

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

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

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

the law is the law,” he said.

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.

Nine in six for Haaland

AFP, Berlin

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

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

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

Frankfurt could only come up with 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 Haaland, who scored 28 goals in 22 games this season for Salzburg before Dortmund paid 20 million euros (\$22 million) for him, now has eight goals in five league games, plus one in the 3-2 German Cup defeat to Werder Bremen.

The teen was replaced 12 minutes from time and came off to a standing ovation from the 81,000 crowd.

After Guerreiro hit the post with a free-kick for Dortmund early on, the hosts took the lead through right-back

Borussia Dortmund’s Erling Braut Haaland celebrates after scoring against Eintracht Frankfurt, his ninth goal in six matches, at the Signal Iduna Park on Friday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Piszczek.

The Poland international, stand-in captain with Marco Reus sidelined by a leg injury, cracked a long-range goal off his left foot on 33 minutes.

Sancho and Haaland, both 19, then put the result beyond doubt with two goals inside four minutes after the break.

England winger Sancho showed his class when a long pass by Axel Witsel found him on the left wing.

He powered into the box before tucking his shot past Frankfurt goalkeeper Kevin Trapp on 50 minutes.

Sancho was then involved in Haaland’s goal when he fed Achraf Hakimi and the right winger provided the final pass which the Norwegian teen converted on 54 minutes.

It became a rout when Hakimi tried to pass back for Haaland, who could not control the ball.

The Frankfurt’s defence cleared the danger, but the ball went only as far as Guerreiro, who hit the bottom corner on 74 minutes.

Atletico held at Valencia

AFP, Madrid

Atletico Madrid were twice pegged back in Friday’s 2-2 draw at Valencia to keep Diego Simeone’s side in fourth in La Liga ahead of Liverpool’s visit next week.

Atletico host the runaway Premier League leaders at the Wanda Metropolitan in the Champions League last 16 first leg on Tuesday.

Atletico’s Real Madrid recruit Marcos Llorente right-footed the visitors’ into an early lead before a close range header from Gabriel Paulista got Valencia back level five minutes before the break.

Three minutes later Ghanaian midfielder Thomas Partey had Atletico back in front only for Geoffrey Kondogbia to earn Valencia a share of the points off a set piece after the restart.

This was Atletico’s 10th stalemate of the season and it left them on 40 points, with Valencia in sixth, two points adrift.

“We’re on the right path. It was an important match with lots of goal-scoring chances for both sides,” commented Simeone.

ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

Scratch&Win

upto 0% on making charges

FEB/21ST - 29TH/2020

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