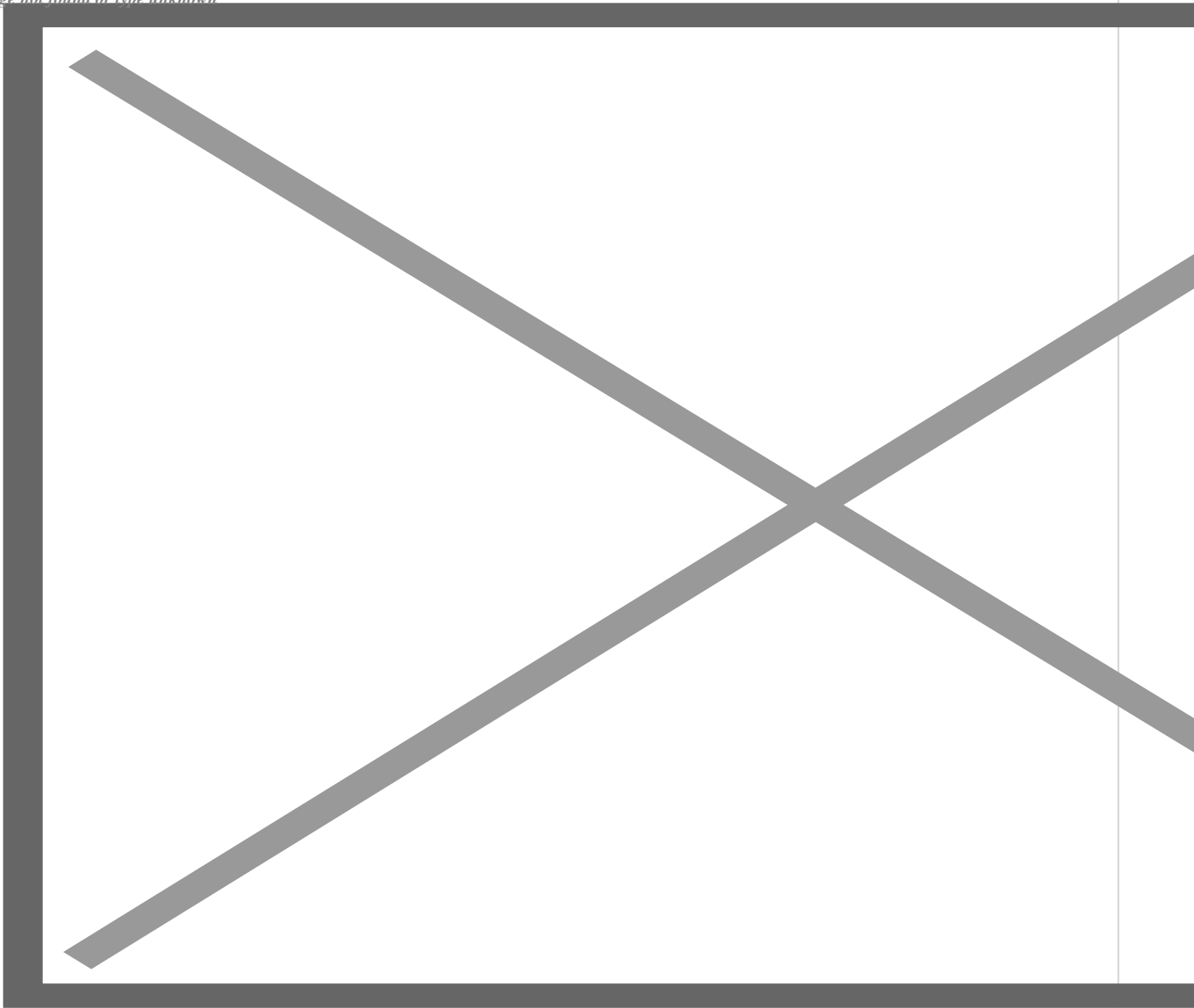


Flick's Barcelona beats Espanyol to remain LaLiga leader

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Dani Olmo

Barcelona, Nov 3 (RHC) FC Barcelona beat Espanyol 3-1 today at the Lluís Companys Olympic Stadium in Montjuïc and remained the leader of the Spanish soccer league with 33 points, nine more than Real Madrid.

The disciples of coach Hansi Flick played a great first half, with their usual advanced defense, almost on the edge, which led to several offsides by the opposing attackers, while they took an early lead, thanks to Dani Olmo's goal in the 11th minute, after another amazing assist from Lamine Yamal with the outside of his left boot.

The visitors were not fazed and tried to equalize through their main striker Javi Puado, with a shot that went just wide of the post defended by Iñaki Peña, but captain Raphinha put the game away with a subtle volley in the 23rd minute, beating goalkeeper Joan García, after another formidable assist, this time from midfielder Marc Casadó.

Olmo, one of only two changes to Flick's starting eleven - the other being Héctor Fort for Jules Koundé at right-back - made it 3-0 with a powerful shot from outside the box after a pass from left-back Alejandro Balde, and the game was all but sealed at half-time.

After the restart, Espanyol played long balls insistently to try to outwit the defensive strategy of the Culé eleven, who settled for ball control, taking care not to wear themselves out ahead of the Champions League match against Red Star Belgrade on Wednesday.

Flick's team conformism allowed the blue-and-whites to score in the 63rd minute through Puado, but Flick once again stirred up his pupils from the sidelines, seeing the danger that an excess of relaxation could bring with more than a quarter of the game still to play.

With their victory, the blaugranas increased their lead in the table, although Real Madrid was unable to play the day before, as their game against Valencia was suspended, the latter province having suffered serious damage after the meteorological phenomenon known as "gota fría" or DANA (isolated depression at high levels).

The Villarreal-Rayo Vallecano game could not take place either, while in the remaining challenges, Atlético Madrid and Real Sociedad won, in both cases 2-0, against Las Palmas and Sevilla, respectively.

The day before, Alavés defeated Mallorca 1-0, Osasuna defeated Valladolid with the same score, while Girona beat Leganés 4-3.

Behind Barcelona (33 points) and Real Madrid (24) are Atlético (23), Villarreal (21) and Osasuna (21), with two matches remaining: Athletic Bilbao-Real Betis, and Celta de Vigo-Getafe.

Source: Prensa Latina

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