

## Age not an obstacle to Serena's pursuit of 24th major -Mouratoglou

Reuters | New York

Serena Williams is getting faster and fitter in her hunt for an elusive 24th Grand Slam title and the 37-year-old still has time on her side despite missed opportunities, the American's coach, Patrick Mouratoglou, has said.

Williams suffered her fourth consecutive defeat in a Grand Slam final at the U.S. Open earlier this month, as she again came agonisingly close to Australian Margaret Court's all-time record of 24 majors before falling in straight sets.

Williams has not won a set in any of the four Grand Slam finals she has reached since returning from maternity leave in September 2017. At Flushing Meadows, she fell to a first-time Grand Slam finalist in Canadian teenager Bianca Andreescu.

Williams may not need statistics to prove her standing in the game but Mouratoglou is confident she has plenty of gas in the tank to continue her pursuit next season.

"I think time is working for her," Mouratoglou told Sky Sports.

"I think she was much better at the U.S. Open than she was at Wimbledon, and Wimbledon (was) better than Roland Garros.

Serena Williams



# Man City stroll past Shakhtar

Manchester City overran an outclassed Shakhtar Donetsk to get their Champions League campaign off to a winning start

● **Riyad Mahrez, Ilkay Gundogan and Gabriel Jesus scored the goals for City in a one-sided affair**

AFP | Kharkiv, Ukraine

Pep Guardiola insisted he never doubted Manchester City could cope with their defensive injury crisis as his side made a flying start to the Champions League campaign with a 3-0 win against Shakhtar Donetsk on Wednesday.

City boss Guardiola was forced to deploy Brazilian midfielder Fernandinho at centre-back after losing Aymeric Laporte and John Stones to recent injuries.

But Fernandinho slotted in comfortably at the back as City easily subdued Shakhtar with first-half goals from Riyad Mahrez and Ilkay Gundogan at the Metalist Stadium.

Gabriel Jesus netted City's third goal in the closing stages to ensure they made the long flight home with three points stowed away.

"When you win the manager makes the right decisions, when you lose the wrong decisions. We lost one game in eight months and we will not doubt who these players are. It is a joy to be their manager," Guardiola said.

"We defended really well and created chances. We don't have many choices in defence.

"Fernandinho's the only



Ilkay Gundogan of Manchester City scores his team's second goal

one I have. He is a clever player and so intelligent and an incredible guy.

"He has a lot of experience and personality and what he says the people follow him in the locker room. He's important."

Fernandinho added: "I've been training in this position since the start of the season. Pep knows all about our squad and team. Today was my opportunity and I hope I can improve more."

There was more good news for Guardiola as French defender Benjamin Mendy, on as a late substitute, made his first appearance since April after returning from a knee injury.

With Dinamo Zagreb and Atalanta making up Champions League Group C, City are expected to cruise into the last 16.

This mature performance was the perfect opening to their bid to win the Champions League for the first time, especially coming after Saturday's shock 3-2 defeat at Norwich in the Premier League.

"Three points away are so important. Now it's in our hands. If we can close the games at home then we will be in the last 16," Guardiola said.

City have failed to get past the quarter-finals in Guardiola's previous three seasons in charge, while the Spaniard hasn't won the tournament since the second of his two titles with Barcelona in 2011.

Those past failures gave extra significance to City's opening match.

Nicolas Otamendi is the Eng-



**Manchester City have failed to get past the Champions League quarter-finals in Pep Guardiola's previous three seasons in charge**

lish champions' only fit centre-back, so Fernandinho was pressed into action, with Guardiola giving the Brazilian the captain's armband for his first start this season.

The 34-year-old had lost his place as City's holding midfielder following the pre-season signing of Rodri from Atletico Madrid.

### Emphatic response

Rodri wasted a chance to put City in front inside the first minute when he met Kevin De Bruyne's free-kick with a mis-directed header inside the six-yard box.

City were dominating possession without testing Shakhtar keeper Andriy Pyatov and Jesus's shot deflected for a corner after the Brazilian was teed up by Gundogan's clever pass.

Their pressure was rewarded in the 24th minute when Jesus flicked the ball back to Gundogan on the edge of the area.

Gundogan's curling strike cannoned back off a post into the path of Mahrez, who had the simple task of slotting into the net from close range for his first goal of the season.

It took 35 minutes for Shakhtar to muster their first shot on target when Junior Moraes had a close-range effort well saved at the near post by Ederson.

City's response was emphatic and they doubled their lead in the 38th minute.

Mahrez was the provider this time with an incisive surge towards the Shakhtar area.

The Algerian deftly picked out Gundogan's run and he finished with a clinical strike that flashed past Pyatov.

Jesus wrapped up the points in the 76th minute when he slotted home from De Bruyne's pass for his second goal of the season.

## Lewandowski strikes again as Bayern see off Red Star

AFP | Munich

Robert Lewandowski scored as Bayern Munich eased to a 3-0 win over Red Star Belgrade in their opening Champions League group-stage match at the Allianz Arena on Wednesday.

After Kingsley Coman gave Bayern a first-half lead, Lewandowski poked home ten minutes from time for his ninth goal in six matches before Thomas Mueller added a stunning late third.

Bayern visit last season's runners-up Tottenham, who blew a two-goal lead on Wednesday in a 2-2 draw at Olympiakos, in their second Group B game in two weeks' time.

The hosts were stuttering to a slender win before Lewandowski capitalised on two mistakes in the Red Star defence for a classic poacher's goal.

"We had the whole game under control, we just scored too few goals," Lewandowski told Sky.

"I'm very happy that I scored and that we played well as a team."

The margin of victory pleased Bayern head coach Niko Kovac after his side peppered the Serbian team's defence and enjoyed a huge share of possession.

"I believe we can be very satisfied, the team concentrated very hard on the job at hand," said Kovac.



Bayern Munich's Polish forward Robert Lewandowski shoots the ball

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ROBERT LEWANDOWSKI

"We scored three goals, that's standard for us."

However, Red Star came

within a whisker of equalising just before Lewandowski struck when their captain Marko Marin fired narrowly wide with Bayern goalkeeper Manuel Neuer beaten.

The German champions are not having things their own way so far in the Bundesliga and Saturday's 1-1 draw at early leaders RB Leipzig left Bayern fourth in the table, two points adrift.

However, they remain a force to be reckoned with and last lost a Champions League group game at home in December 2013.

It took just over half an hour for them to take the lead, capitalising on 70 percent possession.

With the away defence hanging back, understandably worrying about Lewandowski, Coman slipped his marker and headed home from fellow winger Ivan Perisic's pin-point cross from the left flank on 34 minutes.

It could have been 2-0 going into the break as Philippe Coutinho, on loan from Barcelona, audaciously flicked the ball into the net with his heel, but was narrowly offside.

## Olympiakos hit back to draw 2-2 with Tottenham

Reuters | Athens

Last season's runners-up Tottenham Hotspur squandered a two-goal lead to draw 2-2 in their Champions League Group B opener away to Greek club Olympiakos Piraeus on Wednesday.

Tottenham silenced the raucous crowd with two goals in four minutes midway through the opening half, first with Harry Kane's well-struck penalty and then a stunner by Lucas Moura.

Olympiakos, who had conceded only once in nine games in all competitions so far this season, halved the deficit through Daniel Podence shortly before halftime.

The hosts levelled it up after 54 minutes when Mathieu Valbuena beat fellow Frenchman Hugo Lloris from the penalty

spot after some sloppy play by the visitors.

Tottenham looked the more likely winner in the closing stages with Dele Alli and Erik Lamela squandering chances.

While it was an improvement on their start in last season's ultimately memorable Champions League campaign, when they lost their opening two matches, Tottenham will be disappointed at their failure to protect their lead.

They will need to be far more clinical when they host Bayern Munich in their second game. Olympiakos will travel to Red Star Belgrade next.

"When you go 2-0 up after 30 minutes you are in a great position, after that I thought we controlled the game whereas before we didn't play well but scored two goals," Kane said.



Mathieu Valbuena of Olympiakos scores his sides from the penalty spot