

Undated, Dec 7 (AP) -Cristiano Ronaldo's record-breaking hat trick helped Real Madrid equal another Spanish league milestone in a 3-0 win over Celta Vigo on Saturday. His 23rd career hat trick in La Liga gave him one more treble than greats Alfredo Di Stefano and Telmo Zarra. Ronaldo's 21st, 22nd and 23rd goals through 14 rounds also ensured Madrid claimed its 18th consecutive victory across all competitions under coach Carlo Ancelotti, matching a mark for Spanish teams established by Barcelona in 2005-06. Madrid maintained the league lead, four points ahead of Atletico Madrid after the defending champions won 2-0 at Elche. Barcelona, trailing Madrid by five points, hosts Espanyol on Sunday. Ronaldo opened at the Santiago Bernabeu from the penalty spot in the 36th minute after he fell following light contact with a defender. He struck again in the 65th and 81st. "It's a privilege to play with (Ronaldo)," Madrid defender Sergio Ramos said. "You would have to invent words to describe him. He may be in his best moment." Ronaldo received a standing ovation when substituted late, after taking his overall tally to 29 goals in 21 games this season. He led the Spanish league with 31 goals last season. Lionel Messi holds the record for the most goals in a Liga campaign with 50 in 2011-12. Ronaldo is already well on pace to repeat not only as the league's top scorer - Neymar is second with 11 - but he is also making a strong bid to defend his award for the world's best player. Madrid's commanding win was marred only by losing James Rodriguez, who asked to be changed and walked off the pitch in the 53rd. Celta defender Gustavo Cabral suffered a more painful injury later and had to be carried off. Ronaldo flirted with the goal in the 18th when he looped an acrobatic bicycle kick onto the top of the net before he tested Sergio Alvarez with a strike from Marcelo's pass. Marcelo continued to torment Celta's defense with his incursions from the left flank, and his cross led to the opening goal when Ronaldo collapsed after defender Jonathan "Jonny" Castro touched his arm. "It was a little unfair, we were in the game until then," Jonny said. "I touched him but he fell at the last moment." Celta's Fabian Orellana finally threatened with a curling shot that missed the post one minute after halftime, but Ronaldo sealed the win by stabbing home the ball after Madrid hemmed Celta into its box. He got his third goal from another cross by Marcelo, expertly using his left boot to score. Atletico churned out the win at Elche with defender Jose Gimenez firing in the first goal in the 17th to end a dizzying series of one-touch passes by Siqueira, Jorge "Koke" Resurreccion and Arda Turan from a set piece. Striker Mario Mandzukic finished Elche off in the 53rd by sprinting onto Gabi Fernandez's lob and firing the ball inside the post. Also, promoted Cordoba's 42-year wait for a top-tier victory finally ended by winning 1-0 at Athletic Bilbao, while Malaga won 1-0 at Deportivo La Coruna to rest in sixth place overnight. Cordoba hadn't won in 13 league games this season after returning to the top flight for the first time since 1972. But Cordoba striker Nabil Ghilas pounced on Ander Iturraspe's poor pass, leapt over Carlos Gurpegui's sliding tackle, and beat goalkeeper Gorka Iraizoz for what proved to be the winner in the 23rd. Malaga goalkeeper Carlos Kameni continued his superb season with several saves, including stopping Ivan Cavaleiro's penalty try. Counterpart Fabricio Agosto, however, was caught off his line by Sergi Darder's long strike to grab the visitors the win in the 23rd. Cordoba rose into 18th place, with Deportivo next and Elche at the foot of the standings.