

## Spurs' sacking of Mourinho before Cup final 'crazy': Rooney



Jose Mourinho and Wayne Rooney make their way to the bench during a match (file photo)

AFP | London

Tottenham Hotspur's decision to sack manager Jose Mourinho just days before their League Cup final against Manchester City is "crazy", former England skipper Wayne Rooney said.

Rooney, who played under Mourinho when the Portuguese was in charge at Manchester United, said Spurs should have waited until after Sunday's final to pull the plug on the 58-year-old's tenure.

Spurs have endured a dismal run of form this season and fans are disgruntled by the team's style of play under the former Porto, Chelsea, Inter Milan and Real Madrid boss, who replaced Mauricio Pochettino in late 2019.

"I think it's crazy doing it before a Cup final," Derby County manager Rooney told reporters. "It's strange timing anyway. Surely they could have waited until after the Cup fi-

nal if that's the direction they wanted to go in.

"Mourinho is a manager who loves winning trophies, that's quite clear to see. He's won a lot of trophies throughout his career ... I'm sure (Spurs chairman) Daniel Levy could have waited until the day after the game.

"If there was one manager to set up a team to play against City in a Cup final it's Mourinho. Tottenham haven't had the best of seasons, so from that point of view it's crazy and a massive risk."

Tottenham forward Son Heung-min thanked Mourinho after the announcement of his sacking.

"I have no words to describe how I'm feeling, it's been a pleasure to work with you," Son said on Instagram. "I'm sorry things didn't work out and truly grateful for the time we've had together. Good luck and all the best for the future."

# Al Ahli book return trip to Cup final

Khalifa bin Salman Cup defending champions defeat Al Najma in game two to sweep Golden Square semi-final series

● **Ahmed Aldurazi, Mike Harris combine for 48 points to score nearly half of Ahli's points total**

● **Ahli now await the winners of the other Golden Square semi-final series between Manama and Al Hala, which was extended to a third game, to be played on Sunday**

TDT | Manama

Holders Al Ahli punched their return tickets to the Khalifa bin Salman Cup final last night following a dominant 97-72 victory over Al Najma in game two of their Golden Square semi-final series.

The result earned Ahli a two-game sweep of their match-up and they now await the winners of the other head-to-head in this round of four between Manama and Al Hala, which has been ex-



Al Ahli's Mike Harris looks to take a jump shot during their match against Al Najma last night

tended to a decisive third game.

That winner-take-all affair is scheduled to be played on Sunday. A win for Manama would forge a re-match with Ahli in last year's Khalifa bin Salman Cup final.

Ahli got off to a hot start in yesterday's game and took a commanding 33-13 lead at the end of the first quarter. Najma tried

to battle back before the half but Ahli maintained their double-digit edge, heading into the interval with a 51-34 advantage.

Ahli then virtually put the game away in the third where they stretched their lead even further to march into the final canto up 80-46. There, they enjoyed their biggest lead of the contest of 35 points following

an Ali Baqer lay-up early in the period and they cruised all the way until the final whistle.

Ahmed Aldurazi and American Mike Harris scored nearly half of Ahli's points in the game, combining for 48 points.

Aldurazi finished with 26 and was red hot from the three-point line, burying seven long-range shots. Harris added 22 points, including three triples, to go with 13 rebounds, five assists and three blocks.

Aldurazi's backcourt mate Maitham Jameel was also on fire from beyond the stripe, firing in four three-pointers en route to contributing 16 points. Subah Hussain was Ahli's only other player in double figures with 14.

Hussain Mohammed finished as Najma's leading scorer with 24 points, while big man CJ Giles had a monster effort of 19 points and 19 rebounds, but they received little help from elsewhere.

Ali Jaffar and Qassim Hassan added seven points apiece.

Ahli had a huge edge over their rivals with their outside marksmanship, as they had 11 more made three-pointers than Najma.

## BIC launches Fitness on Track with cycling and running programme

TDT | Manama

Bahrain International Circuit (BIC), "The Home of Motorsport in the Middle East", announced yesterday the launch of Fitness on Track, an extensive programme of activity for cyclists and runners of all ages who are looking to maintain their physical fitness. The first series of events launches this Thursday with three weekly Ramadan Specials, sponsored by Batelco.

The all-new Fitness on Track programme is dedicated to offering cyclists and runners the opportunity to train or simply



A man rides a bike at BIC

take casual exercise within a safe and controlled environment at Bahrain's world-renowned Formula 1 circuit.

BIC Fitness on Track Batelco Ramadan Special will be open from 530pm to 830pm. Cyclists will be riding their bikes along BIC's 3.543-kilometre Outer Track, while runners and walkers will be utilising the 2.554km Inner Track. There will also be a separate dedicated area for children's cycling.

The Batelco Ramadan Special events will be run over three weeks during Ramadan, including on Thursday April 22, Friday April 30, and Thursday May 6. The track will open between 530pm and 830pm and there will be food and beverage trucks available from sunset onwards.

To ensure the safety of all

participants, entry is restricted to vaccinated or COVID-19 recovered people only, as show by the green badge on the BeAware app. Children under 18 may attend when accompanied by a qualifying adult.

The programme's launch follows a test event held earlier this year for cyclists, which showed significant interest in such an activity.

All those interested to take part must pre-register and pay in advance on BIC's official website bahraingp.com. The cost to take part is BD2 for cyclists and BD1 for runners. Those under the age of 12 can participate for free if accompanied by a paying adult.

For more information on BIC's Fitness on Track programme or for other events and activities, visit [www.bahraingp.com](http://www.bahraingp.com).

## Guardiola says plans for closed Super League format are 'not sport'

AFP | London

Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola has criticised the closed format of a proposed breakaway European Super League, saying it is "not sport" if success is guaranteed.

City are one of 12 clubs to have signed up to the proposal, alongside Manchester United, Liverpool, Chelsea, Arsenal, Tottenham, Real Madrid, Barcelona, Atletico Madrid, Juventus, Inter Milan and AC Milan.

The Super League would guarantee a spot for up to 15 founding members every year, removing the uncertainty of



Manchester City's Spanish manager Pep Guardiola gestures on the touchline during a match

qualification and the accompanying risks to revenue.

"It's not a sport when the relation between effort and reward doesn't exist," Guardiola said yesterday. "It's not a sport when success is already guaranteed, it's not a sport if it doesn't matter if you lose."

"It's not fair when one team fight, fight, fight, arrive at the top and after cannot qualify because the success is already guaranteed just for a few clubs."

"People say five clubs can go up and play this competition, but what happens if these 15 don't play a good season and will be there. This is not a sport."

Guardiola said he and oth-

er managers of the breakaway clubs have been put in an "uncomfortable" position by having to face press conferences before their club executives have come forward to explain their rationale for the proposals in detail.

One of Guardiola's former clubs Barcelona have signed up, while his previous employers Bayern Munich have rejected the plans.

And he questioned the reasoning for selecting the 12 clubs involved with City, Tottenham and Arsenal, who have never won the European Cup included, while four-time European champions Ajax are not.

"They have the duty and obligation to say as soon as possible," he added.

“It's not fair when one team fight, fight, fight, arrive at the top and after cannot qualify because the success is already guaranteed just for a few clubs. People say five clubs can go up and play this competition, but what happens if these 15 don't play a good season and will be there. This is not a sport”

PEP GUARDIOLA



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