

King of Clay in 'difficult situation'

REUTERS, Madrid

Rafa Nadal will miss next week's Madrid Open after a setback in his recovery from a hip injury sustained at the Australian Open in January, the 22-times major champion said on Thursday.

Nadal skipped tournaments at Indian Wells, Miami and Monte Carlo as well as the current Barcelona Open after suffering the injury that effectively ended his Melbourne Park title defence as he fell to a second-round defeat by Mackenzie McDonald.

"Initially it had to be a six to eight week recovery period and we are now on fourteen. "The reality is that the situation is not what we would have expected, " Nadal said in a video published on his social media accounts.

While the Spaniard, also known as King of Clay, a 14-times French Open champion who has dominated the clay court season for years, still hopes to be fully fit for the Grand Slam starting in May, his statement is not optimistic.

"The injury still hasn't healed and I can't work out what I need to compete," Nadal said.

'Hope to see Kane statue outside Spurs stadium'

AFP, London

Tottenham chairman Daniel Levy says Harry Kane can still fulfil his ambition of winning a trophy with the club but believes being a "legend" is also important.

The England captain has scored 23 Premier League goals this season – behind only Manchester City's Erling Haaland – but is approaching the final 12 months of his contract at managerless Spurs.

The 29-year-old forward, who has been linked with a move to Manchester United or Paris Saint-Germain at the end of the season, has spent his whole senior career at Tottenham but is yet to win a trophy.

Spurs' record goalscorer has often made clear his desire to win silverware at his boyhood club but discussions over a new deal are yet to take place.

Levy said during a discussion at the Cambridge Union Society: "He (Kane) can absolutely win a trophy at Spurs, but being a legend is also important. "The fact that he's the top scorer for Tottenham, he's making history. I hope one day there is a statue of Harry Kane outside our stadium."

Long-serving chairman Levy is known for his reluctance to take part in media activities and has rarely given interviews during his 22 years at Spurs since ENIC bought the club.

The Tottenham fan reflected on a number of issues during the event in Cambridge last month, including the club's trophy drought, which has now extended into a 15th consecutive campaign.



Erling Haaland compensated for missing from the spot in the first half as he lashed one past the Bayern Munich goalkeeper for his 48th goal in 41 appearances this season to help Manchester City draw 1-1 in the Champions League quarterfinal second leg at the Allianz Arena, and secure a 4-1 win on aggregate, on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Fans await thrilling semifinals

AGENCIES

Whilst drama remained in Tuesday's quarterfinal ties in the Champions League, few expected any sort of comebacks from the teams trailing when Wednesday night's second legs began.

A 4-1 win on aggregate for Manchester City over Bayern Munich and Inter Milan's 5-3 aggregate victory against Benfica now only see fans, even neutrals, spend days in anticipation of what promises to be a blockbuster series of Champions League semifinals next month.

With revenge on mind, Erling Haaland, who once again was on the scoresheet during their 1-1 draw in the quarterfinal second leg at the Allianz Arena yesterday, and Manchester City will take on defending champions Real Madrid in one semifinal while the Milan derby will return to the centre stage of European football when the Italian city's two giant clubs – AC Milan and Inter Milan – meet in the other fiery Champions League semifinal.

CAN CITY GET REVENGE?

A year ago Manchester City suffered one of the most heartbreaking European defeats in their history against Real Madrid - but now they have the chance of revenge.

For the second season in a row, and third overall, City and Real have been drawn against each other in the Champions League semifinals.

Last year City went till the 85th minute of the second leg at the Bernabeu just needing to not concede two goals, only to do so in dramatic fashion.

Having won a thrilling first leg 4-3 at Etihad Stadium, Riyad Mahrez gave City a 5-3 aggregate lead.

But substitute Rodrygo netted in the 90th and 91st minutes, with Real's first

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE SEMIFINAL FIXTURES

Tuesday, May 9:
Real Madrid vs Manchester City

Wednesday, May 10:
AC Milan vs Inter Milan

Tuesday, May 16:
Inter Milan vs AC Milan

Wednesday, May 17:
Manchester City vs Real Madrid

****This season's Champions League final is scheduled for Saturday, June 10 at Istanbul's Ataturk Olympic Stadium.**

two shots on target.

Karim Benzema then scored an extra-time winner from the penalty spot to seal a stunning 6-5 aggregate triumph – and Carlo Ancelotti's side went on to beat Liverpool in the final.

But is there a real feeling things could be different this year – especially with 48-goal striker Erling Haaland in their ranks.

"All clubs know if you want to win the Champions League you need to beat Real Madrid," said City boss Pep Guardiola, who once managed Real's arch-rivals Barcelona.

Real have won 14 European Cups, twice as many as anybody else – including five of the past nine.

"Hopefully yes!" said City midfielder Bernardo Silva when asked about the chance of exacting revenge against the holders on 9 and 17 May, with the second leg at home.

"We will go for it definitely. We always go for it, but we feel the team is very, very confident at the minute. I think we are going through."

FIERY MILAN DERBY IN STORE

Meanwhile, the prospect of the two matches full of colour and pageantry between local rivals Inter and AC Milan, who between them have been crowned kings of Europe 10 times, will dominate discussion in Milan, and remind fans when Italian football had a legitimate claim to call itself the world's best.

Before the draw for the 2005 Champions quarterfinals, former AC Milan managing director Adriano Galliani was desperate to not be drawn with another Italian team.

"Above all I don't want Inter because for those of us who live in Milan it would be hell," he said.

In the end Galliani's wish was not granted and that year's last eight was the scene of possibly the most notorious derby of all, with Inter fans throwing barrage of flares onto the pitch, one which took on a hellish landscape in the second leg after Milan won the first 2-0.

A footballing epoch has passed since those days, with both Milan clubs spending years in the doldrums at home and abroad until they won the two most recent Serie A titles between them.

"For us, this derby is a chance of revenge, a revenge of history and revenge also for last year," said Inter chairman Steven Zhang after Wednesday's straightforward passage past Benfica.

Mustafizur's struggles stemming from lack of red-ball perseverance

SPORTS REPORTER

England's Moeen Ali made his debut in 2014, a year before Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman. One similarity is that neither have been playing Test cricket, but the differences in their thought process is an important aspect in Bangladesh's pace bowling department.

The difference is that Moeen was starting to feel the lack of Test cricket affecting his white-ball cricket. Moeen felt he was missing rhythm with his spin.

"When I was playing Test matches, I always felt like I was bowling well in white-ball cricket. You can kind of lose that rhythm, I guess. I think I've got to have that mindset of still bowling with that same energy as I would have done in Test matches," Moeen recently said in an interview with Cricinfo.

Moeen is a veteran of 63 Tests compared to Mustafizur's 15 Tests. Pitches for home Test had rendered pace bowlers as souvenirs and, in that regard, Mustafizur's motivation has always been white-ball cricket, with just 36 first-class games under his belt.

The question can always be pondered why a white-ball specialist needs longer-version cricket.

Talking to Nazmul Abedin Faheem, analyst and mentor to many national team stars, shed some light.

"Test cricket gives batters and bowlers an opportunity to play their own way and understand their own strengths and weaknesses. In T20 format, you don't play your own game, the scoreboard dictates," he said.

The analytical side of Fizz's game merits reconsideration given the two length deliveries in his last IPL game, which allowed batters to get under them at a very crucial stage. It appeared he could be targeted when opposition required it.

"I don't know if he [Mustafizur] has a clear head about his own game. He is probably depending on what others tell him. It's not about his cutters or slowers but his understanding and reading of the game. There is the thing about 'what am I not supposed to do?'. That's probably in his head."

Does that stem from a negative mindset? "Yes," Fahim says. "You are thinking you won't bowl loose deliveries or half-volleys or wides. But negative thoughts don't bring positive results. Maybe he's thinking he won't give away runs but it's very difficult since in T20s without aggressive intent since everyone gets hit. He has to back himself and he isn't doing that."

"We used to think of him as an automatic choice in T20s but that's not the case anymore. We have four to five bowlers who come before Mustafizur," Fahim says.

It is not just Tests, playing first-class games could have been beneficial as well.

"Your technique is completely challenged in longer-version cricket. In T20s, you can bowl slowers but in longer-version the wicket has to be earned with skill. You acquire that skill with hardships day in and day out. That's where mental strength and perseverance comes from."

"Every format has a different trait and your mentality develops according to that. Talking about perseverance, when a partnership develops and reaches 200, you are still bowling and persevering. That mental development is missing," Fahim concluded.



Bullish Arteta accepts demand to win

AGENCIES, LONDON

Mikel Arteta responded to Arsenal legend Thierry Henry's claims that the Gunners were 'too emotional', expressing confidence that Arsenal could return to winning ways after damaging draws against Liverpool and West Ham cost them momentum in the Premier League title race.

"When you set the standards and expectations really high, after you have to maintain them, and to win every game in the Premier League is extremely difficult. It's not like we lost five games in the last six and we are in this situation, it's that you draw two matches, two very difficult fixtures away from home.

"But when you are there you are expected to win, to win, to win, because there's a necessity. To get the Premier League you have to win almost every single game. That's the demand and you have to accept it."

The Gunners let two-goal leads slip in both of their last two games and the leaders are now just four points ahead of defending champions Manchester City,

who have a game in hand.

The two title-chasing teams meet at the Etihad Stadium next week in a match that could prove pivotal.

"I don't know the last time we beat Man City so it's going to be a tough one," Henry said on CBS Sports. "The last game against them [a 3-1 defeat in February] didn't reassure me. Since the start of the season I've been talking about emotions and how you don't win league titles with emotion. I'm sorry, but you don't. There is a difference between passion and emotion. You can feel emotions but don't become too emotional, that's the difference. They need to stay calm. "If I was in the dressing room I would be saying, 'This is the moment. This has to be the moment.' But emotionally they should be composed enough to handle the big moments. It will be amazing if we do it."

Arteta knew exactly what was at stake though. When asked if Arsenal were focused on winning each game as it came, he answered: "Each ball. Now, it's each ball."



WHAT TO WATCH

T Sports and Star Sports Select HD1

Indian Premier League
Chennai vs Hyderabad
Live from 8:00 pm (today)
Lucknow vs Gujarat
Live from 4:00 pm (Saturday)
Mumbai vs Punjab
Live from 8:00 pm (Saturday)
Bangalore vs Rajasthan
Live from 4:00 pm (Sunday)
Kolkata vs Chennai
Live from 8:00 pm (Sunday)
Hyderabad vs Delhi
Live from 8:00 pm (Monday)

Star Sports Select HD2

English Premier League
Arsenal vs Southampton
Live from 1:00 am (Saturday)
Fulham vs Leeds
Live from 5:30 pm (Saturday)
Liverpool vs Nottingham Forest
Live from 8:00 pm (Saturday)
Newcastle United vs Tottenham
Hotspurs
Live from 7:00 pm (Sunday)

Sony Sports 1

English FA Cup
Sheffield United vs Manchester City
Live from 10:00 pm (Saturday)
Brighton vs Manchester United
Live from 9:30 pm (Sunday)



Even though speculation remains about Kylian Mbappe's future at PSG, the French forward was focused in training ahead of their visit to Angers on Friday. A win for PSG could see them 11 points clear of second-placed Marseille and on course for a record-breaking 11th Ligue 1 title.

PHOTO: TWITTER