

What to WATCH

DAY'S EVENT

SONY SIX

South Africa v England

Third T20

Live from 6:30 pm

STAR SPORTS SELECT 1

English Premier League

Arsenal v Newcastle United

Live from 11:30 pm

STAR SPORTS SELECT 2

Bundesliga

Koln v Bayern Munich

Live from 8:30 pm

Mainz v Schalke

Live from 11:00 pm

TEN 1

Serie A

Juventus v Brescia

Live from 8:00 pm

TEN 2

Serie A

Udinese v Verona

Live from 5:30 pm

Sampdoria v Fiorentina

Live from 8:00 pm

Cagliari v Napoli

Live from 11:00 pm

Lazio v Inter

Live from 1:45 pm

Bangladesh Cricket League

Four-day Match, Day 3

Time: 9:30am

Central Zone v South Zone

Venue: Cox's Bazar

East Zone v North Zone

Venue: Cox's Bazar

Bangladesh Premier League

Abahani v Bangladesh Police

Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

Time: 6:30pm

City ban puts Pep’s future in doubt

AFP, London

Pep Guardiola faces a huge test of his loyalty to Manchester City after his club were hit with a stunning two-year suspension from UEFA competitions on Friday.

City have been banned from the Champions League and Europa League for the next two seasons and fined 30 million euros (£24.9 million) after UEFA found them guilty of committing “serious breaches” of financial regulations.

The Premier League champions overstated sponsorship revenue in accounts submitted between 2012 and 2016, according to European football’s governing body.

UEFA also said City failed to cooperate with an investigation into the matter launched by its Club Financial Control Body.

The shock punishment will cost City an estimated £170 million in lost Champions League revenue and the club reacted furiously, immediately vowing to appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS).

“Manchester City is disappointed but not surprised by today’s announcement by the UEFA Adjudicatory Chamber,” a statement read.

“The club has always anticipated the ultimate need to seek out an independent body and process to impartially consider the comprehensive body of irrefutable evidence in support of its position.”

But, while City urgently plan their appeal, the football world waits to see how Guardiola reacts to a punishment that could convince the Spaniard to quit the Etihad Stadium at the end of the season.

Guardiola reportedly has a break clause in his contract which means he can depart at the conclusion of this campaign should certain stipulations be met that satisfy the City hierarchy.

City officials were said to be confident that, despite an underwhelming season which has seen them fall 22 points behind runaway Premier League leaders Liverpool, Guardiola would honour a contract that currently ties him to the club until 2021.



But staying with City now European football could be off limits is likely to be a rather more unappetising prospect for Guardiola.

Whether the former Barcelona and Bayern Munich boss wants to stick it out at City will show how much he has grown to love the club since arriving in 2016.

Guardiola is close to City directors Txiki Begiristain and Ferran Soriano, who worked with him at Barca, but his ties to City’s Abu Dhabi-based owner Sheikh Mansour might be frayed if there is no escape from the embarrassing ban.

Leading City to a pair of Premier League titles in record-breaking fashion and winning a domestic treble last term underlined Guardiola’s

enduring qualities.

However, he has failed to get past the quarter-finals of the Champions League with City and another daunting test lies in wait in the last 16 when they face Real Madrid later in February.

The most recent of Guardiola’s two Champions League titles as a manager came way back in 2011 with Barca and his failure to add to that tally is the one blemish on his otherwise glittering CV.

The critics who crow that he can only win Europe’s elite club prize with a genius like Barca’s Lionel Messi in his team have nagged at Guardiola for years.

So the prospect of wasting two seasons waiting to return to the pursuit of his holy grail could be too much for Guardiola to bear, especially as rampant Liverpool look capable of keeping the Premier League crown out of City’s grasp for years to come.

Asked about the potential for a European ban in December 2018, Guardiola had been optimistic, but that trust proved misplaced.

“We will not be banned. I trust in them (the owners),” he said at the time. “If it happens, because UEFA decide that, we will accept it and move forward.”

Everything has changed now and reports immediately after news of the ban broke claimed the 49-year-old would consider his future unless City win the appeal.

Guardiola is already 7/4 with bookmakers to not be in charge of City before the start of the next Premier League season.

In a doomsday scenario for City, it might not only be Guardiola who could be weighing up his options if the ban is upheld.

Mansour may feel the damage to his reputation and to City’s status is too much to take and could put the club up for sale.

City stars including Raheem Sterling, Kevin De Bruyne, Sergio Aguero and Aymeric Laporte are unlikely to be impressed at being hauled off the Champions League stage through no fault of their own.

They may consider demanding transfers, adding another factor that could push Guardiola towards the exit door.

Hacker or whistleblower?

AGENCIES



Football Leaks hacker Rui Pinto -- the man who exposed Manchester City’s breaking of Financial Fair Play rules -- remains in prison awaiting a court case.

Pinto hacked his way into club emails from his Portugal home in 2015 and then passed them on to the media and sparked the investigation into City’s finances.

Despite being widely praised by the football world, Pinto was arrested and sent to prison, and will face a trial for 90 different counts of hacking, sabotage and fraud.

Pinto was denied an appeal on Thursday and has been in jail since last March, while awaiting a verdict by the Lisbon Court of Appeal.

News of UEFA’s decision to ban City from the Champions League for the next two seasons saw Pinto’s name start trending with the hashtag #freePinto on Friday night.

Borussia Dortmund fans even held aloft a banner appealing for authorities to drop the case and allow Pinto to walk free.

Football Leaks was created back in 2015 and has exposed everything from tax fraud to clubs breaching FFP. Pinto reportedly got hold of 70 million documents and 3.4 terabytes of information and told Der Spiegel recently that he was aware of the risks of his work.

“I was aware that anything could happen,” he said to the German newspaper. “I knew that Portuguese authorities prosecute whistleblowers, so I had to be ready for that. The Portuguese authorities are afraid of what I know and that’s why it is important that I not lose my mind.”

“In the beginning, I wrote notes related to the case in my notebook, but then it was taken from me. My lawyer was present when they searched my cell and said it was illegal to take my notes from me. It wasn’t the prison guards who did it, but the Portuguese prosecutors. They do anything they want. It was a month before they returned the notebook to me.”



Zidane fears Man City motivation

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane on Saturday said that he is expecting Manchester City’s motivation to be “immense” when the two sides meet in the Champions League following the announcement of the English side’s two-season ban from European competitions.

UEFA on Friday said that City would be suspended from the next two editions of the Champions League for “serious” financial fair-play breaches, although the Premier League champions have said they will appeal the decision to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS).

Real host Pep Guardiola’s City in their last-16 first leg on February 26, with the return game at the Etihad on March 17.

“For what has just happened, their motivation will be immense,” said Zidane ahead of La Liga leaders Real’s match against Celta Vigo on Sunday.

“I’m not going to go into what happened, what is going to happen...”

“It’s a team anyway, who will be a difficult opponent, knowing also how they have been doing in the Premier League. So they will have extra motivation.”

Manchester City logo

Timeline of events

November 2018: Football Leaks allegations emerge

It has been 15 months since Der Spiegel published a host of articles claiming the defending Premier League champions flagrantly flouted UEFA’s FFP laws. The German publication purportedly gained the information from whistleblowers Football Leaks and claimed Sheikh Mansour’s City regime topped up multi-million-pound sponsorship deals with Abu Dhabi companies, using their owner’s fortune, to meet the financial rules. It was also claimed City were cut a favourable deal by UEFA for overspending in 2014. City said in response: “The attempt to damage the club’s reputation is organised and clear”.

November 2018: UEFA warns City FFP investigation could reopen

UEFA said it would consider reopening a 2014 probe, which saw City fined and have restrictions on the size of Champions League squad imposed, if “new information comes to light”. Early in December, UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin said: “We are assessing the situation. We have an independent body working on it. Very soon you will have an answer on what will happen in this concrete case.”

March 2019: UEFA launches formal investigation

It was almost a year ago UEFA formally started an investigation into Der Spiegel’s allegations, with Club Financial Control Board chairman and former Belgium prime minister Yves Leterme warning the “heaviest punishment” City face is “expulsion from UEFA competitions”. City said: “The accusation of financial irregularities are entirely false. The club’s published accounts are full and complete and a matter of legal and regulatory record”.

May 2019: City respond to ban reports

After reports emerged in the New York Times that City were facing the prospect of a one-year UEFA ban, the club released a statement registering concern that their “good faith” in UEFA’s investigation into their financial affairs could be “misplaced”.

May 2019: “Hostile process” slammed by City

Leterme had earlier in the year told Belgian magazine Sport and Strategy that City should face a ban from UEFA competition if the allegations were proven. A strongly worded club statement slammed the CFCB investigation as a “hostile process” after the probe was referred to the body’s adjudicatory chamber for a final decision after the

completion of Leterme’s inquiry. The club said they were “disappointed but regrettably not surprised” by the decision.

November 2019: Reports say City set to avoid ban

Towards the back end of last year, it was reported UEFA were struggling to enforce its FFP regulations and City could avoid a ban and escape only with a fine.

November 2019: CAS deems City appeal ‘inadmissible’

In June last year, City appealed against UEFA’s investigation into alleged breaches of FFP to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS). However, five months later CAS ruled City’s appeal as “inadmissible” because UEFA had not reached a final decision on the case.

February 2020: UEFA announces ban

After a lengthy process, UEFA announced City have been hit with a two-year ban from European competition and a hefty €30million fine. The Adjudicatory Chamber of the CFCB found City guilty of “overstating its sponsorship revenue in its accounts and in the break-even information submitted to UEFA between 2012 and 2016”. City again questioned the process of the investigation and announced their intention to launch an appeal with CAS “at the earliest opportunity”.

VAR denies Wolves as Hamza sees red

REUTERS, Undated



Wolverhampton Wanderers had a goal controversially ruled out by VAR as they were held to a 0-0 draw at home to Leicester City, who finished with 10 men, in the Premier League on Friday.

The result leaves Leicester in third place on 50 points, a point behind Manchester City, while Wolves move up to seventh place on 36, five points off the Champions League places.

Wolves thought they had the lead just before the break when Willy Boly headed home after a short-corner routine but VAR ruled that Pedro Neto was marginally offside when he crossed.

The VAR footage showed Neto’s non-striking foot slightly offside when he received the ball back from Diogo Jota from the short corner.

Wolves manager Nuno Espirito Santo said the VAR system needed to be re-examined.

“It is reality now but each time it happens it upsets you. When you see the images, there is not a clear advantage but the law is the law,” he said.



Hamza Choudhury was sent off as Leicester City drew goalless against Wolverhampton on Friday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Leicester went down to 10 men when Hamza Choudhury was sent off for tripping Leander Dendoncker as he picked up a second yellow card in the 76th minute.

Wolves went close to a late winner when Raul Jimenez flashed a header from a corner just wide and in stoppage time Adama Traore forced a save out of Leicester keeper Kasper Schmeichel.

Griezmann shines in Barca win

AFP, Barcelona

A slick Antoine Griezmann strike set Barcelona on their way against Getafe in La Liga on Saturday before they survived a late onslaught from the gritty visitors to win 2-1.

The result leaves Barcelona trailing on goal-difference atop La Liga before leaders Real Madrid’s Sunday home game with Celta Vigo.

In a physically engaging game, Barca star Jordi Alba limped off in the first half.

Alba, the club tweeted after the game, “is suffering from a right adductor muscle injury and will be undergoing further tests.”

The Catalan giants have a Champions League last-16 game away to Napoli on Tuesday.

Barcelona forwards Luis Suarez and Ousmane Dembele are both out with long-term injuries.

Fed by a masterful through ball from Lionel Messi, Griezmann’s finish was perfect as he clipped the ball over onrushing goalkeeper David Soria on 33 minutes.

Sergi Roberto then doubled the scores six minutes later, firing into the bottom corner from a cross by Alba’s replacement Junior Firpo.

But a late rally from Getafe, third in La Liga after four straight wins without conceding a goal, gave Barca a scare.

Getafe, playing in their dayglo yellow away strip, often silenced the 80,409 fans at the Camp Nou.

Their direct approach yielded a



Barcelona forward Antoine Griezmann celebrates after scoring the opener in their 2-1 win over Getafe in a La Liga encounter yesterday. PHOTO: TWITTER

goal when Angel Rodriguez scored with a powerful volley on 66 minutes.

Rodriguez came within an inch of pulling Getafe level on 73 minutes sparking a goalmouth scramble.

Goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen scooped the ball off the line.

Barcelona clung on before Griezmann and Messi both went close with late efforts.

Allan Nyom thought he had put Getafe ahead on 25 minutes when he banged home a rebound. A VAR review, however, judged he had fouled Samuel Umtiti.

Mallorca climbed out of the relegations places as Cucho Hernandez scored the goal in a 1-0 home victory over Alaves.

Real Sociedad’s visit to Eibar on Sunday has been called off because of poor air quality following a landslide into a nearby rubbish dump, the clubs announced on Saturday.

The Basque regional health department had recommended that sports be avoided in the area after the rockslide on February 6 into the Zaldibar rubbish dump, about eight kilometres from Eibar’s Ipurua stadium.

Nine in six for Haaland

AFP, Berlin

Norwegian teen Erling Braut Haaland took his tally to nine goals in six games for Borussia Dortmund after netting in Friday’s 4-0 win over Eintracht Frankfurt.

Dortmund sit a point behind leaders Bayern Munich, who play Cologne away on Sunday.

Dortmund dominated Frankfurt, who looked a shadow of the side which hammered Bayern 5-1 last November and beat Leipzig 2-0 last month.

Frankfurt could only get one shot on goal, compared to Dortmund’s 17 at Signal Iduna Park.

After goals by Lukasz Piszczek and Jadon Sancho, Haaland again showed some clinical finishing to smash home a second-half pass and continue his phenomenal tally before Raphael Guerreiro added a late fourth.

The 19-year-old, who scored 28 goals in 22 games this season for Salzburg before Dortmund paid 20 million euros for him, now has eight goals in five league games, plus one in the 3-2 German Cup defeat to Werder Bremen.

ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

Scratch & Win

upto 0% on making charges

FEB/21ST - 29TH/2020

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