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**Barcelona keep title hopes alive by relegating Espanyol**

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A second half strike from **Luis Suarez** pedalled **Barcelona** past **Espanyol** 1-0 on Wednesday night at **the Camp Nou**.

The result brings **Barcelona** to within a point of leaders **Real Madrid** in the table, with Los Blancos scheduled to face **Alaves** on Friday, while **Espanyol** are officially relegated to the second division.

It was far from the dominating performance seen in **Barcelona's** last outing against **Villarreal**, as **Espanyol** made sure it was a tough, contentious derby.

A wild second half sequence in which **Ansu Fati** and **Pol Lozano** were sent off within minutes of each other made for a slightly more open affair, with **Barcelona** taking advantage just enough to secure the three points.

**Quique Setien** made just one change from the starting XI that pasted **Villarreal** over the weekend, with **Ivan Rakitic** coming in for **Arturo Vidal**.

Otherwise, it was **Lionel Messi**, **Suarez** and **Antoine Griezmann** up top, with **Sergi Roberto** once again pulling the strings in midfield.

While **Barcelona** dominated the early proceedings, **Espanyol** were the ones with the first real scoring chance on a counter attack that ended with an **Adrian Embarba** shot being blocked by the leg of **Barcelona** goalkeeper **Marc-Andre ter Stegen**.

**Barcelona** started peppering **Espanyol** goalkeeper **Diego Lopez** with shots through **Messi** and **Suarez**, but otherwise it was tough going against their city rivals, who were not as inclined to give up space in midfield like **Villarreal**.

The **Espanyol** counter attack produced another gilt-edged chance minutes before half time, with **Didac Vila** glancing a shot off the post after the ball had pinballed off a couple players deep in the area.

**Setien** made his first change during the break, replacing **Semedo** with **Fati**, but just minutes after coming on the pitch the youngster was sent off for a studs-up challenge on **Fernando Calero** after referee **Jose Luis Munuera Montero** consulted with VAR, leaving **Barcelona** a man down.

The advantage for **Espanyol** lasted just a few moments, though, as almost immediately a studs-up tackle from **Pol Lozano** on **Gerard Pique**, [who got everyone's attention pre-match by riding his bike to the Camp Nou](#), also resulted in a VAR-aided red card, making for 10 vs 10 football for the final 40 minutes.

**Barcelona** were happy to exploit the extra space on the pitch and they notched the game's lone goal minutes later when **Griezmann** back-heeled to **Messi**, whose shot was blocked, but **Suarez** was there to clean up and fire into goal for a 1-0 lead.

The second substitution for the hosts saw **Griezmann** make way for **Vidal**, but **Barcelona** were still struggling to find a second goal to make things less nervy.

The **Espanyol** attacking substitutions didn't help and **Victor Campuzano** almost nodded in a header which would have equalised.

**Martin Braithwaite** was next to be summoned off the bench, replacing **Suarez**, but it was **Espanyol** who had the look of scoring the next goal and there was some question as to whether a shot struck the arm of **Vidal** in the penalty area in stoppage time.

In the end, a spot kick was not awarded to the Pericos, as **Barcelona** emerged with the three points to stay within striking distance of the top spot.

**Espanyol**, meanwhile, must start preparing for LaLiga SmartBank.

### Match Sheet:

**1.- Barcelona:** Ter Stegen; Semedo (Fati, min. 46), Pique, Lenglet, Jordi Alba; Busquets, Sergi Roberto, Rakitic (Araujo, min. 92); Messi, Suarez (Braithwaite, min. 82), Griezmann (Vidal, min. 71)

**0.- Espanyol:** Diego Lopez; Victor Garcia, Bernardo, Cabrera, Calero (Darder, min. 66), Didac; David Lopez, Marc Roca (Wu Lei, min. 86), Pol Lozano; Embarba (Campuzano, min. 74), Raul de Tomas

**Goals:** 1-0, min. 56: Suarez

**Referee:** Munuera Montero (Andalusian).

**Yellow cards:** Raul de Tomas (Min. 45+1) for Espanyol, Pol Lozano (Min. 52) for Espanyol

**Red cards:** Ansu Fati (Min. 49) for Barcelona, Pol Lozano (Min. 53) for Espanyol (David Lopez (Min. 94) for Espanyol

**Stadium:** Camp Nou

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