

La Liga Briefing Matchday 13

November 25, 2025

Matchday 13 of LaLiga delivered a dramatic and revealing weekend. From Barcelona's electric return to the Camp Nou and Real Madrid's stumble in Elche, to red cards, controversies, resurgent stars and tactical experiments across the league, the table tightened at the top and the pressure grew at the bottom. With six red cards, 23 goals, and a wave of individual storylines, the weekend offered a clearer picture of who is rising, who is fading, and who is flirting with crisis as the season approaches its midpoint.

Hansi Flick's Barça produced their best performance of the season in a dominant and expressive 4–0 win over Athletic Club at the reopened Camp Nou.

With Frenkie de Jong suspended after his red card against Celta, Flick surprised many by deploying Eric García as a defensive midfielder, leaving Marc Casadó on the bench despite the absences of Pedri and Gavi. Dani Olmo and Fermín López both started: Olmo acted as the interior creator in Pedri's role, while Fermín operated as a roaming No.10. The XI was aggressively attack-minded, a clear statement of Flick's intention to dominate territory, press high, and defend on the front foot.

Joan García finally returned to the starting XI after nine missed matches through injury, relegating Szczesny to the bench. García delivered a clean sheet—Barcelona's first in ten games. The contrast with Athletic Club's Unai Simón, at fault for Barça's first two goals, reignited the already heated debate about Spain's No.1: Simón remains trusted by Luis de la Fuente, but García was arguably LaLiga's best goalkeeper last season and continues to perform at an elite level, and he still does not have a single national team call-up.

The match also marked Barça's long-awaited return to the Camp Nou after 909 days of renovations and postponements. Over 45,000 fans created an electric atmosphere, far superior to Montjuïc's distant stands, and the team responded with a statement performance despite the

absences of Pedri, Gavi, Marcus Rashford—who was out with a fever—, and with Raphinha only fit enough for the final 10 minutes.

Lamine Yamal was sensational again, delivering two sublime assists for Ferran Torres, who now has nine goals in all competitions and is pushing Lewandowski hard for the No.9 spot. But Lewandowski, eternal as ever, opened the scoring and maintained his astonishing efficiency—one goal every 79 minutes.

It was also the first-ever Camp Nou appearance for several players: Olmo, Fermín (who celebrated his 100th first-team appearance with a goal and MOTM performance), Pau Cubarsí, Joan García, Gerard Martín, and Marc Bernal, who continues to regain rhythm after a year-long ACL layoff.

For Nico Williams, the night was far less enjoyable. Facing Barça for the first time since rejecting their summer approach—an approach reportedly initiated by his own agent—he was whistled relentlessly. He lost possession 10 times, had three shots off target, and was given a taste of the directness he would have enjoyed had he joined the club.

Tensions peaked when Oihan Sancet completely lost control, kicking Fermín off the ball.

Referee Sánchez Martínez was standing a metre away and somehow produced only a yellow—until VAR intervened and upgraded it to a deserved red. Sancet has struggled badly this season and is offering few arguments for World Cup inclusion, especially with Fermín, Dani Olmo and Isco all competing for the same creative role.

Isco, who returned from injury for Betis and announced his contract renewal until 2028, changed everything for Real Betis in their 1-1 draw against Girona. Coming on in the 60th minute, he assisted Betis's equaliser and immediately dictated the rhythm of the match. Azzedine Ounahi impressed early, showing why the move to Girona has revitalised him, but he lost control once Isco entered the pitch.

Girona took the lead through Vladyslav Vanat, who finished a tap-in after a slick combination from Bryan Gil and Ounahi. For Betis, 22-year-old Valentín Gómez continued his breakout run.

Starting his third straight match at left-back, he has clearly displaced Ricardo Rodríguez and Junior Firpo. His performance included a goal from a corner, strengthening his case for an Argentina call-up ahead of the World Cup.

Betis suffered late when Antony saw red after a VAR review for striking Joel Roca in the face while attempting an overhead kick. A huge blow ahead of the Derbi Sevillano that will take place next weekend.

Two disappointing performances were Betis' Rodrigo Riquelme, whose £7m move from Atlético has not worked well so far, and Girona's Yaser Asprilla, who missed a big 95th-minute chance to win the game. After his £16.6m move from Watford last year, he has yet to shine in Spain. The same applies to Nelson Deossa, Betis's £11.4m signing, who has struggled for minutes and impact.

A difficult match between Getafe and Atlético Madrid at the Coliseum—always one of the hardest away fixtures in Spain—was decided by a late own goal from Domingos Duarte in the 82nd minute. Atlético took all three points after the 0-1 win.

Atlético's night started badly as Marcos Llorente limped off after 14 minutes and is expected to miss at least two weeks. Jan Oblak also missed out after picking up a knock with Slovenia, watching from the stands alongside Giuliano Simeone, who was also withdrawn from the squad late due to a minor injury. Both are expected back for Atlético's massive Champions League clash against Inter later this week.

Despite a dull encounter, the three points extend Atlético's unbeaten run to 13 league games and move them to within four points of leaders Real Madrid.

The league leaders were dreadful in a 2-2 draw against Elche, and the tension between Xabi Alonso and the dressing room is becoming increasingly visible.

Xabi's experimental lineup raised eyebrows: Álvaro Carreras and Fran García both starting as overlapping left-sided players, and Vinícius Júnior dropped to the bench amid contract-renewal disputes and reports of a strained relationship with the coach. Federico Valverde was also

benched. Meanwhile, Rodrygo reached 29 straight games without scoring, nearing Mariano Díaz's infamous club record of 30.

Elche took full advantage. Former Madrid midfielder Aleix Febas dominated the centre of the pitch and scored the opener. Later, Álvaro Rodríguez, signed from Real Madrid for £1.7m, added a brilliant second, meaning Elche's both goals came from former RM players.

Gonzalo García, with only 138 minutes all season since starring in the Club World Cup, got 26 minutes. Endrick, however, stayed on the bench again. Stuck at just 11 minutes played this season and almost certain to seek a winter loan to obtain gametime and try to fulfill his World Cup ambitions with Brazil.

Real Madrid's response came from set pieces: Huijsen scored his first LaLiga goal from a corner, and Jude Bellingham equalised after Iñaki Peña parried a shot into his path. But the goal was hugely controversial as Vinicius appeared to strike Peña in the face moments before, leaving the keeper with a bloody nose. Elche manager Eder Sarabia was furious in his post-match comments, saying he could not believe the goal stood.

Up next we have European competitions, with most Spanish teams playing away. Barcelona travels to London for a difficult matchup against Chelsea, Real Madrid plays against Olympiacos, Villarreal visits the Signal Iduna Park for a yellow-teams' clásico against Borussia Dortmund, Celta travel to Bulgaria to face Ludogorets, Rayo plays Slovan Bratislava in Slovakia, and Athletic Club go against Slavia Praha in Czechia. Atletico Madrid and Real Betis each play at home against Inter Milan and FC Utrecht respectively.

Other results:

Valencia 1 - 0 Levante

Alavés 0 - 1 Celta de Vigo

Osasuna 1 - 3 Real Sociedad

Villarreal 2 - 1 Mallorca

Real Oviedo 0 - 0 Rayo Vallecano

Espanyol 2 - 1 Sevilla

POSITION		TEAM	POINTS	Pld	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD
⌚	1	 REAL MADRID	32	13	10	2	1	28	12	+16
⌚	2	 FC BARCELONA	31	13	10	1	2	36	15	+21
⌚	3	 VILLARREAL CF	29	13	9	2	2	26	11	+15
⌚	4	 ATLÉTICO DE MADRID	28	13	8	4	1	25	11	+14
⌚	5	 REAL BETIS	21	13	5	6	2	20	14	+6
⌚	6	 RCD ESPANYOL DE BARCELONA	21	13	6	3	4	17	16	+1
⌚	7 ▲	 GETAFE CF	17	13	5	2	6	12	15	-3
⌚	8 ▼	 ATHLETIC CLUB	17	13	5	2	6	12	17	-5
⌚	9 ▲	 REAL SOCIEDAD	16	13	4	4	5	17	18	-1
⌚	10 ▲	 ELCHE CF	16	13	3	7	3	15	16	-1
⌚	11 ▼	 SEVILLA FC	16	13	5	1	7	19	21	-2
⌚	12 ▲	 CELTA	16	13	3	7	3	16	18	-2
⌚	13 ▼	 RAYO VALLECANO	16	13	4	4	5	12	14	-2
⌚	14 ▼	 DEPORTIVO ALAVÉS	15	13	4	3	6	11	12	-1
⌚	15 ▲	 VALENCIA CF	13	13	3	4	6	12	21	-9
⌚	16 ▼	 RCD MALLORCA	12	13	3	3	7	13	20	-7
⌚	17 ▼	 CA OSASUNA	11	13	3	2	8	10	16	-6
⌚	18	 GIRONA FC	11	13	2	5	6	12	25	-13
⌚	19	 LEVANTE UD	9	13	2	3	8	16	24	-8
⌚	20	 REAL OVIEDO	9	13	2	3	8	7	20	-13