

# The Messi and Ronaldo era is phenomenal: Guardiola

Goal.com | London

Manchester City coach Pep Guardiola believes the football world is witnessing an era of “two phenomena” with the exploits of Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo.

Over the last 10 years, Ron-



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PEP GUARDIOLA

aldo and Messi have hogged the plaudits and they are still going strong despite entering their thirties.

Every Ballon d'Or award since Kaka won it in 2007 has been taken home by either Ronaldo or Messi, with the two tied on five each.

Guardiola knows what Messi is like to coach firsthand from his time at Barcelona and he believes his personality rubs off on teammates, adding that he and Juventus star Ronaldo are a cut above everyone else.

“Leo is a competitive, fierce animal,” he told reporters at Festival dello Sport.

“That helps others to be competitive. He hates to lose and plays like when he was a kid. In big matches, if the team helps him, he makes the

difference.

“Together with Cristiano [Ronaldo] we have lived and are living an era of two phenomena.

“They have spent 10 years scoring 50 goals a season. It's incredible. It's not one year, it's year after year, more and more.”

Luka Modric appears to be the biggest threat to the duo's Ballon d'Or run, though, as the Croatian recently picked up the FIFA award for Best Men's Player.



Lionel Messi (L) and Cristiano Ronaldo

## Halep secures second year-end No. 1 ranking

AFP | Paris

Simona Halep has secured the year-end number one ranking in the WTA standings for the second year running.

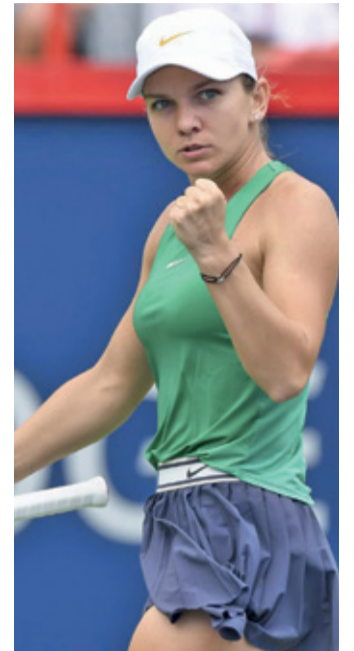
The Romanian spent 40 weeks at No. 1 in 2018, a season that saw her win three titles from a tour-leading six final appearances, amassing a 46-11 win-loss record.

This year Halep has won the Shenzhen Open, the Rogers Cup and her debut Grand Slam crown at Roland Garros.

In addition, she reached the title match at the Australian Open, in Rome and Cincinnati.

“Finishing the season as the WTA World No.1 last year was a huge honour for me,” said Halep.

“To do it for a second time in 2018 feels like a special achievement, especially having also won my first Grand Slam this year. To be able to see my name again alongside the other legends



Simona Halep

who have achieved the year-end No.1 ranking makes me very proud.”

### WTA rankings as of October 15

1. Simona Halep (ROM) 7421 pts
2. Caroline Wozniacki (DEN) 6461
3. Angelique Kerber (GER) 5400
4. Naomi Osaka (JPN) 4740
5. Karolina Pliskova (CZE) 4465 (+1)
6. Elina Svitolina (UKR) 4350 (-1)
7. Petra Kvitova (CZE) 4255
8. Sloane Stephens (USA) 4022
9. Julia Görges (GER) 3785
10. Kiki Bertens (NED) 3740



Max Verstappen feels qualifying should be more a shorter session

## 'F1 risks qualifying becoming another practice session'

Autosport | London

Max Verstappen of Red Bull believes Formula 1 risks turning qualifying into “just another practice session” if it adds an extra phase to the knockout format.

F1 has considered a revised format that would involve four cars being eliminated in Q1, Q2 and Q3, leaving just eight for a final shootout in a new Q4 session.

At present, a driver that makes it through to the top-10 shootout will likely run twice in all three parts of qualifying, giving them five runs before the lap that finally determines their grid position.

“I would keep it like it is, otherwise you're running so much,” said Verstappen of the mooted change.

“It's more and more practice,

and qualifying should be more a shorter session where you don't have that many opportunities to do a lap.

“Otherwise, what's qualifying for?”

“It's just another practice session, where everybody can get into a rhythm.

“What I always understood in qualifying is that you have to go out, have a few shots at it, and that's it.

“If you start to do more and more and more, everybody at one point starts to do a good lap.”

Renault driver Carlos Sainz Jr shared his former Toro Rosso team-mate's view that drivers should not get as many chances in qualifying.

Asked by Autosport about the possibility of an extra session, Renault driver Sainz said: “I would like to see that, but only



I would keep it like it is, otherwise you're running so much. It's more and more practice, and qualifying should be more a shorter session where you don't have that many opportunities to do a lap

MAX VERSTAPPEN

with one set of tyres per session.

“Don't give the drivers a second chance, [make them] have to do it one time per session.

“I think the pressure would be higher.

“Your speciality as a driver is

putting a lap together straight away in Q1, straight away in Q2 and not sandbagging like a lot of drivers are doing in Q1 and then give it all out in Q2, or give it all out in Q3.

“If you have only once chance, you put a lot of beans, a lot of concentration, into that one lap, because you cannot get it wrong.”

One problem that has emerged with the current format is that races where tyre degradation is higher have hurt, rather than rewarded, the best-of-the-rest runners behind Mercedes, Ferrari and Red Bull.

Making it into the top 10 means they need to start on the tyre they used in Q2, which is usually the softest compound, and this presents a strategic disadvantage in the race because their rivals immediately behind on the grid have free tyre choice.

## Djokovic closing in on Nadal's No. 1 spot

AFP | Paris

Novak Djokovic is closing in on Rafael Nadal's number one spot after winning the Shanghai Masters title, according to ATP rankings released yesterday.

Nadal is struggling with a knee injury and has decided to sit out the current Asian segment of the ATP tour. Last week he joined the clean-up operation after deadly flash floods on his native Majorca.

After his 6-3, 6-4 victory over Borna Coric in the Shanghai final on Sunday, Djokovic is just 215 points behind the Spaniard.

### ATP rankings as of October 15

1. Rafael Nadal (ESP) 7660 pts
2. Novak Djokovic (SRB) 7445 (+1)
3. Roger Federer (SUI) 6260 (-1)
4. Juan Martin Del Potro (ARG) 5860
5. Alexander Zverev (GER) 5025
6. Marin Cilic (CRO) 4185
7. Dominic Thiem (AUT) 3825
8. Kevin Anderson (RSA) 3775
9. Grigor Dimitrov (BUL) 3440
10. John Isner (USA) 3290

## No Messi but Argentina 'have to' beat Brazil: Romero

AFP | Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Argentina may be without a superstar Lionel Messi but the two-time world champions simply must beat Brazil in a friendly in Saudi Arabia today, Manchester United goalkeeper Sergio Romero says.

While Brazil have picked most of their star names, Argentina are without the likes of Manchester City's in-form for-

ward Sergio Aguero, Gonzalo Higuain of AC Milan and Paris Saint-Germain winger Angel Di Maria, as well as Messi.

Messi also sat out Argentina's last three matches, all friendlies, since the country's disappointing last 16 elimination from the World Cup.

He is believed to have asked for some time off from international duty ahead of next year's Copa America in Brazil.



Novak Djokovic