

# Maresca aims to bring ‘new concepts’ to first Man City match

New manager says he will not copy Pep Guardiola as Manchester City begin a new era

● Maresca prepares for first City match today

● Faces Inter Milan in Hong Kong

● Warns against quick judgements

● Dismisses Rodri transfer speculation

AFP | Hong Kong



Enzo Maresca reacts during a match (file photo)

Manchester City manager Enzo Maresca said yesterday people may be quick to judge his side, as he prepared for his first game in charge since succeeding Pep Guardiola.

The Italian formally took over last month following the departure of the legendary Catalan, who steered the club to 20 trophies during a supremely successful decade at the Etihad Stadium.

Maresca will lead City out for the first time in a pre-season friendly against Inter Milan in Hong Kong on Saturday.

“We’re going to be judged, always -- not just tomorrow,” the former Chelsea and Leicester boss said at a news conference.

“We started 10 days ago, all together, we are introducing some new concepts, so it’s also impor-

tant tomorrow to see something. “I don’t believe in copy and paste. I think every manager (is) different... so it’s my target, my duty, to try to introduce some new ideas.”

Several of City’s World Cup stars have not travelled with the squad to Hong Kong, the first stop on an Asia tour that will also include two games in Seoul.

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Several of City’s World Cup stars, including Erling Haaland and Rodri, have not travelled with the squad for the Asia tour

Among them are striker Erling Haaland -- last season’s Premier League top scorer -- and Rodri, who captained Spain to World Cup victory this month.

The midfielder is recovering from minor back surgery and has been rumoured to be a transfer target for Real Madrid.

Maresca dismissed the links as “speculation” and said he and the club hierarchy had not had “any conversations just focused on Rodri”.

“The main focus for him when the season finished was the World Cup. Now he is enjoying some rest.

“Every manager in the world wants Rodri because he’s a top player, so it’s important for me, for the club, for everyone, but now he needs his holiday.”

Inter announced the signing on Thursday of former City defender John Stones on a two-year deal.

The 32-year-old left the Manchester club when his contract expired at the end of last month, and helped England to a third-placed finish at the World Cup.

“For us, having the possibility to get John Stones (as) a free agent, it’s important,” Inter head coach Cristian Chivu said yesterday.

“It’s important for the quality he brings, it’s important for the personality, for the charisma he has, for the experience that he has shown.

“It’s one defender added to our group of defenders who will definitely improve the department.”

## Real Madrid pounce to sign Levante striker Espi



Levante  
AFP | Madrid

Real Madrid swooped to sign striker Carlos Espi from Levante for a reported €25 million fee.

The 21-year-old had been linked with several Premier League sides but record 15-time European champions Madrid pounced, with Gonzalo Garcia likely to leave for Fulham.

“(Espi) will join our club for the next five seasons, until June 30, 2031,” said Madrid in a statement.

Espi scored 11 goals in LaLiga last season in 25 top-flight appearances.

The striker is the fifth signing Madrid have made this summer, following Marc Cucurella, Bernardo Silva, Ibrahima Konate and Denzel Dumfries.

Madrid have agreed terms with RB Leipzig’s Ivorian winger Yan Diomande according to media reports, while Manchester City midfielder Rodri is also a rumoured target.

## Chelsea’s Palmer says World Cup snub has motivated him

AFP | Sydney

Chelsea playmaker Cole Palmer said yesterday he has a point to prove this season after missing out on England’s World Cup squad, while hailing new manager Xabi Alonso as a “breath of fresh air”.

Palmer was a high-profile omission from Thomas Tuchel’s World Cup line-up, despite playing a major role in England’s run to the final of Euro 2024.

He ultimately paid the price



Cole Palmer

for a poor season at Chelsea and said being overlooked hurt.

“It’s like anything, if someone

tells you’re essentially not good enough to get in the squad, then you’re going to think, ‘all right’ and try and go extra harder,” he said in Sydney on Chelsea’s pre-season tour.

Painful as it was to miss out on England’s run to a third-place finish, Palmer enjoyed a rare seven-week summer break, which has him “fresh” and itching to get going again.

After a disappointing 10th-place finish last season, Chelsea has a new manager in Spanish

great Alonso who Palmer is excited about.

“Him and his staff have been good. You know, a breath of fresh air for us players with his ideas and stuff. So yeah, we’re enjoying it,” he said.

Palmer is also ecstatic about Chelsea signing attacking midfielder Morgan Rogers from Aston Villa for a British record 117 million pounds (\$157 million).

The two are close friends and Alonso said this week he expected the pair to “link really well”.

## Casemiro keen to team with Messi at Miami



Inter Miami co-owner Jorge Mas introduces new Brazilian acquisition Casemiro

AFP | Miami

Brazil star Casemiro sang the praises of new Inter Miami teammate Lionel Messi, calling his former La Liga rival a “god of football.”

“Of course if I’m here it’s because of him and to help him and Inter Miami,” the former Real Madrid midfielder said of the Argentine star who now captains Miami.

“I want to enjoy being with him, help him win, make him even greater. He’s one of the gods, if not the god of football,” Casemiro said as he was officially introduced by his new Major League Soccer club.

Casemiro, who arrived in MLS after a four-year stint at Manchester United, has already played his first minutes for the Herons in a 1-0 win over Montreal on Saturday.

Argentine star Messi sat that one out less than two weeks after his country’s World Cup final defeat to Spain.

Casemiro said he was looking forward to playing alongside, rather than against, Messi, after their many battles in the Spanish league classics between Real Madrid and Barcelona.

“I know he’s impossible to stop. I never managed it,” Casemiro said. “I always needed help from my teammates. And in the two training sessions I’ve already had with him, it’s already clear he’s impossible to stop.”

Miami co-owner Jorge Mas beamed as he handed over Casemiro’s pink jersey and denied there had been any impropriety in signing him despite MLS’s investigation into possible “tampering”.

The probe focuses on MLS’s system of “discovery rights,” which must be acquired by a club before they can start negotiating with some high-profile players.

Casemiro was on LA Galaxy’s list, and Mas said he had contacted the club before starting talks with the Brazilian.

## De Minaur beats teen Hewitt in all-Aussie Washington clash

AFP | Washington

Defending champion Alex de Minaur powered into the Washington Open quarter-finals with a clinical 6-2, 6-3 victory over fellow Australian Cruz Hewitt.

Men’s second seed Ben Shelton also advanced, as did women’s top seed Jessica Pegula and No. 2 Elina Svitolina.

Top-seeded De Minaur was always likely to prove too much for 17-year-old qualifier Hewitt -- son of Aussie great Lleyton Hewitt -- who had only captured his first ATP victory in Tuesday’s first round.

The first set threatened to become a demolition as De Minaur raced to a 5-0 lead.

But Hewitt found his feet, breaking back in the sixth game and holding serve before succumbing 6-2.

Cheered on by a crowd that included his famous father, Hewitt started the second set brightly.

But he was broken again on his second service game and could not reel in De Minaur, who warmly embraced the



Alex de Minaur embraces fellow Australian Cruz Hewitt following their match

youngster at the net after taking the match.

It was the first head-to-head ATP Tour match between the two, who have known each other for years.

“It was definitely weird,” said De Minaur. “I knew I was going to play him on the tour someday, but I didn’t actually expect it to be this week.

“It was an amazing feeling. Even all the lead up, seeing all the incredible pictures that we have together and how we’ve both grown up.

“I’m glad I managed to get

through, but I’m sure we’re going to have many battles in the years to come.”

De Minaur next faces American Brandon Nakashima, who upset Czech seventh seed Jakub Mensik 7-6 (7/5), 3-6, 6-4.

US home hope Shelton advanced with a gritty 6-7 (3/7), 6-3, 6-4, victory over France’s Ugo Humbert. After handing Humbert the first set with a double fault on set point, Shelton dominated the second.

But the third set was a tense affair and after seizing a break

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ALEX DE MINAUR

for a 5-4 lead Shelton had to fend off a break point before polishing off the match with a sharply angled serve that Humbert smacked into the net.

“For me, it was all about heart tonight,” Shelton said after lining up a meeting with Chile’s Alejandro Tabile, a 6-3, 7-6 (8/6) winner over France’s Terence Atmane.

Pegula also had to rally from a set down, saying she started her match against Poland’s Frech “just a little off” after a first-round bye.