

## WC fatigue could have caused De Bruyne injury



Manchester City's Kevin de Bruyne in action against Arsenal last week

AFP | Manchester, United Kingdom

Pep Guardiola has suggested post-World Cup fatigue could have been a factor in the knee injury that has ruled out Manchester City star Kevin De Bruyne for around three months.

De Bruyne only returned to training at City last week, having had a break after helping Belgium finish third in Russia in July.

He played for the final 30 minutes last Sunday as Guardiola's side began their Premier League title defence with a 2-0 victory at Arsenal.

However, the midfielder then suffered a knee injury in training on Wednesday, and was spotted on crutches that night at the premiere of 'All Or Nothing', a documentary that features behind-the-scenes footage of City's title victory.

Guardiola expects De Bruyne to be fit again by the beginning of December, but acknowledges City will have a tough task dealing with his absence, just as they did when a knee injury ruled out left-back Benjamin Mendy for virtually the whole of last season.

"We never know. My opinion is that when you ask a lot of the players, over more than 11 months, then after he comes back, this (injury) can happen," Guardiola told reporters on Friday.

"Nobody knows, but I'm pretty sure this can influence it. When you are fresh here, fresh on your legs, it doesn't happen. Sometimes it can.

"It will be two or three months. We hope he can do as much as possible to get back and help us again.

"It will be a big miss like last

season with Mendy. Last season, Kevin was outstanding and of course for him and his family, you never want this.

"It's part of the game for the players -- it's normal, they don't rest. It's a tough season, with short recovery times. They (the football authorities) say 'let's go' and we are in the competition.

"Human beings have a limit and sometimes these things happen.

"My advice to him now is to rest, take the holidays he didn't get in these two or three weeks, do it now. Then he'll start training and we'll be waiting for him with big arms."

### 'Right moment'

De Bruyne's absence is set to give David Silva more opportunities to impress, with the Spain playmaker free to commit himself to club duties after announcing his international retirement on Monday.

Silva missed several matches last season to spend time with his son Mateo, who was seriously ill in hospital after being born prematurely.

Mateo was allowed to leave hospital in May, five months after being born, and his now recovering well.

"I'm glad for him. If he has decided to do that, it is because he feels it is the right moment. Congratulations to him," Guardiola said.

"He has played more than 100 games, winning two European Championships and one World Cup. He is one of the most fascinating, incredible players in the whole history of Spain.

"He decided. No one at Man City, and not myself, pushed him. The player has to feel it. He decided to rest a little bit more with his wife and his little boy, and play with us."

City are waiting to hear from Tottenham about where their Premier League match in London, scheduled for October 28, might be played.

White Hart Lane will not be ready, as it is still being rebuilt, and Wembley is hosting an NFL match that day.

Asked if City might reverse the fixtures, and switch October's game to the Etihad Stadium, Guardiola said: "I don't know -- I can only say, if that happened, then four of our final five matches of the season would be away.

"I think when you are maybe playing for the Premier League, four games away is a little bit different."

# Ronaldo gets nod for Juventus debut

AFP | Rome

Cristiano Ronaldo is curious to find out about life in Serie A and will make his debut in the opening match of the season for champions Juventus against Chievo in Verona, coach Massimiliano Allegri confirmed on Friday.

Allegri said the 33-year-old was eager to play in Serie A after his 100 million euro (\$117 million) transfer from Real Madrid last month.

The five-time Ballon d'Or winner has appeared in two warm-up friendlies for Juventus but did not travel with the team to the United States.

"I didn't give Ronaldo any



Cristiano Ronaldo

**"I didn't give Ronaldo any advice. He's very intrigued to understand how teams play in Italy. It's time to put aside the excitement of the arrival of great players and the greatest of all, we have to keep our feet on the ground, keep a low profile**

JMASSIMILIANO ALLEGRI

advice. He's very intrigued to understand how teams play in Italy," said Allegri as Juventus begin their campaign on Saturday.

"Ronaldo will make his debut. (Wojciech) Szczesny, (Giorgio) Chiellini, (Leonardo) Bonucci and (Miralem) Pjanic will play and the two full-backs on each side will be (Joao) Cancelo and Alex Sandro.

"Everyone is in good condition, even (Mario) Mandzukic and (Blaise) Matuidi, who both

went all the way to the final in the World Cup."

But Allegri warned his team not to rely too much on the Portuguese superstar as they target an eighth straight Serie A title.

"It's time to put aside the excitement of the arrival of great players and the greatest of all, we have to keep our feet on the ground, keep a low profile," continued Allegri.

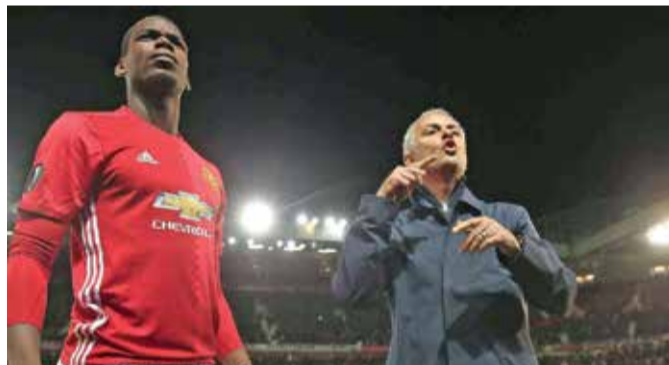
"We mustn't make the mistake of thinking that we can win because we have Cristiano. He's

an added value in a team that has played two Champions finals in the last four years."

"Players like Ronaldo are different from all the others: it shows in what he has won, he is a stimulus for everyone.

"It will be a difficult campaign and we need to be prepared and remain focused, because tomorrow at 18:00 (1600GMT) season begins and we will find a tough Chievo side waiting for us.

"I'm curious to see how the team fares."



Paul Pogba and Jose Mourinho

## 'I've never been so happy with Pogba,' says Mourinho

AFP | Manchester, United Kingdom

Jose Mourinho has broken his silence on his relationship with French World Cup winner Paul Pogba and insists there has been no disagreement with Manchester United's record signing.

A summer of discontent has seen repeated reports that Pogba wishes to leave the club he joined from Juventus for £89.3 million two summers ago and move to Barcelona.

They were followed by claims this week that manager and player had exchanged angry words in a heated meeting after comments made by Pogba following last week's opening league fixture against Leicester.

Having starred, and scored, in United's 2-1 victory, just four days after returning to pre-season training following his

World Cup adventures, Pogba claimed: "There are things I cannot say otherwise I will get fined."

But Mourinho, preparing for Sunday's visit to Brighton, insists that argument never took place.

"The truth is we are together for two years and a couple of weeks and I've never been so happy with him as I am now, that's the truth. I cannot demand more from him," Mourinho told reporters on Friday.

"He came here on a Monday, trained three days, I asked for his support for his contribution in an important match for us when the team had difficulties, he did it better and for more time than we could expect.

"When he says he did it for the fans and for the team, it is exactly what I want. It is exactly what I demand from my players.

## Fabregas out of Arsenal reunion



Cesc Fabregas

Reuters | London

Chelsea midfielder Cesc Fabregas will miss Saturday's Premier League reunion with former club Arsenal due to a leg injury, manager Maurizio Sarri said on Friday.

The Spaniard took a knock to his leg near his knee and is expected to resume training with the squad next week.

"Fabregas is out for this match. I hope he'll be able to feature next week. I'm not sure," Sarri told reporters.

"It's nothing serious but he has a very unusual injury. He has pain near the knee, not in the knee."

Sarri also said he was confident midfielder Eden Hazard would stay at the club this season. British and Spanish media reports have linked the Belgium international with a switch to Real Madrid, following in the footsteps of Thibaut Courtois.

The move could still go through as the transfer window for European leagues is open until Aug. 31. However, Sarri assured Chelsea supporters his talisman would stay.

"I've spoken with him often in the last 10 days but he has never said to me anything about this so I am sure Eden will be with us for this season," Sarri said.

Ahead of the clash at Stamford Bridge, the Italian backed his counterpart Unai Emery to make Arsenal a force to be reckoned with. The Spaniard suffered a 2-0 defeat by Manchester City in his first Premier League match since succeeding Arsene Wenger.

"Emery is a good coach," Sarri added.

"He won the Europa League three times, he won in France with Paris St Germain. Arsenal will be competitive. They will be able to fight for a place in the Champions League."



**Kevin De Bruyne began his senior career at Genk and netted his first hat-trick for the club in a 5-4 win over Club Brugge in October 2011**