

# Chelsea’s Maresca says Man City link ‘100 percent’ speculation

Chelsea manager insists he will stay despite reports linking him with Pep Guardiola’s job

● Maresca’s current contract runs until 2029

AFP | London

Enzo Maresca said yesterday that reports linking him to the Manchester City manager’s job were “100 percent” speculation, promising that he would still be at Chelsea next season.

The Italian said last weekend that he had suffered his “worst 48 hours” since joining the club in July last year.

Maresca made the surprising comments after his side’s 2-0 win at home to Everton, hitting out at unnamed parties for failing to support him and his players, though he stressed that he was not referring to fans.

The remarks fuelled intense speculation he was taking aim at the club’s owners and sporting directors.

A report in the Athletic said the former Leicester boss was high on City’s list for a replacement for Pep Guardiola, should the Spaniard leave at the end of the season.



Chelsea’s Italian head coach Enzo Maresca (C) congratulates his players

But Maresca brushed that question aside at his press conference on the eve of Chelsea’s Premier League match at Newcastle.

“It doesn’t affect me at all because I know that is 100 percent speculation,” he said

“And in this moment, there is no time for these kinds of things.

First of all, because I have a contract here until 2029. And my focus, I said many times, that is just about this club and I’m very proud to be here.”

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Last weekend, Maresca said he endured his “worst 48 hours” at the club, criticizing unnamed parties for a lack of support, which had fueled speculation about his relationship with the board before he shut down exit rumours

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ENZO MARESCA

I’m paying attention to that.” Maresca, who arrived at Chelsea in July 2024, won the UEFA Conference League and Club World Cup in his first season at Stamford Bridge.

His team are fourth in the Premier League table and can qualify automatically for the last 16 of the Champions League.

On Tuesday, they beat third-tier Cardiff to progress to the League Cup semi-finals, where they will face either Arsenal or Crystal Palace.

## West Indies 110-0, trail by 465, after Conway’s epic 227 for New Zealand

AFP | Mount Maunganui

Brandon King and John Campbell comfortably negotiated 23 overs in fading light before stumps to take the West Indies to 110-0 at the end of day two of the third Test after New Zealand declared on a mammoth 575-8 at Mount Maunganui.

The West Indies, with King unbeaten on 55 and Campbell not out 45, are still 465 runs behind.

New Zealand opener Devon Conway’s epic 227 and some late hitting from Rachin Ravindra, who had six fours and two sixes in his 72 not out, and Ajaz Patel (30 not out) allowed captain Tom Latham to give his bowlers



West Indies’ Brandon King (C) makes a run

more than an hour at the West Indies openers.

But King and Campbell were more than up to the task, seeing off the new ball and scoring

freely on a flat Bay Oval wicket as New Zealand’s bowlers struggled to find a good length.

King’s 50 came from just 62 balls, hitting nine fours and

Campbell’s 45 was made from 60 deliveries, and included seven fours.

Campbell was nursing a sore right-hand that was struck in the nets prior to the match.

If the injury-depleted West Indies had any other options, he may have sat out the Test such was the swelling and pain he was experiencing.

The visitors also have doubts over whether Kemar Roach, who is nursing a hamstring strain, will bat, while leading batsman Shai Hope was ill and stayed at the team hotel yesterday.

West Indies all-rounder Justin Greaves said it had been a good day for his side, particularly given the adversity they faced.

## Indian football club banned, fined for refusing to play in Iran

AFP | New Delhi

The Asian Football Confederation banned Indian club Mohun Bagan Super Giant from all its competitions and fined it more than \$100,000 for refusing to play a match in Iran.

Mohun Bagan did not travel for an Asian Champions League Two group match against Sepahan in Iran in September, citing lack of security assurances and medical insurance coverage.

The AFC disciplinary and ethics committee banned Mohun Bagan from the next edition of the continental second-tier tournament, up to the 2027-28 season, it said in a statement on Wednesday.

One of the oldest football clubs in Asia, Mohun Bagan



Mohun Bagan Super Giant players celebrate after a match (file photo)

were also handed a \$50,000 fine and told to pay \$50,729 for damages and losses incurred by the AFC and Sepahan.

Mohun Bagan were withdrawn from the competition after their no-show and their matches were declared null and void by the AFC.

The club had earlier asked the Court Arbitration for Sport to move the match to a neutral venue, but the request was rejected, AFP reported.

## Arsenal in the ‘right place’ as Arteta marks six years at club

AFP | London

Mikel Arteta believes his transformation of Arsenal has put the Gunners in a position to win major trophies as he celebrates six years as manager.

Victory at Arsenal’s former club Everton on Saturday will guarantee Arsenal are top of the Premier League at Christmas as they aim to win the title for the first time since 2003/04.

An FA Cup success early in the Spaniard’s reign is the only major trophy Arteta has delivered, but he has turned Arsenal back into Premier League title contenders and Champions League regulars.

They failed to finish in the Premier League’s top four for six consecutive years between



Arsenal’s Spanish manager Mikel Arteta gestures on the touchline

2017 and 2022 but have come second in each of the past three seasons.

“The transformation has been around the club in terms of the

size, in terms of revenues, in terms of the squad that we built, the value of it, the sporting success that we had, even though we haven’t won any major tro-

phies yet,” Arteta said yesterday.

“I think it’s very, very consistent, so we’re in the right place.”

Arsenal lead Manchester City by two points at the top of the table but the gap has narrowed in recent weeks, with draws at Sunderland and Chelsea followed by just a second defeat of the season at Aston Villa.

Arteta’s men face a demanding festive season, with six games between December 20 and January 8.

And the 43-year-old is clear on what he wants for Christmas.

“Win, win, win, win, win all the games,” he said.

“I’ll say the rest will come naturally, but my mood, my energy is going to be much better (if we win), so that’s what I want.”

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