer playing a give-and-go with Jithin before sliding it to Ajaraie in space. The Moroccan eventually picked out Jithin's surging run and the winger completed the brilliant move with a fine finish.

ISL MEDIA



NorthEast United FC's Redeem Tlang in action against Chennaiyin FC's Lukas Brambilla at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, Chennai, on Monday

NorthEast United FC extended their lead in the 38th minute when Jithin lost his marker with a surging run from the left flank before finding Ajaraie in the box. Ryan Edwards was brilliant to block Ajaraie's initial effort, but the Moroccan followed up the ricochet and slotted it home to score his 21st goal of the campaign.

The Moroccan almost scored his second goal of the night in the 44th minute when Nestor found him with a dink ball. Ajaraie went past his marker before scuffing the shot slightly over the target. As the first half came to a close, Vincy Barretto had a shot on target against the run of

play, but Gurmeet was alert to the danger as he parried the ball away.

The second half saw Owen Coyle make three changes as he introduced Lukas Brambilla, Jitendra Singh and Laldinpuia with the hope of getting back into the game. Brambilla almost made an instant impact when he forced a save out of Gurmeet after he was picked out by Shields.

Wilmar almost felt he had brought Chennaiyin FC back into the game when he nestled it past Gurmeet in the 78th minute from Brambilla's pass. However, the Colombian was judged offside. However, the hosts were soon reduced to 10 men when Ryan Edwards

received his second yellow card for recklessly bringing down Ajaraie near the penalty area.

Chennaiyin FC threw bodies forward and created chances, especially in the second half, but in the end, they lacked sharpness in front of the goal. It was the seventh cleansheet of the season for the Highlanders.

Chennaiyin FC will host Jamshedpur FC at home on March 9, whereas NorthEast United FC will welcome East Bengal FC in Shillong on March 8.

RESULT

NorthEast United FC 3 (Nestor Albiach 7' Jithin MS 26' Alaaeddine Ajaraie 38') Chennaiyin FC 0

Having confirmed 2nd-placed finish, FC Goa host Mohammedan SC today

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FATORDA: FC Goa will host Mohammedan SC in the Indian Super League home match on March 4, at the Nehru Stadium, here, at 7.30 pm.

The Gaurs have confirmed a second-placed finish after the fourth-placed Jamshedpur FC dropped points in a 1-1 draw with Kerala Blasters FC. With two games in hand, the Red Miners can only get to a

PREVIEW

maximum of 44 points now, which would still fall short of FC Goa's current tally of 45 points from 22 matches.

The third-positioned Bengaluru FC have 38 points from 23 encounters. This means that the Gaurs are set to directly play the semi-finals and would not have to engage in the

Team cannot let their guards down despite locking in the second place. We have the second place confirmed, but we need to have two good games, because if we don't perform well, then any team can defeat any other side in the Indian Super League home

-- Manolo Marquez, FC Goa head coach



one-legged eliminator in the play-offs. Mohammedan SC have lost four times and drawn once in their previous five games, having 12 points from 22 games.

FC Goa have won each of their last four home games in the ISL. A victory in this game would make it the third time in their history that they register five or more straight home wins in a single season, after seven triumphs on the bounce in 2019-20 and five in 2023-24.

FC Goa have been lethal from distance this

season, as Carl McHugh's strike against Punjab FC was their ninth goal from outside the box this season. Another such strike will see them become only the fifth team in the ISL to hammer 10+ goals away from the 18-yard box in a single campaign.

Mohammedan SC kept a clean sheet in their last away game against Odisha FC (0-0 on February 28). The only time they managed consecutive shut-outs this season was in January. Their three away clean sheets in 2025 are

the joint-most by any ISL team (alongside Mohun Bagan Super Giant). Does this signify an improvement in their defensive organisation?

FC Goa Head Coach Manolo Marquez affirmed that his team cannot let their guards down despite locking in the second place.

"We have the second place confirmed, but we need to have two good games, because if we don't perform well, then any team can defeat any other side in the ISL," he said.

Mohammedan SC Assistant Coach Mehrajuddin Wadoo admitted that his side will have to produce an improved performance to stand a chance of winning the upcoming contest.

"FC Goa have been a good team and are in a good position. We will have to give it our best effort if we want to take three points from this fixture," he said.

HERALD PIC



Winners Sana Cricketers from Usgaon, who retain the Aldona Champions Trophy – in the 2nd all Goa cricket tournament organised by the Siddhi Sports and Cultural Association at Quitula ground, recently. Kharrem Brothers of Porvorim were the runners-up. The team along with Aldona MLA Adv Carlos Alvares Ferreira, businessman and social worker Mahesh Satelkar and Anti-Terrorism Squad Police Inspector Raia Naik, MD Ethernet Express Sagar Govekar and other dignitaries

Vrishin, Madhav get Int'l Standard Rating in chess

Vrajesh secures ELO Rating of 1457

HERALD PIC



Vrishin Khumaran
Standard Rating-1451

Madhav Bhat
Standard Rating-1433

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PANJIM: Vrishin Khumaran and Madhav Bhat, students of GVM's Utkarsh Vidya Mandir, Ponda, secured Standard Rating of 1451 and Standard Rating of 1433 respectively. Both are trained under expert guidance of FIDE Instructor (FI) Wilson Cruz at the Champion's Chess Academy.

Meanwhile, Vrajesh Natekar from Pissal-Curti got FIDE rating in chess in

Standard Format.

He got an ELO Rating of 1457 and is employed as IT engineer.

Vrajesh also serves as chess coach at Ajinkya Chess Academy, Curti-Ponda.

He praised Anand Kurtikar and Ponda Taluka Chess Association for organising chess tournaments in Curti.

Siddesh Kerkar motivated Vrajesh to participate in the rating chess tournaments so that he could get rating.



Vrajesh Natekar

FIFA owed me this money: Platini in appeals court

AFP, MUTTENZ: Michel Platini, the former head of UEFA, told a Swiss appeals court on Monday, where his acquittal on fraud charges is being examined, that FIFA "owed" him the two million Swiss francs (\$2.2 million) at the heart of the case.

"I still don't understand why the public prosecutor's office is picking on me," the French three-time Ballon d'Or winner said at the start of his hearing.

The special appeals court, sitting in Muttentz near Basel, is hearing a request by the country's Attorney General's office (OAG) to reopen proceedings against the 69-year-old Platini as well as former FIFA president Sepp Blatter, who turns 89 on March 10.

The long-running legal saga began in 2015, when Blatter quit as head of FIFA in a corruption crisis. It stems from the delayed payment of two million Swiss francs FIFA paid Platini, who was president of UEFA from 2007 to 2015, in 2011 for consultancy services.

The pair were acquitted by the Swiss Federal Court in June 2022 of charges that included "disloyal management", "breach of trust" and "forgery of securities".

Barca thrash 10-man Real Sociedad to reclaim top spot in La Liga

AFP, BARCELONA: Barcelona secured a comfortable 4-0 win over Real Sociedad on Sunday to move back top of La Liga.

Aritz Elustondo's early red card gave Hansi Flick's side a comfortable afternoon with Gerard Martin, Marc Casado, Ronald Araujo and Robert Lewandowski on the scoresheet.

Atletico Madrid beat Athletic Bilbao on Saturday to temporarily knock the Catalans from their perch, while Real Madrid, third, lost at Real Betis.

Flick was able to rotate his side a little ahead of the Champions League last 16 visit to face Benfica on Wednesday and still move one point above Atletico.

Real Sociedad, ninth, threatened in the opening stages but fell foul of Barcelona's offside trap, with Sergio Gomez's strike ruled out. At the other end Barcelona playmaker Pedri Gonzalez came close when he pressed La Real goalkeeper Alex Remiro and deflected his attempted clearance just over and onto the roof of the net.

The game swung Barcelona's way when Elustondo was sent off in the 17th minute for pulling down Dani Olmo, who was running through on goal.

The hosts took the lead after 25 minutes when



FC Barcelona's Polish forward #09 Robert Lewandowski (left) celebrates scoring is team's fourth goal during the Spanish league match against Real Sociedad at Estadi Olímpic Lluís Companys in Barcelona

RESULTS

Leganes 1 (Garcia 90+2) Getafe 0, Barcelona 4 (Martin 25, Casado 29, Araujo 56, Lewandowski 60) Real Sociedad 0, Mallorca 1 (Asano 9) Alaves 1 (Garcia 68), Osasuna 3 (Oroz 26, 39, 45-pen) Valencia 3 (Lopez 14, Sadiq 32, 87).

Olmo chipped the ball across for Martin to fire home the first goal of his career. Four minutes later, Barca had their second, with Olmo involved again, this time his wayward shot deflected home by team-

mate Casado.

The enterprising Lamine Yamal teed up Pedri but Remiro saved his shot from the edge of the box as Barca dominated.

Pedri came close again after the break with an

effort from range which bounced back off the crossbar, shortly before Araujo nabbed the third. Remiro pushed out Lewandowski's header from corner but Araujo nodded home the rebound.

Lewandowski cleverly converted Barcelona's fourth, prodding home Araujo's low drive from distance. The 36-year-old leads the league with 21 goals in 25 appearances. Since recovering from a bad knee injury, Araujo has been unable to reclaim a regular starting spot in defence.

Barcelona played out the final half an hour without incident, occasionally threatening, with substitute Ferran Torres twice coming close to a fifth.

Elsewhere Valencia snatched a thrilling 3-3 draw at Osasuna thanks to a remarkable backheel volley by Umar Sadiq.

The Nigeria striker netted a brace, the second of those his spectacular finish from Sergi Canos' cross after 87 minutes to earn his team an important point in the relegation battle.

Valencia are 18th, one point ahead of Alaves who drew 1-1 at Mallorca earlier Sunday. Leganes, 16th, beat Getafe 1-0 to move three points clear of the drop zone.

Real need flawless game against Atletico: Vinicius

AFP, MADRID: Real Madrid star Vinicius Junior said his team face early elimination from the Champions League if they make any mistakes against Atletico Madrid in their last-16 tie.

Los Blancos host their city rivals on Tuesday in the first leg before visiting Atletico next week at the Metropolitan stadium.

Madrid lost 2-1 against Real Betis on Saturday in La Liga and Vinicius said their weak performance cannot be repeated in Europe.

"I think in the last game we lacked a bit of everything... we made too many mistakes, we defended badly and did everything badly," the winger told a news conference Monday.

"It's better it happened in the last game as tomorrow we can make no mistakes, because these are knock-out games where you make a mistake and you're going home, and we don't want to go home so early.

"We're here to keep improving our game and to put in a good performance tomorrow."

Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said he hoped the slip-up against Betis was a one-time issue before the derby.

Manchester Utd crash out of FA Cup as Fulham win shoot-out

AFP, MANCHESTER: Manchester United's dismal season hit a new low as the FA Cup holders crashed out after a 4-3 penalty shoot-out defeat against Fulham in the fifth round on Sunday.

Ruben Amorim's side trailed to Calvin Bassey's first-half opener at Old Trafford before Bruno Fernandes equalised to force a 1-1 draw after extra time.

Fulham keeper Bernd Leno was the hero in the shoot-out as he saved from Victor Lindelof and Joshua Zirkzee, with the visitors converting all four of their kicks.

Booted off at half-time, it was another wretched result for United in a season that sees them languishing in 14th place

in the Premier League.

The 13-time FA Cup winners had reached the final for the last two seasons and beat Manchester City to lift the trophy last year.

But there will be no trip to Wembley this season for United, who have only the Europa League left as a silverware chance.

"It's hard. We had the best chances in the game but in the end the penalties can go both

RESULTS

Manchester United 1 (Fernandes 71) Fulham 1 (Bassey 45+1) aet. Fulham won 4-3 on penalties. Newcastle 1 (Isak 22-pen) Brighton 2 (Minteh 44, Welbeck 114) aet

ways and today it was not our day," Amorim said.

"I know that we are losing games and losing trophies during this season but the goal is to win the Premier League.

"I don't know how long it's going to take. But if you think like that, we can suffer a little bit in these defeats."

It has been another testing week at Old Trafford, with 200 job cuts announced and United struggling to draw with Everton and barely beat lowly Ipswich.

Ryan Sessegnon went close with a powerful effort that Onana pushed away, but United's fate was finally sealed in a nerve-wracking shoot-out.

AFP



Fulham's German goalkeeper #01 Bernd Leno (left) celebrates with teammates after making the save to win the penalty shoot-out in the English FA Cup fifth round match against Manchester United at Old Trafford in Manchester, England

TODAY'S SPORTS

GFA U-13 Division I League: Clube de Salgaocar vs Sesa FA, at Sinquetim ground. Calangute Association vs Guardian Angel SC, at Poriat ground. Kick off 4.30 pm

