

MADRID (Net) — Barcelona's hopes of staying in front of Real Madrid took a hit after another stumble in the Spanish league.

Barcelona was held by Celta Vigo to 2-2 after conceding in the 88th minute on Saturday, opening the way for Madrid to take sole possession of the lead.

Iago Aspas scored from a clever low free kick that went outside the wall to steal the win from Barcelona, which moved only one point in front of Madrid ahead of the rival's visit to last-placed Espanyol on Sunday.

"It's a disappointing feeling, we lost two very important points in the fight for the title," Barcelona striker Luis Suárez said. "Now we have to wait for Real Madrid to lose some points."

Barcelona lost the league lead after drawing at Sevilla two rounds ago. Madrid has yet to lose points after the pandemic break.

"Our margin for error is getting smaller," Barcelona coach Quique Setién said. "We have to win everything and hope that our rival makes mistakes."

Celta moved further away from demotion with the draw, opening an eight-point gap to the relegation zone. It was coming off two victories, including a 6-0 rout of Alavés.

"We've won eight of the last 12 points, we have to be very happy with the team," Aspas said. Both Barcelona goals came from Suárez, who hadn't scored since recovering from surgery on his right knee in January.

He got on the board first with a 20th-minute header after a set-piece taken by Lionel Messi, who again fell short of his 700th career goal for club and country. It was the third straight game in which Messi had a chance to reach the milestone goal.

Aspas, who hit the post in the first half, started the breakaway that led to the close-range equalizer by Russian striker Fiodor Smolov in the 50th.

Suárez put Barcelona ahead again with a shot from near the center of the area after another assist by Messi in the 67th, but Aspas pulled off the late equalizer with his free kick that left Barcelona goalkeeper Marc-André ter Stegen flat-footed.

"I knew what I was going to do," Aspas said. "We had watched videos and knew that the players in the wall were going to jump."

Stegen later saved Barcelona from leaving Vigo without any points by making a goal-line save after a close-range shot by Nolito in the final minutes.

Barcelona hadn't conceded in five straight matches. It hasn't won at Celta in six consecutive matches, since 2015.

Setién started youngsters Ansu Fati and Riqui Puig, leaving Antoine Griezmann on the bench for most of the match at Balaídos Stadium.

### ATLÉTICO'S STREAK

Sául Ñíguez and Diego Costa scored second-half goals as third-placed Atlético Madrid defeated Alavés 2-1 for its fourth straight victory.

The home win moved Atlético four points clear of fourth-placed Sevilla.

Diego Simeone's team remained unbeaten since the league resumed.

It was the third consecutive loss for Alavés, which remained near the relegation zone. Its lone goal was by Joselu in second-half stoppage time.

### ATHLETIC WINS

Athletic Bilbao increased its chances of qualifying for the Europa League by defeating relegation-threatened Mallorca 3-1 at home, moving to ninth place.

The Basque Country club is three points behind sixth-placed Villarreal in the final qualification spot for second-tiered European club competition.

Mallorca, winless since the league resumed, remained in the relegation zone and could drop to last place depending on other results.