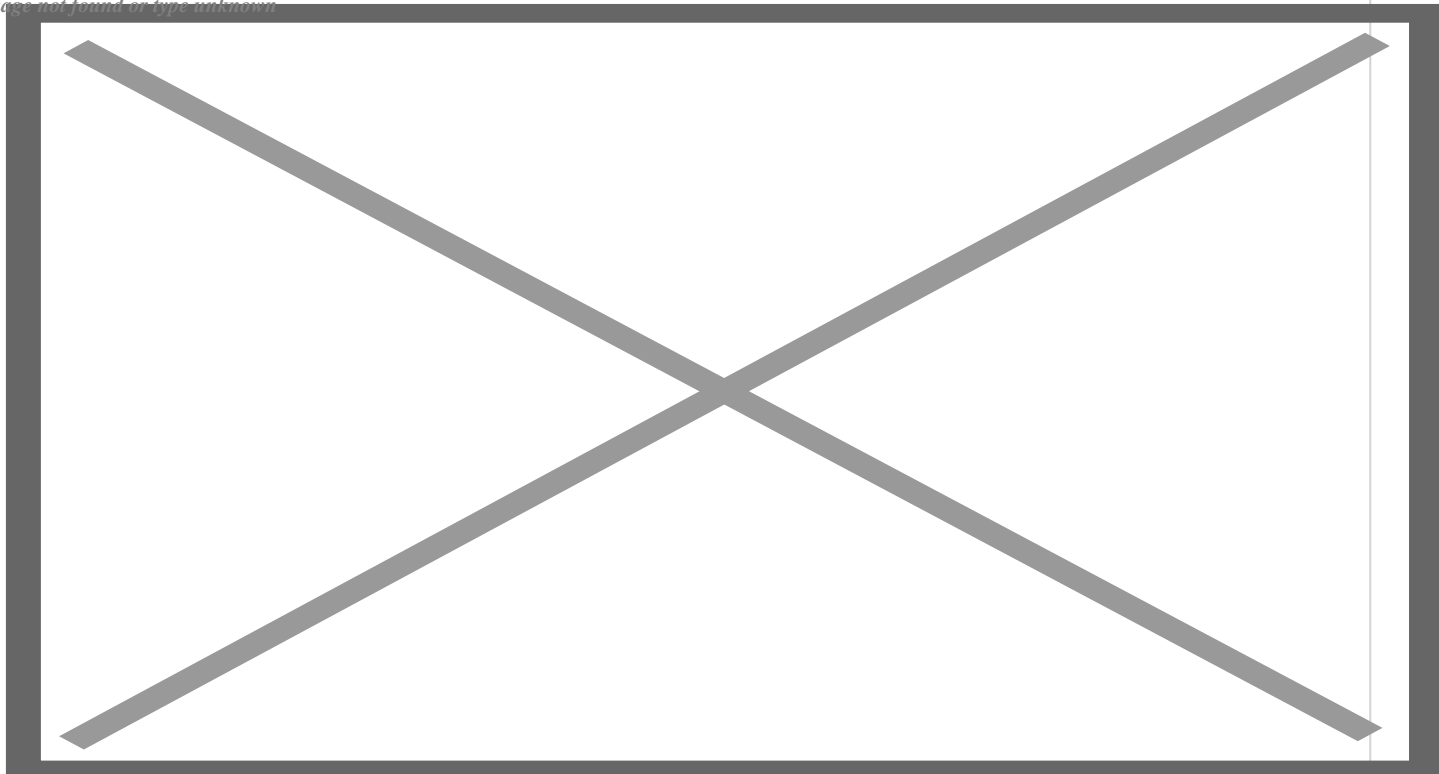


Xavi gets off on the right foot at the helm of FC Barcelona

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Havana, November 20 (RHC)-- FC Barcelona won today an important victory in the Catalan Derby (1-0) against RCD Espanyol, in a match that marked the debut of Xavi Hernandez at the helm of the Culé bench.

Xavi put his stamp on the game even before the opening whistle, giving the young 17-year-old right winger, Ilias Akhomach, the chance to start for the first team.

The first half saw Barça dominate their city neighbors, with a lot of intensity on the pitch and one goal-scoring opportunity after another.

Although they failed to put the ball in the back of the net, they did leave a good impression on their midfield, after a series of negative results at the end of the "Koeman era".

Although Barcelona dominated, Espanyol found some opportunities in the talented player Raúl De Tomás, who had chances to open the scoring.

The second half of the match gave the home team an early prize, when Memphis Depay brought the Camp Nou to its feet, scoring the only goal of the match from the penalty spot (minute 48).

The intensity shown by the azulgranas during the first half and the first twenty minutes of the second half, took its toll in the last minutes of the match when Los Periquitos colonized the ball and had more than one chance to equalize, even with a ball that crashed against the crossbar.

Barcelona ended the game on time but with three points that tasted like glory and allowed Xavi Hernandez to get off to a good start and move up in the standings, where they were far from the usual top positions for the club.

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