

Arsenal have 'desire' to be champions: Arteta



Arsenal's Eddie Nketiah, right, scores his side's third goal

AFP | London

Mikel Arteta said Arsenal's 4-2 win at Brighton proved the Premier League leaders have the "desire" required to lift the title for the first time since 2004.

Arteta's side will go into the new year with a formidable seven-point lead over second placed Manchester City after they powered to a fifth successive league victory.

Goals from Bukayo Saka, Martin Odegaard and Eddie Nketiah set the Gunners on course to cement their unexpected status as serious title contenders.

Kaoru Mitoma reduced Brighton's deficit before Martinelli raced half the length of the pitch to finish off Odegaard's sublime pass.

Brighton substitute Evan Ferguson claimed his first Premier League goal in the closing stages, but Arsenal survived a nervous finish to make it nine league wins from 10 games.

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Arsenal's haul of 43 points from 16 games is among the five best starts to an English top-flight season, with the other four teams all going on to claim the title

"It's a big win against a really good side. We had big moments, especially attacking the spaces with the way they play. We were ruthless, clinical," Arteta said.

"We had some great moments, and also moments when we have to dig in and suffer. You expect that against Brighton."

Aston Villa punish Lloris mistake to shock Spurs

● Douglas Luiz delights Aston Villa and seals victory over error-strewn Tottenham

AFP | London

Aston Villa ruined Tottenham's bid to climb back into the Premier League's top four as a costly mistake from Hugo Lloris condemned the north Londoners to a damaging 2-0 defeat yesterday.

Playing for the first time since France's World Cup final defeat against Argentina, Tottenham goalkeeper Lloris weakly spilled Douglas Luiz's shot early in the second half and Emiliano Buendia pounced to put Villa ahead.

Lloris was left on the bench for Tottenham's draw against Brentford on December 26 as he rested after France's agonising final loss in Qatar.

The 36-year-old, who conceded three times against Argentina before France lost on penalties, might have wished he had been given longer to recover after his blunder against Villa.

Brazilian midfielder Luiz added Villa's second goal in the closing stages, leaving Antonio Conte's side to endure jeers from frustrated fans at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium.

Tottenham had hoped the



Aston Villa's Argentinian midfielder Emiliano Buendia scores the opening goal

first Premier League match of 2023 would serve to kick-start their bid to qualify for next season's Champions League via a top four finish.

Instead, they suffered a New Year's Day hangover as mid-table Villa punished a lethargic display.

Fifth placed Tottenham have failed to win both of their matches since the World Cup break, a dip in form which has allowed fourth placed Manchester United to climb two points above them.

Adding insult to injury for Tottenham, it was former Arsenal boss Unai Emery who masterminded Villa's success on his return to north London.

Villa manager Emery, dismissed by Arsenal in 2019, has

now won three of his four Premier League matches since replacing the sacked Steven Gerrard in November.

Son Heung-min started the match once again wearing the mask he used during the World Cup to protect his fractured eye socket.

But Tottenham's South Korean star ripped the mask off for good early in the first half, discarding it angrily after failing to control a pass.

Shell-shocked Spurs

Son's frustration summed up Tottenham's spluttering performance.

No player has scored more Premier League goals on New Year's Day than Harry Kane's five.

BETTER YOU KNOW

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But the Tottenham striker was denied another at the start of the year when he nodded Ivan Perisic's cross goalwards, only to see Ashley Young clear off the line with an agile diving header.

Although Tottenham dominated possession for long periods, they couldn't make the breakthrough.

Villa hit them with a sucker punch five minutes after half-time as Lloris's blunder allowed the visitors to snatch the lead.

Luiz's long-range shot lacked the power to beat Lloris, but the keeper failed to hold it and Ollie Watkins pounced on the loose ball, flicking it to Buendia, who slotted home from 10 yards.

Real Madrid's Vinicius Jr says LaLiga doing nothing about racism

Reuters | Madrid

Real Madrid's Brazilian forward Vinicius Jr on Saturday accused LaLiga of continuing to do nothing about racist fans at matches, after videos on social media showed fans shouting abuse and throwing objects at him at a match a day earlier.

LaLiga issued a statement condemning all forms of hate speech and saying it was follow-



Vinicius Jr

ing up on instances of racism at the match.

Vinicius appeared to be subjected to abuse at the Jose Zorrilla stadium in Valladolid as he walked past fans after being substituted in Real Madrid's 2-0 win over Real Valladolid on Friday.

"Racists continue to go to stadiums and watch the biggest club in the world up close and LaLiga continues to do nothing," Vinicius wrote on Twitter.

"I will continue with my head held high and celebrating my victories and those of Madrid."

In September Atletico Madrid fans were filmed directing racist chants at the 22-year-old outside their Wanda Metropolitan Stadium ahead of a match against Real.

In its statement on Saturday, the league said it was looking into Friday's match.

Guardiola regrets Man City's dropped points against Everton



Manchester City's Manuel Akanji and Everton's Conor Coady react

AFP | London

Pep Guardiola rued the loss of two points following a 1-1 draw at home to Everton but insisted he had no complaints about the visitors' approach in a fiery Premier League clash at the Etihad Stadium on Saturday.

Erling Haaland fired reigning champions City into a first-half lead only for Demarai Gray to equalise midway through the second period of a match featuring numerous fouls.

The game also required 11 minutes' stoppage time following repairs to an assistant referee's headset.

The result left second-placed City seven points behind Arsenal heading into 2023 after the Gunners won 4-2 at Brighton in Saturday's late clash.

City manager Guardiola, reflecting on Everton's tactics, said: "They made a fantastic

They made a fantastic goal with the first shot on target they had, so we played a real, real good game. Of course the result was not expected but that is football, it is not the first time it happened. We did everything to win. They played really well

PEP GUARDIOLA

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India's Pant recovering, likely to miss Australia Tests

AFP | New Delhi

Indian cricketer Rishabh Pant is in "high spirits" and recovering from surgery after his horror car crash but will likely miss the upcoming Test series against Australia, media reports said yesterday.

The star wicketkeeper-batsman suffered several injuries when his Mercedes SUV crashed into the median before dawn on Friday as he was travelling alone from New Delhi to his hometown Roorkee, a few hours north of the Indian capital.

His car immediately caught fire and the 25-year-old was rescued by a bus driver and conductor on the highway.

Pant "is in high spirits and responding well to treatment... He underwent a plastic surgery on his left eyebrow where he suffered a cut in the accident," Shyam Sharma of the Delhi and District Cricket Association told



Rishabh Pant

The Times of India.

The cricketer also suffered a ligament injury in his right knee, hurt his wrist, ankle, and has abrasion injuries on his back, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said in a statement.

Sharma said the BCCI was monitoring Pant's treatment and was in "constant touch" with his medical team.

"As far as the ligament injury in his right knee is concerned,

YOU KNOW WHAT

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he will take some time to recover. He will be provided the best possible treatment," he added.

A BCCI staffer quoted by the Press Trust of India news agency said Pant faced a prolonged absence from competitive cricket and would likely miss the four-Test Australia series at home starting February 9.

A maverick batsman, Pant is

the mainstay of the Test squad and has played a key role in some of India's most memorable wins in the last three years.

But his white-ball form has been inconsistent lately and Pant was left out of the squad for the T20 and ODI tour by Sri Lanka starting next week.

The wicketkeeper's omission came days after his match-winning innings of 93 in the second Test against Bangladesh, helping India secure a 2-0 series whitewash.