

Real Betis to consolidate third place in Spanish soccer

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Havana, January 18 (RHC)-- Real Betis will try to consolidate third place in the Spanish League today, when they host Alaves for the 21st matchday.

The Andalusian team has 34 points and is one point ahead of Atletico Madrid and Real Sociedad, occupying the fifth and sixth positions, respectively, two ahead of Barcelona (sixth) and three ahead of Rayo Vallecano (seventh).

For Tuesday's clash, Betis will be without left-back Álex Moreno, who was suspended after being sent off against Rayo Vallecano the previous day, and Chilean coach Manuel Pellegrini will not have Joaquín Sánchez, Ivorian Paul Akouokou and Martín Montoya at his disposal.

Pellegrini is sure to make some changes in the starting eleven, although not too many against an opponent that has not won in the competition since November 6 and occupies 18th place in the table.

Chile's Claudio Bravo may return to goal and Héctor Bellerín and Juan Miranda to the fullbacks, Víctor Ruiz will come in at the back, and Mexico's Andrés Guardado will freshen up the midfield, while up front Cristian Tello, Aitor Ruibal and Mexico's Diego Lainez are among the candidates to defend the forward line.

"We are going to face a team that is in complicated places in the table, that is always very difficult because they come with an important motivation to try to get out of those places and with a new coach who has a very clear footballing idea," said Pellegrini at a press conference prior to the match.

The last five times they have faced each other in the tournament, Betis have won three times, suffered one setback and drawn once.

Alavés' coach, José Luis Mendilibar, confirmed the absence of Ximo Navarro due to injury, Frenchman Florian Lejeune due to suspension and Argentine Nahuel Tenaglia, who needs a little more training to get used to his teammates.

On Tuesday, midfielder Pere Pons, who has recovered from a sprained knee, will be on the pitch.

According to the coach, Real Betis likes to build the game from the back and the wingers go inside and the flanks are occupied by the fullbacks.

"When they receive, they drive very fast and do a lot of damage to you. They have a lot of good things because they can also play long and counter-attack well. That's why they are still in all competitions. It's true that sometimes it's hard for them to defend," he commented.

In the other match of the day, Cádiz, relegated to 19th place, will host Espanyol, in 11th place.

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