

Sports

Guardiola says Klopp has made him a better manager

Manchester City still 'best team in Europe' for Klopp

LONDON: Pep Guardiola on Friday credited Jurgen Klopp with making him a better manager before tonight's top-of-the-table Premier League clash between Liverpool and Manchester City at Anfield. The two head coaches have won the last four Premier League trophies, with City claiming three, and a fierce rivalry has developed between the clubs.

Manchester City fended off Liverpool's 2018/19 title challenge despite the Reds amassing 97 points — a title-winning total in all but one previous Premier League season. Guardiola and Klopp were also dugout rivals in Germany's Bundesliga between 2013 and 2015 as the Spaniard's Bayern Munich dominated at the expense of Klopp's Borussia Dortmund. The rivalry is set to continue tonight as table-topping Liverpool host second-placed City, who are only one point behind.

"His (Klopp's) teams helped me to become a better manager. He put me at another level, to think about it and to prove myself to be a better manager, to try to beat them," Guardiola said. "That is the reason why I am still in this business. Some managers — and Jurgen is one of them — challenge you to make a step forward."

Klopp's Liverpool have been tough to beat at Anfield, with the Reds going 68 league games without defeat at home between April 2017 and January 2021. Manchester City's 4-1 win at Anfield last sea-

son was their first victory on Liverpool turf in 18 years and has been attributed to the game being played behind closed doors due to the coronavirus pandemic.

But Guardiola insisted his team was relishing a vibrant Anfield and that any hostile atmosphere would not prevent his team from playing their game. "I am very pleased Anfield is full again. We can enjoy a fantastic atmosphere and hopefully we can handle it," he added. "I am sure the players enjoy (more) to play with fans in Anfield than without. Everything is more alive, more difficult." Left-back Oleksandr Zinchenko and midfielder Ilkay Gundogan will be missing from Guardiola's squad and will not be available until after October's international break.

Europe's 'best team'

Manchester City remain the benchmark for Liverpool to catch, according to Klopp. While Chelsea and Manchester

Both share nine wins in 21 meetings

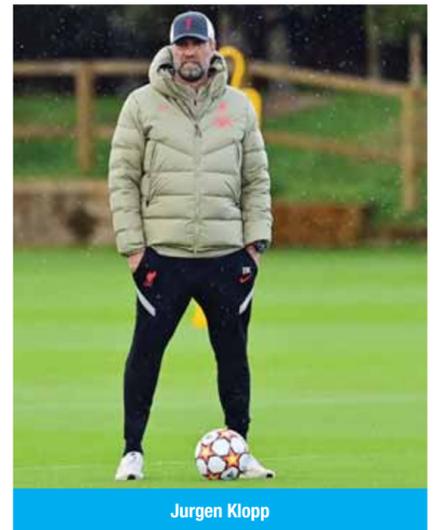


United have been talked up as title contenders this season after spending big in the transfer market, Klopp believes City remain the team to beat as they showed in a 1-0 win at Chelsea last weekend which was more convincing than the scoreline suggests.

"They are still really, for me, probably the best team in Europe in the moment and it's a tough one," said Klopp on Friday. "Last weekend, they played Chelsea and everybody was talking about Chelsea, how good they are — and they are good, oh my



Pep Guardiola



Jurgen Klopp

God, they are really good — but City was clear, clear better that day."

In 21 meetings between Klopp and Guardiola, both have won nine with three draws. Liverpool went into the weekend a point clear of City, Chelsea and United at the top of the table. But Klopp knows his side will have to be at their best to stay there.

"This is a really special game of the season, every year — always the same. It has to be high

intense because if it's not high intense, I would say then City is really difficult to play against," he added. "You have to be brave, you have to be front-footed, you have to be cheeky in moments, you have to be really your best version and then, but only then, you have a chance." Trent Alexander-Arnold and Thiago Alcantara will both be missing for the Reds due to injury, but Klopp is hopeful both will be fit to return after the international break. — AFP

Rangers report Kamara abuse as row sparks diplomatic spat

GLASGOW: Rangers manager Steven Gerrard said the Scottish champions have contacted UEFA after midfielder Glen Kamara was abused by school age Sparta Prague fans in a Europa League clash with the incident threatening to become a diplomatic spat. Kamara was sent off for two bookable offences in Rangers' 1-0 defeat in the Czech capital on Thursday. Czech Foreign Minister Jakub Kulhanek on Friday said he would summon the British ambassador to Prague.

The match was initially meant to be played behind closed doors following a separate racist incident when Monaco's Aurelien Tchouameni was subjected to abuse from the stands during a Champions League qualifier in August. However, UEFA relented to allow around 10,000 fans, mainly school children with some accompanying adults, to attend. The incidents came just months after Kamara was racially abused by Slavia Prague defender Ondrej Kudela in a Champions League game. Czech international Kudela was banned for 10 matches.

In the immediate aftermath of Thursday's match, Gerrard said he was unaware of Kamara being booed every time he touched the ball. But on Friday, the former Liverpool captain added he was now aware of it having reviewed television footage.

"I am fully aware now having watched the game back with audio on and I am actually surprised that I wasn't aware of it during the game," said Gerrard. "Yes, I have spoken to Glen Kamara and that conversation will remain private. Glen is OK."

Gerrard called on UEFA and other governing bodies to take far tougher action against racist abuse. "There are hundreds of thousands and maybe more people disappointed and frustrated because these things keep raising their head far too often and unfortunately the punishments are not enough.

"I said last night there needs to be more done and that is the only way it is going to be eradicated because the punishments are nowhere near severe enough. I have been told that Rangers are going to take it up with UEFA, I think that has already happened and the wheels are already in motion and I certainly will be pushing from my direction to make sure that's the case."

'Desperate'

Kamara's lawyer Aamer Anwar issued a statement saying: "Prague has a serious problem with racism and as usual UEFA is nowhere to be seen." Sparta labelled Anwar's statements as "desperate". Foreign Minister Kulhanek tweeted: "Enough! Deliberately spread disgusting insults of Czech children in media and on the internet have no place in football, let alone good relations between two countries. "I will summon the British ambassador on Monday to discuss the whole matter with him." Sparta said on its website that Anwar's "activism and online bullying should be dealt with by the relevant institution in Scotland." — AFP

Sampaoli says Marseille match should have been halted after violence

MARSEILLE: Marseille coach Jorge Sampaoli said on Friday that the Europa League match against Galatasaray should have "been stopped" after the incidents in the stands interrupted play. "I think the game should have been stopped. If we continue like this, we show that this violence is part of the game, that we get used to it. We have to make sure that families can come to the stadium in peace," said Sampaoli in a press conference.

The match was delayed by five minutes late in the first half on Thursday as projectiles, including fireworks and smokebombs, were lobbed from the end of the Stade Velodrome where fans of the Turkish club were grouped, officials said. There were also clashes between rival sets of fans before calm was restored.

Further incidents broke out after the final whistle. Four police officers were injured, according to a spokeswoman for the police headquarters.

Five fans, three Turkish and two for the home team, were arrested for possession and use of pyrotechnic devices, she said. "It's very strange. You wonder why people come from so far away to provoke or throw firecrackers. They prefer to create this spectacle rather than watch the pitch," said Sampaoli.

"The fairest thing would be to make decisions that leave the violence outside. Otherwise it will become something normal and the field will become secondary. We have seen very violent things, firecrackers, insults. It's a shame what happened," concluded the Argentine coach.

In France, there has been a rise in



MARSEILLE: Players stand on the pitch as the match was interrupted due to clashes in grandstand during the UEFA Europa League group E football match between Olympique de Marseille and Galatasaray AS at the Velodrome Stadium in Marseille, southern France on Thursday. — AFP

violent incidents in Ligue 1 this season and Marseille has been involved more than once. Their match in Nice in was abandoned after Marseille refused to continue following a pitch invasion. The game will be replayed on October 27 in Troyes.

Fighting between fans and fireworks also marred Marseille's visit to Angers on September 22. The same evening a bus carrying Bordeaux fans was attacked in Montpellier. On September 18, Lens fans invaded the pitch during their local derby with Lille. — AFP

Wheelchair tennis to launch in Kuwait

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: President of Kuwait and Arab Tennis Federations Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah received honorary President of Kuwait Disabled Sports Club Sheikh Sheikh Al-Abdullah Al-Khalifa Al-Sabah, Chairman of Kuwait Paralympic Committee Nasser Al-Ajmi, Secretary General of the Paralympic Committee Sharifa Al-Ghanem and Chairman of Al-Irada Disabled Club Duaij Al-Hajiri. Both sides discussed cooperation and preparations to launch wheelchair tennis in Kuwait at Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah International Tennis complex in cooperation with Rafa Nadal Academy Kuwait.

This move comes out of KTF board's belief in the importance of allowing Paralympic athletes to practice wheelchair tennis, as they have special capabilities and a distinguished sports history, making continental and international achievements in the name of Kuwait. Wheelchair tennis is one of the fastest spreading



KUWAIT: President of Kuwait and Arab Tennis Federations Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah meets officials from Kuwait Disabled Sports Club, Kuwait Paralympic Committee, and Al-Irada Disabled Club.

game around the world, and it was introduced in the Paralympics in 1992, and in the Grand Slams in 2007. It also has a series of international championships that include more than 160 tournaments held in 40 countries. Kuwait is set to become the first Arab country to practice the wheelchair tennis.

Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber discussed coordina-

worked closely with football authorities to achieve an outcome that balances the interests of both club and country while maintaining the highest levels of public health and safety.

"Our best defense against the virus is vaccination and these new measures will allow fully vaccinated players to fulfill their international duties in the safest, most practical way possible, while allowing them to train and play with their clubs as early as possible upon their return."

Players not fully vaccinated will still be subject to 10 days quarantine in a government-allocated hotel should they travel to a country on the red list. According to reports this week only seven of the 20 Premier League clubs have squads that are more than 50 percent fully vaccinated.

'Stay here'

Premier League and English Football League clubs collectively refused to release players for international duty in red-list countries last month. It initially appeared that stance would lead to players being barred from representing their clubs in the five days after the end of the international break.

However, the request from a number of football associations was dropped after what FIFA described as "positive signals and constructive dialogue" with the British Government. Brazil has already issued call-ups to eight Premier League players, including Liverpool trio Alisson Becker, Roberto Firmino and Fabinho.

But Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp criticized the plans which could see players separated from their families for up to three weeks. "That would mean the players go for 10-12 days with their national teams. Then another 10 days away from their families into quarantine. That's 22 days and two weeks later there is another international break," said Klopp. "It is not okay we just move responsibility to the players. If you are ready to do that then ok, if not then stay here."

Klopp added that Senegalese forward Sadio Mane and Greek defender Kostas Tsimikas, who is due to travel to Georgia, would also be affected. Aston Villa manager Dean Smith said that Argentina's Emiliano Martinez and Marvelous Nakamba of Zimbabwe were set to travel for international duty. — AFP