

# Ronaldo ready to roar

Champion Ron looks to pick up where he left off as Juve host Genoa

AFP | Milan, Italy

Engulfed in turmoil, Cristiano Ronaldo will look to pick up where he left off on the pitch as Juventus host Genoa in Serie A today before next week's trip to his former club Manchester United in the Champions League.

Ronaldo shrugged off explosive rape allegations to score for the champions in their last Serie A game against Udinese before the international break on October 6 to keep Juventus's 100 percent record after eight games.

The allegations made by 34-year-old American Kathryn Mayorga, that Ronaldo raped her in a Las Vegas hotel in 2009, threaten to engulf the Portuguese superstar in a lengthy legal battle.

Ronaldo, 33, issued a statement to "firmly deny the accusations" but was left out of Portugal's squad for this month's 3-1 friendly win over Scotland, and 3-2 Nations League victory against Poland.

Juventus have stood behind their star signing and he will look to help the reigning champions maintain their six-point lead on second-placed Napoli, ahead of next week's visit to Old

Trafford where he became a star.

"Goals, pains, tears and the case in the USA -- the first 100 days at Juventus," wrote Gazzetta dello Sport.

"With Juventus it's a honeymoon," the newspaper added of the former Real Madrid player's three months in Turin, "but the Mayorga case..."

It was business as usual at training for Ronaldo who posted a photo of himself listening to coach Massimiliano Allegri's instructions on social media Thursday with the 'thumb up' emoji.

Their rivals are Genoa, in 11th, but with Europe's top scorer this season in Polish striker Krzysztof Piatek.

The 23-year-old Pole has scored nine goals in seven games for Genoa, who have a match in hand, compared to Ronaldo's four.

The young player, who arrived from Cracovia for four million euros (\$4.6 million) in the summer, was relishing coming up against the five-time Ballon d'Or winner.

"Cristiano Ronaldo is the best player in the world right now and in my view the greatest there has ever been," said Piatek.

"I'd like to give my jersey to Ronaldo and maybe get his."



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Genoa also switched coaches during the break with Ivan Juric replacing Davide Ballardini.

"Genoa have changed coach and they will want to make a good impression here in Turin," said Juventus full-back Mattia

De Sciglio.

"Against the Rossoblu (Genoa) it's always a tough game, and after the international break it's even harder to start again."

Carlo Ancelotti's Napoli visit Udinese ahead of their trip

## Series A

Today		
AS Roma	v	SPAL (1300GMT),
Juventus	v	Genoa (1600),
Udinese	v	Napoli (1830)
Tomorrow		
Frosinone	v	Empoli (1030GMT),
Bologna	v	Torino (1300),
Chievo	v	Atalanta,
Parma	v	Lazio,
Fiorentina	v	Cagliari (1600),
Inter Milan	v	AC Milan (1830)
Monday		
Sampdoria	v	Sassuolo (1830GMT)

Wednesday to Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League.

Inter Milan, third, two points adrift of Napoli, face city rivals AC Milan in the first derby of the season in the San Siro, before travelling to Barcelona three days later.

"It's the game the city most looks forward to," said Inter captain Mauro Icardi. "The goal for Inter remains to reduce the gap with Juventus and Napoli."

Roma host SPAL looking to stretch their run to four league wins in a row before welcom-

ing CSKA Moscow in the Stadio Olimpico, as city rivals Lazio, in fourth, travel to Parma.

Meanwhile, ex-Italy boss Gian Piero Ventura returns to coaching bidding to guide tailenders Chievo to their first win of the season.

It will be Ventura's first match since being sacked last November after Italy failed to reach the World Cup finals.

"I'm experiencing this new beginning with the enthusiasm of a child," said Ventura, 70, who replaced Lorenzo D'Anna.

## Spotlight on Mourinho once more

London, United Kingdom

Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho remains the centre of attention when the former Chelsea boss returns to Stamford Bridge today.

A dramatic fightback from 2-0 down to beat Newcastle 3-2 before a two-week international break offered Mourinho a stay of execution, but the pressure is still on the Portuguese to close a seven-point gap on Chelsea, Manchester City and Liverpool at the top of the table.

Here, we look at what to look out for in the Premier League this weekend.

### Can Mourinho stop the rot?

Mourinho has been quick to remind Chelsea fans on his previous returns to Stamford Bridge he delivered three Premier League titles in two spells in charge.

However, he has lost without even scoring a goal in three visits as United manager.

Another defeat wouldn't just realistically end United's chances of winning the title in mid-October, but leave a mountain to climb just to make it back into the top four.

With Juventus to come twice in quick succession in the Champions League and a visit to City also to come before the next international break in three weeks' time, Mourinho needs a good start to a difficult spell to avoid more speculation over his future.

### Testing times for Tottenham

Spurs start a demanding seven-game stretch in 21 days against a West Ham side on Saturday that have already proven



Manchester United's Portuguese manager Jose Mourinho gestures during the English Premier League football match between Manchester United and Newcastle at Old Trafford in Manchester

### Fixtures (all times GMT)

#### Today

Chelsea v Manchester United (1130), Bournemouth v Southampton, Cardiff v Fulham, Manchester City v Burnley, Newcastle v Brighton, West Ham v Tottenham, Wolves v Watford (all 1400), Huddersfield v Liverpool (1630)

#### Tomorrow

Everton v Crystal Palace (1500)

to be at their best on the big occasion this season.

Of the Hammers seven Premier League points from eight games, four came from home games against Chelsea and United. Spurs have equalled their best ever start to a Premier League season despite already appearing at times to be running on fumes with a series of injuries to players who went deep into the World Cup.

Mauricio Pochettino will again be without Dele Alli, Jan

Vertonghen and Danny Rose and could be distracted by a must-win Champions League tie at PSV Eindhoven on Wednesday.

### Arsenal under the radar

Amid the three-way battle at the top and the circus surrounding Mourinho, Arsenal's resurgence under Unai Emery has gone under the radar.

The Gunners have won nine games in a row in all competitions, six of them in the Premier League, to close to within two



The pressure is still on the Portuguese to close a seven-point gap on Chelsea

points of the leaders.

Emery has managed to find the right balance to get club record signings Alexandre Lacazette and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang into the same side with the two combining for 11 goals in all competitions.

Questions remain over how far Arsenal can go this season, particularly as they lost to City and Chelsea in the opening weeks of the season and haven't beaten any side in the top eight on their winning run. But the visit of Leicester to the Emirates on Monday night offers another perfect opportunity.

### City, Liverpool expected to bounce back

Neither side were too disheartened when Liverpool and City played out a 0-0 draw at Anfield just before the international break to preserve their unbeaten starts to the league season.

After that anticipated thriller fell flat, though, both will be expected to get back among the goals this weekend when Burnley visit the Etihad and winless Huddersfield host Liverpool.

## Bayern boss out to end winless streak

Berlin, Germany

Under-pressure Bayern Munich head coach Niko Kovac desperately needs a win at Wolfsburg today to break the Bavarian giants' miserable run and reignite their Bundesliga title defence.

Kovac, 47, only took charge in July, but must turn things around at mid-table Wolfsburg with the German champions winless in their last four matches, including back-to-back league defeats.

After dominating the Bundesliga for the last six seasons, Bayern are sixth in the table and four points behind leaders Borussia Dortmund -- an unacceptable situation for senior bosses.

A humbling 2-0 defeat away to Hertha Berlin was bad enough before Bayern crashed to an embarrassing 3-0 drubbing at home to Borussia Muenchengladbach a fortnight ago.

Gladbach midfielder Chris-

### Fixtures (all times 1330 GMT unless stated)

#### Today

Wolfsburg v Bayern Munich, Bayer Leverkusen v Hanover, Stuttgart v Borussia Dortmund, Augsburg v RB Leipzig, Nuremberg v Hoffenheim, Schalke v Werder Bremen (1830)

toph Kramer rubbed salt in Bayern's wounds by saying their superstars were dispirited -- "this is not the dominant Bayern team we all know".

A third straight defeat would test the patience of Bayern president Uli Hoeness, who has promised to "defend Kovac until the death".

"It's about time that we get the feeling of a win back again," admitted defender Mats Hummels.

Former Bayern midfielder Markus Babel says pressure on Kovac will come from within at Munich.



Bayern Munich's Croatian headcoach Niko Kovac reacts on the pitch