

*The 11th round of the V.League last weekend saw Hanoi FC continue their unbeaten run and emerge as the champions of the first leg with two more matches to go.*



*Hanoi FC players celebrate Pham Van Thanh's opening goal against Sanna Khanh Hoa BVN.□*

There was little shuffle in the provisional table, but the gap between teams is getting narrower and narrower, adding greater thrill to this year's title race.

Hanoi FC, the odds-on favourites for the overall trophy, added Sanna Khanh Hoa BVN to their list of victims who have been felled by their terrific attacking power this season.

Despite the absence of their top scoring Nigerian striker, manager Chu Dinh Nghiem's side still put in an overwhelming display against the visitors from Khanh Hoa province, who had suffered only two losses before the June 3 fixture at Hang Day stadium.

The brilliance of talented young strikers, such as Quang Hai and Van Hau, guaranteed a resounding 4-0 victory for Hanoi FC (their ninth win in 11 games), helping them to move eight points clear ahead of second-placed Quang Ninh Coal.

Such a safety net means that the capital team are assured to be the winners of the first-leg competition, which has only two rounds left to play.

Becamex Binh Duong and Hoang Anh Gia Lai went on to keep their title hopes alive following respective draws against Ho Chi Minh City and Quang Ninh Coal.

Former champions, Binh Duong, built on with their exceptional form this season – conceding just one loss in 10 games – by leaving Cam Pha stadium with a precious point against in-form Quang Ninh.

Following a fantastic performance in the previous round, striker Tien Linh shone again, accounting for Binh Duong's solitary goal in their 1-1 away tie.

Receiving HCM City at Pleiku stadium, Hoang Anh Gia Lai missed a glorious chance to reclaim Binh Duong's third place in the table, as they failed to convert their two-goal advantage into the full three points.

The 2018 V.League table after the 11th round of play.

Another team quietly finding their way back to the leading group is Quang Nam FC.

The reigning title holders took advantage of a round with four of seven matches ending up as draws to jump to fifth position by edging out XSKT Can Tho 1-0.

Hai Phong followed closely behind after beating Saigon FC by the same score.

The hard-fought wins helped both teams to re-ignite their hopes of resuming the title race.

However, with the narrow gaps between teams at the moment, Quang Nam and Hai Phong will have to play in top form in the remaining stage if they do not want to be surpassed by other competitors.

The bottom group of the table is still made up of Song Lam Nghe An, Saigon, and newly promoted Nam Dinh FC, with a fragile gap of only one point between them.

By conceding against Hai Phong at home, Saigon have now gone six consecutive games without a win.

The pressure is mounting on manager Phan Van Tai Em's side, as Nam Dinh are threatening to snatch Saigon's second last position following their encouraging 1-1 draw at home against early title favourites FLC Thanh Hoa.

In the remaining two rounds of the first leg, the three teams at bottom will confront each other in two matches Saigon – Song Lam Nghe An and Nam Dinh – Saigon.

This will be an ideal chance for some of them to accumulate points in their bid to break away from the relegation zone.

*Source: Nhan Dan*