

Zenit Slips to Defeat as CSKA Tops Russian Table

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Pigeons fly over a playing field at Zenit's training center in St. Petersburg.

Reigning champion Zenit St. Petersburg suffered its first home loss in the Russian Premier League in nine months Saturday, allowing its old rival CSKA Moscow to open up a lead at the top of the table.

Zenit lost 2-0 to FC Krasnodar, whose Colombian winger Ricardo Laborde scored one goal and set up the other. On Friday, CSKA had gone top with a 2-1 derby win over Spartak Moscow.

Laborde swung in a free kick for Icelandic defender Ragnar Sigurdsson to open the scoring for Krasnodar on 26 minutes despite appeals for offside. Laborde made it 2-0 on 50 minutes with a low, powerful 25-yard strike that left Zenit goalkeeper Yury Lodygin stranded.

"We suffered with controlling Krasnodar's counterattacks. Today I think everything went bad for us," Zenit coach Andre Villas-Boas said. "We couldn't create enough situations to come back into the game."

The loss leaves Zenit second, three points behind CSKA, which has a perfect record of five wins from five games.

All the goals in CSKA's win came in a six-minute spell, starting with Sergei Ignashevich's 31st-minute opener, the veteran defender first to the rebound after Vasily Berezutsky hit the bar at a corner.

CSKA's second goal came four minutes later when the Spartak defense failed to react to a deflected pass and Nigerian forward Ahmed Musa was allowed to go one-on-one with goalkeeper Artyom Rebrov, finishing off with a placed shot. Almost immediately after the kickoff, CSKA's Bibras Natkho gave away a penalty for tripping Ivelin Popov on the edge of the box, and Dmitry Kombarov scored for Spartak.

CSKA goalkeeper Igor Akinfeev then made some good saves in the second half as his team held on for the win. The match saw Ivorian striker Seydou Doumbia make his first appearance since returning to CSKA on loan from Roma when he came on as a second-half substitute.

Elsewhere, Rubin Kazan ended a run of four straight defeats with a 1-0 win over Kuban Krasnodar on Saturday, though Rubin coach Rinat Bilyaletdinov remains under pressure, while Friday saw Anzhi Makhachkala pick up its first point since returning to the Premier League this season, drawing 1-1 with Amkar Perm.

Third-placed Lokomotiv Moscow can overtake Zenit for second place with a win at home to Chechen club Terek Grozny on Sunday, while underperforming Dynamo Moscow, in eighth, will hope for three points against unfancied Ural Yekaterinburg.

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