

## MANCHESTER CITY THREATEN TEBAS WITH LEGAL ACTION

**LONDON:** Manchester City have threatened La Liga president Javier Tebas with legal action after he said their partnership with Spanish club Girona was an attempt to “cook the books”. Tebas made his remarks during an appearance at the Soccerex football conference in Manchester on Wednesday.

He said City and French giants Paris Saint-Germain were “destroying football” with state-enabled spending. But a City spokeswoman, in a statement released late on Wednesday, said: “Mr Tebas’s statements are ill-informed and in parts pure fiction. “As you

would expect, Manchester City Football Club and the City Football Group are seeking appropriate legal counsel and will act accordingly on that advice.” PSG prised Neymar from Barcelona in a world-record 222 million euros (\$265 million) deal and have also signed Kylian Mbappe from Monaco in a move that could be worth 180 million euros.

City outspent any other European club in the transfer window by lavishing around £221 million (242 million euros, \$288 million) on new players. Tebas said the assistance City and PSG received from their respective

Emirati and Qatari backers amounted to “financial doping”. He said the two clubs were “laughing” at European governing body UEFA’s Financial Fair Play rules, which oblige clubs to minimise their losses. UEFA has opened an investigation into PSG’s transfer dealings, but City are not under investigation.

In particular, Tebas raised questions about the legitimacy of City’s decision to loan five players to Girona for the coming season, suggesting the players had been undervalued. Asked if City and Girona were “trying to cook the books”, Tebas replied: “They were trying

to, but they didn’t manage to do it.” City purchased a 44.3 percent stake in Girona last month, matching the stake already held by City manager Pep Guardiola’s brother Pere. Girona were promoted to the Spanish top flight last season. Tebas is reported to have held a meeting to discuss the matter with City chief executive Ferran Soriano on Wednesday. France’s Professional Football League has strongly criticised Tebas.

“These unworthy remarks are unbecoming of an institution as respectable and successful as the Spanish Liga,” the LFP said. —AFP

## PREMIER LEAGUE STARS FACE AWKWARD RETURNS TO CLUBS

**MANCHESTER:** Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain was greeted with a high five and a warm hug from Liverpool manager Juergen Klopp ahead of the midfielder’s first training session at his new club on Wednesday.

For some of the other high-profile players returning to their Premier League teams following the international break, the reception might be a little frostier. Unlike Oxlade-Chamberlain, who managed to secure a transfer from Arsenal, three stars of the league - Alexis Sanchez, Philippe Coutinho and Riyad Mahrez - failed to get the moves they wanted on the final day of Europe’s transfer window last week.

They have since been training and playing for their countries, but the time has come to go back to their clubs. And it could be an awkward situation for all concerned. Mahrez so wanted to quit Leicester that the winger left the Algerian national team’s training camp in Sidi Moussa on deadline day and returned to England, so that he would be in a better position to complete the formalities of a transfer if a club made a late bid. Unfortunately, a transfer didn’t materialize.

Now Mahrez must put that disappointment behind him and get ready for Leicester’s home match against champion Chelsea tomorrow. It could be even more uncomfortable for Coutinho. The Brazil playmaker hasn’t played for Liverpool this season while being the subject of three huge offers from Barcelona, and even lodged a transfer request in early August in an attempt to force through a move to the Spanish side.

Officially, Coutinho was absent for Liverpool’s first three league games because of a back injury, yet he trained as normal when he was on international duty and made two appearances as a substitute in World Cup qualifiers against Ecuador and Colombia.

Liverpool visits Manchester City on Saturday in the stand-out match of the fourth round of league games, and it remains to be seen if Coutinho is in the right state of mind to be in contention. Oxlade-Chamberlain could make his debut for Liverpool, but would likely have to displace one of Emre Can and Georginio Wijnaldum - two of the Reds’ best players in their 4-0 win over Arsenal in the last game before the international break.

Sanchez is still an Arsenal player after a prospective transfer to Manchester City was aborted hours before the window closed, because Arsenal could not find a replacement at such a late stage.

The forward had a tough time on international duty with Chile - the team lost both of its games and no longer occupies an automatic qualification spot in the South American zone for next year’s World Cup in Russia - and he made his frustration clear by saying on Instagram that he was “fed up” with the criticism he was receiving. Arsenal, which accepted a bid from Man City for Sanchez last week, is at home to Bournemouth tomorrow and is looking to avoid a third straight loss.

Another player who might need to be reintegrated at a Premier League team now the transfer window is closed is Virgil van Dijk, who hasn’t trained with Southampton’s first-team squad since the end of last season after handing in a transfer request amid interest from Liverpool.— AP



**PARIS:** Paris Saint-Germain’s new forward Kylian Mbappe holds his jersey during his presentation at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris on September 6. The 18-year-old striker moved to PSG in a season-long loan deal with a 180 million euro buy-out clause attached, making him the second most expensive player of all time behind new teammate Neymar.—AFP

## MBAPPE EMBARKS ON NEW ADVENTURE WITH PSG

**PARIS:** Kylian Mbappe takes centre stage today as the French league returns from the international break with Paris Saint-Germain taking on Metz where they will unleash their latest marquee recruit. The 18-year-old starlet joined PSG on a season-long loan from champions Monaco in a deal that includes the option to buy Mbappe for a fee rising to 180 million euros (\$215 million), the second most expensive transfer in history.

“It’s a great pleasure to join this club, it’s one of the best in the world,” Mbappe said as he was unveiled at the Parc des Princes on Wednesday. “It’s extremely ambitious and wants to become the best.

“It’s putting everything in place to make that goal more than possible and that’s important to me.” The France international is set to make his PSG debut away at rock-bottom Metz on Friday with Unai Emery’s side chasing a fifth successive win to maintain their

perfect start to the season.

Metz are the only team without a point in Ligue 1 this term and need no introduction to Mbappe who scored a hat-trick against them in a 5-0 Monaco victory last February. Emery confirmed Mbappe was ready for selection, and an injury to Angel Di Maria while on World Cup duty with Argentina could prompt the Spaniard to thrust the teenager into a fearsome front three alongside world-record signing Neymar and Edinson Cavani. “These are players who for the most part have won everything already, it’s going to be a rewarding experience,” Mbappe said of his new team-mates. “I have a lot to learn and a lot to prove.” Di Maria is set to miss several weeks with a thigh problem, while Italian midfielder Marco Verratti remains suspended with several of PSG’s South American contingent only expected back later.

Monaco, level with PSG at the top, will attempt to extend their record 16-

match winning run away to Cote d’Azur rivals Nice, whose third-place finish last season is swiftly fading from memory.

The title holders raided Serie A to draft in Montenegro striker Stevan Jovetic and Senegal forward Keita Balde from Inter Milan and Lazio respectively to try and fill the void left by Mbappe.

Monaco also have an in-form Radamel Falcao to call upon, the Colombian has scored a league-leading seven times in four outings and earned his country a vital World Cup qualifying point in Tuesday’s 1-1 draw with Brazil.

Nice have lost three times already this season, only once less than all of the 2016-17 campaign, and were trounced 3-0 by top-flight newcomers Amiens last time out.

Unbeaten Bordeaux face Marcelo Bielsa’s Lille on Friday, while Lyon host Guingamp on Sunday with consecutive draws having somewhat stalled their early-season charge.—AFP