

---

Zinedine Zidane credits Real Madrid for 'perfect game' against PSG

---

07/03/2018



Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane hailed a "perfect game" from his side as they won 2-1 at Paris Saint-Germain in Tuesday's Champions League round-of-16 second leg to ease through to the quarterfinals 5-2 on aggregate.

After a goalless first half, Cristiano Ronaldo headed Madrid in front soon after half-time, with the Portuguese matching former Manchester United teammate Ruud Van Nistelrooy's record of scoring in nine consecutive UCL matches.

Marco Verratti left PSG with 10 men after picking up a second yellow card for dissent, before Edinson Cavani got one back for the French side during a goalmouth scramble. But Casemiro's deflected 20 yarder ended any doubt over who was progressing, with Marco Asensio and Lucas Vazquez also hitting the woodwork as the Ligue 1 side ended the game well beaten.

Zidane told the postgame news conference that his team's plan for how the game had gone just as he hoped, while maintaining that his players deserved most of the praise.

"It went well for us, we played a very good game, serious from the start, pressing them high." Zidane said. "We played a perfect game. I am very happy, as you can

see that whoever starts, and the substitutes, they all played a good game.

"This is a not an easy place to play a good game, but we did it. So I can only be happy. Tactically we played the game we expected. But in the end it is the players convinced in what we [coaches] do, that is the most important."

Zidane denied that the expensively-assembled PSG side, who have still not made it past the UCL quarterfinals despite over €1 billion invested by their Qatari owners, had been weaker than expected opponents.

"I don't believe PSG have been weak or easy to beat," he said. "They played very well in the first leg, maybe not as good tonight, but also because we played very well. It started 50-50 and was until the end. Maybe the sending off changed things, and then when we scored the second it was more difficult for them."

Madrid's XI had included Vazquez and Asensio as wingers in a 4-4-2, with the higher-profile Gareth Bale and Isco left on the bench.

"Playing Lucas and Marco, today it was important to have two lines of four," Zidane explained. "To defend well against their wide players. We did that very well. Lucas is in very good form, Marco too. So they played, and did very well. I must choose an XI every three days, and today the plan was to start these players."

Bale was again a substitute, but Zidane denied the Wales international had lost any status at the Bernabeu.

"For sure Bale would prefer to play more," he said. "But we have many games, we will keep going as we have all been doing. All the players are important here, which is what I look at. Gareth is one of them, he did not start the home or away [against PSG], but he will play games. He is an important player for us."

Madrid had come through some difficult moments this season, said Zidane, but their immediate focus should now be on trying to improve their third place position in La Liga.

"We have had difficult moments, La Liga a bit, and the Copa [del Rey elimination]," he said. "But that is part of football. We finished my two years here winning a lot, and before that too. It is difficult to always maintain that level every three days.

"You must accept difficult moments during a season, and keep working. Because you cannot always win everything. Now we must think about our next La Liga game on Saturday at Eibar, and try and put in the same performance there."