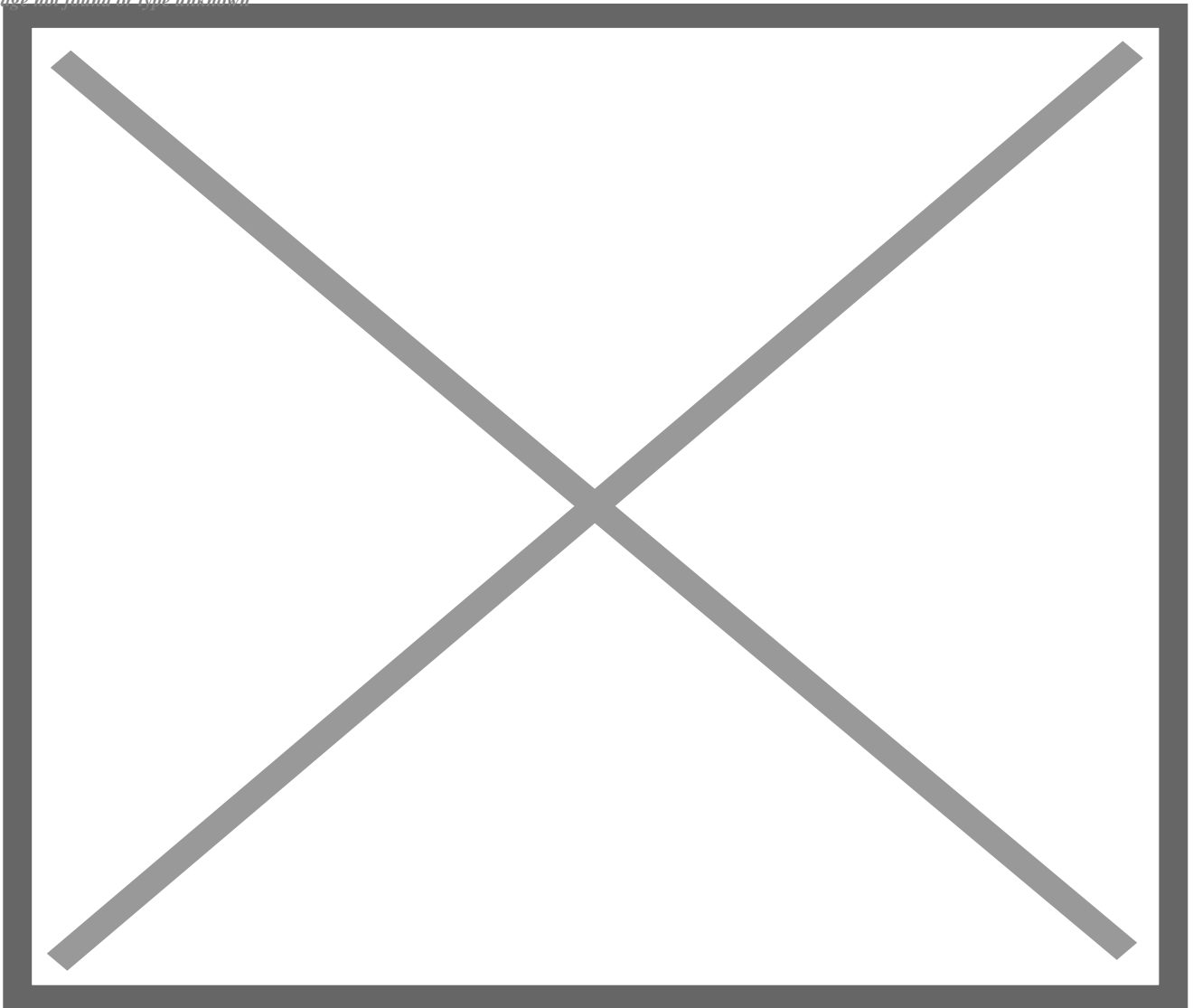


# *Real Madrid closes in on Barcelona in Spanish soccer*

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**Real Madrid**

Madrid, 25 (PL) A small slip by Barcelona and a resounding victory by Real Madrid narrowed the gap between the top teams in Spain's LaLiga soccer league, on the threshold of the Champions League.

The Azulgranas played out a two-goal draw with the combative Celta Vigo, suffering from the absence of injured youngster Lamine Yamal, although the club's usual scorers, Poland's Roberto Lewandowski (Pichichi of the tournament) and Brazil's Raphinha, scored their respective goals.

“It was a bad game, right from the start, too many mistakes. But it's nothing serious either, we'll work on it and I'm sure we'll get back to playing well,” Barça's German coach Hansi Flick told the press.

In their turn, Real Madrid took advantage of their arch-rivals' slip to move to four points in the table and with a game in hand. They swept aside Leganés 3-0, with goals from France's Kylian Mbappé, Uruguay's Fede Valverde, and England's Jude Bellingham.

“We're looking for solutions, we're trying players in positions we don't usually play. I think we will find the key to our needs,” analyzed the Italian coach of the Merengues, Carlo Ancelotti.

He was referring to the absence for the rest of the season of Brazilian center-back Eder Militao and Spanish full-back Dani Carvajal, along with another for a shorter period (Lucas Vázquez) and the need to cover them, for the time being with youth player Raúl Asensio and Valverde.

On his 700th match as Atlético de Madrid coach, the Argentine Diego Pablo Simeone managed to savor the record with a hard-working victory over Alavés 2-1, with goals from Frenchman Antoine Griezmann and Norwegian Alexander Sorloth.

The week that begins on Tuesday will have the surprise Champions League club, Stade Brestois, from France, facing Barcelona, while Real Madrid will face a test on Wednesday, with Liverpool at Anfield.

A more relaxed Atleti will face Sparta Prague on Tuesday.

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