



Can Champions League salvage Man City's season?

LONDON: Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola conceded the Premier League title to Liverpool long ago, but his side's profligate attack and porous defence are becoming worrying trends.

A sixth defeat of the campaign, at Tottenham on Sunday, means City have now lost as many times this season as in their previous 84 league games under Guardiola and are relying on cup competitions to salvage their season.

Guardiola's men are into a third consecutive League Cup final, where they will be heavy favourites to beat Aston Villa on March 1. They face Sheffield Wednesday in the fifth round of the FA Cup.

However, City's season will

In their back-to-back title winning campaigns, Guardiola's men conceded 27 goals in 2017/18 and 23 last season. With 13 games still to play this season, they have already conceded 29.

Laporte is back fit, although he has been bedded in slowly after making his return in a 1-0 win at Sheffield United nearly two weeks ago.

Waiting to 'click'

The 2-0 defeat in north London on Sunday was only the second time City have failed to score in the league this season.

However, a failure to take their chances has also been a recurring theme of City's season. Against Spurs they had 18 shots to Totten-



now be judged on how they fare in the Champions League, with the might of 13-time winners Real Madrid awaiting them in the last 16.

An inability to progress beyond the quarter-finals in Guardiola's three seasons at City so far has been the major disappointment of an otherwise hugely successful reign. "I will be judged, if we don't win it in my final period here, that I will be a failure here. I know that," said the City boss ahead of this weekend.

Relying on Laporte

If they are to be crowned European champions, City need major improvements at both ends of the pitch, but tightening up at the back is the most pressing priority.

Dembele picks up another injury in training

LONDON: Barcelona forward Ousmane Dembele pulled out of training on Monday amid fears the Frenchman has suffered a setback in his recovery from a hamstring injury.

"During this morning's training session, Ousmane Dembele felt some discomfort in his right leg as a consequence of muscle fatigue," Barcelona said in a statement. "He

will continue with his rehabilitation."

Dembele has not played for Barca since November 27 but had been expected to return this month.

The 22-year-old has endured a spate of injuries since moving to Camp Nou from Borussia Dortmund in 2017 and has only made nine appearances this term.



INJURY ENDS SHARMA'S NZ TOUR

WELLINGTON: India opening batsman Rohit Sharma has been ruled out of the rest of the tour of New Zealand after suffering a calf strain in the final Twenty20 international in Mt. Maunganui, the country's cricket board (BCCI) said on Tuesday.

Rohit retired hurt on Sunday when he was on 60 off 41 balls. He received treatment for several minutes in the 17th over but hobbled off three deliveries later and was unable to continue.

"He underwent an MRI scan in Hamilton on Monday. The opening batsman has been ruled out of the upcoming ODI and test series and will be referred to the National Cricket Academy for further management of his injury," the BCCI said in a statement.

India, who swept New Zealand 5-0 in the T20 series, play three ODIs starting Wednesday in Hamilton and selectors have named Mayank Agarwal as Rohit's replacement in the 50-overs squad.

Prithvi Shaw, who was sidelined first by an ankle injury and then a doping ban last year, was named in the 16-member test squad and is expected to open with Agarwal with fellow 20-year-old Shubman Gill as the reserve opener.

India will also be without all-rounder Hardik Pandya for the test series as he recovers from a back injury.

India test squad: Virat Kohli (captain), Mayank Agarwal, Prithvi Shaw, Shubman Gill, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane,

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Hanuma Vihari, Wriddhiman Saha, Rishabh Pant, Ravichandran Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Jasprit Bumrah, Umesh Yadav, Mohammed Shami, Navdeep Saini, Ishant Sharma

WILLIAMSON ruled out of India one-dayers

WELLINGTON: New Zealand captain Kane Williamson has been ruled out of the first two one-day internationals against India this week due to a shoulder problem and replaced in the squad by Mark Chapman.

Williamson suffered an "inflamed AC joint in his left shoulder" while fielding in a Twenty20 match against India last week and will miss Wednesday's match in Hamilton and Saturday's clash in Auckland, New Zealand Cricket said on Tuesday.

Black Caps physiotherapist Vijay Vallabh said Williamson's injury would be managed cautiously and the batsman might be fit for the third and final match of the series at Mount Maunganui.

"Kane has had an X-ray scan which cleared him of anything serious, but it's best for his recovery that he avoids aggravating the joint for the next few days," Vallabh said in a statement.

"He will continue his fitness training sessions throughout the week and will start batting again on Friday with the prospect of being available for game three next Tuesday."

Tom Latham will stand in for Williamson as captain in the first two matches.

Lefthanded batsman Chapman scored 124 not out on debut against the United Arab Emirates in Dubai in 2015 but managed only nine runs in three matches against England last year in his last ODI outings.

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'Hungry' Morgan sets sights on T20 WC success for England

England captain Csays the hunger to lift trophies has not diminished in the wake of the his side's 2019 World Cup triumph and has his eyes set on more silverware in the shortest form of the game in the coming years.

Morgan will lead England against South Africa at Newlands on Tuesday in their first one-day international since they claimed the World Cup in dramatic fashion at Lord's in July, and he said the aim now is to make sure that was not a one-off success.

"Before the next (50-over) World Cup we have two T20 World Cups that we are eyeing, so this series against South Africa will allow us to build a broader squad so that in three or four years' time we have a substantial group to select from, just like we did before this past World Cup," Morgan told reporters on Monday.

The T20 World Cup will be played in Australia in October-November, with the next edition set for a year later in



I haven't looked that far ahead. I'm looking at the next two T20 World Cups and I feel I have enough to say I hope to be here for both," he said.

India. "The next three World Cups will be the same, stick to the process by which we are trying to get better the whole time, and that includes younger guys coming through to test older guys who

hold the positions at the moment," he added.

"I haven't looked that far ahead. I'm looking at the next two T20 World Cups and I feel I have enough to say I hope to be here for both," he said.

"Often when you make a decision to stay on longer it's taken out of your hands, so I just want to focus on the next two T20 tournaments."

"Coming back from the five T20 matches we played in New Zealand (in November), I felt physically and mentally very good, so I want to continue with that."

Morgan added that the England team don't dwell on the world champions tag, but that it is good to hear.

"We don't call ourselves that. Everybody refers to us as that, which is awesome. But our goal was to win the World Cup, we managed to achieve that and it was an unbelievable feeling. It has given us the platform to build for next cycle," he said.