

'EL CLASICO' 4

Tuesday, 03 May 2011

Barcelona are in a commanding position ahead of their Champions League semi-final second leg with Real Madrid at the Nou Camp on Tuesday.

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In an ill-tempered affair, Madrid defender Pepe was sent off in the 61st minute, and Barcelona substitute goalkeeper Joes Pinto was also sent off after an ugly fracas at half-time.

The Pepe dismissal also resulted in Real coach Jose Mourinho being sent to the stands, and the post-match fallout was extensive - centring on Mourinho's outspoken criticism of referee Wolfgang Stark, who he accused of favouring Barcelona.

Both teams enter the clash on the back of some poor league form, with Barca suffering a 2-1 defeat at Real Sociedad on Saturday, while Mourinho's men all but handed their fierce rivals the title with their 3-2 loss at home to Real Zaragoza the same day.

Barca have an eight-point lead in the league with four games to play, meaning the Champions League is likely to be Real's last chance of securing any more silverware this season after their victory in last month's Copa Del Rey.

Tuesday's game will be the fourth El Clasico encounter in 18 days.

The two sides played out a 1-1 draw at the Bernabeu in La Liga action on April 16, before Cristiano Ronaldo scored an extra-time winner to hand Real the Copa Del Rey four days later.

Both managers have selection dilemmas ahead of the match, with Pep Guardiola's Barca side particularly hard hit by injuries.

Skipper Carles Puyol is out, Andres Iniesta is in doubt, while French left-back Eric Abidal is still recovering from surgery to remove a tumour from his liver.

Defenders Maxwell and Adriano are both injured, and to further stretch Guardiola's reserves at the back, Gabriel Milito and Martin Montoya will both miss out after they were hurt in the match with Real Sociedad.

Milito suffered a calf strain while Montoya - in his full match for the club - suffered a broken collarbone.

Mourinho has defensive headaches of his own, with Sergio Ramos and Pepe both suspended, but central defender Ricardo Carvalho should be back after his one-match ban.

Midfielder Sami Khedira is out through injury, but Mourinho could inject Kaka into the fray with the need for goals paramount, after the influential Brazilian was conspicuous by his absence in the first leg.

Source: bdnews24.com