

## PEP GUARDIOLA FACES FA CUP Q-FINAL HEADACHE

**MIDDLESBROUGH:** Pep Guardiola faces a selection headache in today's FA Cup quarter-final at Middlesbrough as the Manchester City manager juggles the demands of competing for silverware on two fronts.

Guardiola must decide how many of City's best players to risk for at the Riverside Stadium as they have a crucial Champions League last 16 second leg clash with Monaco four days later.

The FA Cup offers the more realistic prospect of Guardiola's first trophy with City, but the Spaniard's success in Europe was a key factor in the decision to bring him to Manchester last year.

The former Barcelona and Bayern Munich boss will find his skills tested to the limit in what is a defining week for City's season.

His most recent attempt at squad rotation failed

when Guardiola decided to start Wednesday's Premier League home game against Stoke without his two best creative players.

David Silva was named as a substitute and Raheem Sterling was rested altogether as City drew 0-0, leaving them 10 points behind leaders Chelsea.

Guardiola has rested players for each of City's FA Cup games so far, but there are signs that he is taking the competition more seriously the further he progresses. Having made eight changes for their goalless fifth round tie at Huddersfield last month, he made only four for the replay, which City won 5-1.

Claudio Bravo, now the second-choice goalkeeper for league games, has come back in for the last two FA Cup ties and should play again at the Riverside Stadium, while full-back Pablo Zabaleta has also tended to be used in the competition.

Perhaps the biggest question revolves around Sergio Aguero. The Argentina striker was demoted to the bench following the January arrival of Gabriel Jesus from Brazilian club Palmeiras.

### INDISPENSABLE

Yet since Jesus broke his foot against Bournemouth on February 13, Aguero has proved indispensable. He scored twice in 5-3 first leg win against Monaco, and is City's best hope of the away goal they may well need in the principality to secure European progress. Guardiola cannot afford an injury to the striker, and so may decide to field Kelechi Iheanacho against Middlesbrough instead. City midfielder Yaya Toure hinted that there will be some changes on Saturday, saying: "We've got two games now where we need all the players." — AFP

## SAMP TARGET GENOA DERBY, INTER BATTLE ATALANTA

**MILAN:** Former Juventus striker Fabio Quagliarella said respective positions in the league table will be ignored today when Sampdoria face Genoa in derby "battle for 90 minutes".

With leaders Juventus hosting AC Milan later looking to extend their eight-point lead over second-placed Roma, who are in action tomorrow at Palermo, the focus of this weekend's Serie A action is on the Luigi Ferraris stadium.

Sampdoria, sitting 10th at 29 points off the lead, are nine points ahead of Genoa in 15th place in a season where top flight survival for both is the only objective.

Having won their home fixture 2-1 last October, Quagliarella is confident Marco Giampaolo's men can make it two in a row, telling Premium Sport: "We're going into this game totally relaxed, although it's a game that won't take into account our respective league standings."

"Our results recently have shown how well we're doing, but the derby is a match apart. It will be a battle for 90 minutes. Hopefully, we'll win our second this season."

While a shock win for Milan in Turin could throw the title race back open, the fight for European places continues apace.

Inter Milan, one of several teams battling for a coveted Champions League spot, face the acid test with the visit of high-flying Atalanta to the San Siro tomorrow.

Amid their best Serie A season to date, Atalanta sit fifth, one point ahead of Inter and five points behind Napoli in the third and last Champions League qualifying spot.

Portugal midfielder Joao Mario admits the Bergamo side pose a "difficult" challenge, but said: "On Sunday we can gift everyone at Inter with a win, that's what we want." — AP



**ROSTOV-ON-DON:** Manchester United's Marouane Fellaini, right, and Rostov's Christian Noboa fight for the ball during the Europa League round of 16 first leg soccer match between Rostov and Manchester United in Rostov-on-Don, Russia, Thursday. — AP

### SOCCER

## MOURINHO EYES PROGRESS DESPITE CHELSEA DATE

**ROSTOV-ON-DON:** Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho is hopeful the obstacle of a trip to Chelsea in the FA Cup does not hinder his side's prospects of completing a Europa League last-16 win over Rostov.

United drew 1-1 in Russia in the first leg of their tie on Thursday after Henrikh Mkhitaryan's first-half opener was cancelled out by an Aleksandr Bukharov strike shortly after the break.

It was a good result after a long trip for a match played on a shocking surface at the Olimp 2 stadium—so bad that Mourinho had questioned whether the match should have gone ahead at all.

United host Rostov in the return at Old Trafford next Thursday but before that they go to Chelsea in the FA Cup quarter-finals on Monday evening, meaning the Portuguese manager will have to adequately manage his squad

to avoid fatigue. And he acknowledged the importance of the Europa League as a potential route into next season's Champions League for a team currently sitting sixth in the Premier League.

"We want to keep the two goals open. In the Europa League, if you manage to go to the quarter finals, then in the quarter finals, you feel it so we have to try by every means," said Mourinho, whose side have already won the English League Cup this season.

"We have a trophy in our pocket which is always a good thing, a good feeling for everyone. But now we have the Premier league to try to be in the top four, we have the Europa League to try to beat Rostov, and on Monday we cannot go with a bad team."

"Manchester United is too big. It's not Chelsea's fault that we'll play on

Monday. So we have to make changes, for sure, but we cannot go to Stamford Bridge with a bad team."

Of the game in Rostov, the former Chelsea manager admitted disappointment at his side's inability to hold their lead but hinted that the outcome still suited him.

"You know, an away goal is always positive. It's better 1-1 than 0-0 but the game is open," said Mourinho, who won the UEFA Cup with Porto in 2003.

"The result is open and this Rostov team, they have experience at playing big matches, big opponents and big stadiums. I don't think it's a problem for them to compete against us."

"They play Sunday against Terek Grozny, we play Monday against Chelsea. For us, it's difficult but we are one step from being in the quarter-finals." — AFP

Live Matches on TV (Local Timing)	
<b>ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE</b>	
Everton v Albion	18:00
beIN SPORTS	
Middlesbrough v Sunderland	18:00
beIN SPORTS	
Crystal Palace v Tottenham	18:00
beIN SPORTS	
Hull City v Swansea City	18:00
beIN SPORTS	
Bournemouth v West Ham United	18:00
beIN SPORTS	
Arsenal v Leicester City	20:30
beIN SPORTS	
<b>SPANISH LEAGUE PRIMERA</b>	
Valencia v Sporting Gijon	15:00
beIN SPORTS	
Sevilla v Leganes	18:15
beIN SPORTS	
Malaga v Deportivo Alaves	20:30
beIN SPORTS	
Granada v Atletico de Madrid	22:45
beIN SPORTS	
<b>ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE</b>	
Genoa v Sampdoria	22:45
beIN SPORTS	
<b>GERMAN LEAGUE</b>	
Hertha Berlin v Borussia	17:30
beIN SPORTS	
Freiburg v Hoffenheim	17:30
beIN SPORTS	
Bayern Munich v Eintracht	17:30
beIN SPORTS	
Darmstadt v Mainz	17:30
beIN SPORTS	
Leipzig v Wolfsburg	17:30
beIN SPORTS	
Ingolstadt v Koln	20:30
beIN SPORTS	
<b>FRENCH LEAGUE</b>	
Monaco v Girondins	18:45
beIN SPORTS	
Montpellier v Nantes	22:00
beIN SPORTS	
Stade Rennes v Dijon	22:00
beIN SPORTS	
Guingamp v Bastia	22:00
beIN SPORTS	
Nancy Lorraine v Lille	22:00
beIN SPORTS	