

## ALLARDYCE CASTS SHADOW OVER PREMIER LEAGUE ACTION

**LONDON:** Premier League chiefs will hope attention returns to on-field matters this weekend after an uncomfortable few days in the spotlight for English football. Sam Allardyce's one-game career as England manager came to a shock end after just 67 days on Tuesday following controversial comments made to undercover reporters, which continued Thursday with Southampton assistant manager Eric Black filmed offering alleged advice on giving bribes to officials at other clubs.

Allardyce, 61, was also secretly filmed giving advice on how to circumnavigate transfer rules and mocking England predecessor Roy Hodgson. Appointed England manager on a £3 million-a-year contract (\$3.9 million), Allardyce also agreed to travel to Singapore and Hong Kong as an ambassador for their fictitious firm for a fee of £400,000.



**BOLTON:** Former England soccer team manager Sam Allardyce leaves his home in Bolton, England. Even by English soccer's standards, the latest embarrassment is a new low after Sam Allardyce was forced out in disgrace after one game in charge of the national team. —AP

England Under-21 coach Gareth Southgate has been placed in caretaker charge for the upcoming World Cup qualifiers, but, with the Football Association still to appoint a permanent replacement, a succession of Premier League managers have found themselves being asked if they would like a shot at the England job. Bournemouth boss Eddie Howe, one of English football's rising managerial stars, ruled himself out of replacing Allardyce for the time being. "I think I have said in many interviews that the England job is the ultimate job...It sounds arrogant but I am not interested in the (England) job now, but

you never know what will happen in the future," said Howe.

Veteran Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger, long spoken of as a possible England manager, is out of contract with the Gunners at the end of the season. "I've said many times that my priority has always been Arsenal Football Club and I have to assess how well I do until the end of the season," said the Frenchman, looking to build on his side's 3-0 win over Chelsea away to Burnley today. Manchester City will look to return to winning ways at Tottenham Hotspur today after a midweek 3-3 draw away to Scottish giants Celtic ended their perfect record under manager Pep Guardiola. "We're going to recover well, to focus on White Hart Lane," Guardiola said.

### Stuck in a rut

After his side's lacklustre defeats against Liverpool and Arsenal, Chelsea manager Antonio Conte could do without another setback at Hull as he tries to revitalize a team stuck in a rut since last season. The Blues' miserable defense of the Premier League title cost Jose Mourinho his job last term and, while it's far too soon for Conte to fear the axe after his close-season appointment, he knows demanding owner Roman Abramovich doesn't take kindly to prolonged spells of poor form.

Conte, whose cause isn't helped by the ankle injury that continues to sideline captain John Terry, said: "I'm lucky because Mr Abramovich is very passionate about football. To talk with him about football is very interesting. To discuss and explain my idea of football. We haven't got a magic wand to change the situation in two months, three months, four months. We don't forget the past. The past is there, it's very clear. We finished in 10th place last season. When you finish 10th, it means you have problems. We must change the situation and we must work hard together and we are doing this."

Southampton, fresh from a 3-0 win over West Ham, travel to Leicester City, with the Premier League champions beating Porto 1-0 in the Champions League following a 4-1 defeat by Manchester United. Liverpool, who thrashed Hull 5-1 last week, are away to Swansea while bottom of the table Sunderland will seek a first league win of the season at home to West Brom. United, for whom Zlatan Ibrahimovic scored in a 1-0 home win over Zorya Luhansk in the Europa League on Thursday, face struggling Stoke at Old Trafford today. —AFP

## RANIERI CHALLENGES SUPERSTITIOUS VARDY

**LEICESTER:** Leicester City manager Claudio Ranieri has challenged Jamie Vardy to prove his curious pre-match drinking ritual still works by ending his goal drought against Southampton today. Vardy revealed in his new autobiography that he superstitiously drank a glass of port out of a Lucozade bottle the night before every match last season.

The England international striker's unusual habit worked a treat as he left opposing defenders punch drunk en route to scoring 24 times in Leicester's incredible Premier League title triumph.

But Vardy, 29, who also said he consumes three cans of Red Bull and two espressos on the day of a game to boost his energy, has only three goals this term and has gone five matches without scoring. Keen to keep him on his toes, Ranieri questioned if the ritual had lost its magic following Vardy's latest blank, in Leicester's 1-0 Champions League win over Porto on Tuesday.

"He took it before Porto? Why didn't he score?!" Ranieri said. "A nutritionist gives them something to eat but after they go home they are professional and can eat and drink what they want. For me it's important to watch on the pitch, when they play and train well I am happy. Sometimes the players do something just because, 'Ah, I scored a goal and I want to continue'. It's okay. It's the doctor who has to investigate and say the port is good or not good. Jamie is doing a fantastic career, from non-league to national team. I don't believe port can do something. It is a glass of red wine. It is okay. For me it is only superstition, nothing more."

## MODRIC INJURY ADDS TO REAL MADRID PROBLEMS

**BARCELONA:** Real Madrid are set to be without influential midfielder Luka Modric for up to a month due to a knee injury. The Croatian sustained the injury in Tuesday's 2-2 draw at Borussia Dortmund although he managed to complete the 90 minutes. "Following tests carried out on Luka Modric at the Sanitas La Moraleja University Hospital, he has been diagnosed with an injury to the articular cartilage in his left knee. His recovery will continue to be monitored," Real said in a statement. Modric is set to miss Real's La Liga fixtures with Eibar, Real Betis and Athletic Bilbao and Alaves as well as their Champions League game at home to Legia Warsaw, while he is a doubt for the return trip to Poland.

He will also miss Croatia's World Cup qualifiers against Kosovo and Finland. Modric's prolonged absence is the latest midfield blow for Real, who recently lost Casemiro for up to two months with a fractured fibula. News of Modric's injury emerged after Zinedine Zidane gave a

news conference on Saturday before Real's game with Eibar today, when they will look to pick up a first win in four games following draws with Villarreal, Las Palmas and Dortmund. Real twice squandered the lead in their last two games, drawing 2-2 against Las Palmas and Dortmund, but the coach said he was not concerned about the team's displays.

"When you draw twice it means something, especially when you had the game under control. We had a lot of chances but I'm not worried," Zidane said. "We've conceded twice in the last two games and that hasn't happened to us for a long time. Now we have to get back to winning, because we always want to win. The most important thing is to be at our best from the start to the finish." Zidane confirmed midfielder Isco would take Modric's place against Eibar and make his first start of the season. Isco was named in the Spain squad for World Cup qualifiers against Italy and Albania despite playing just 55 minutes of league football this campaign. — Reuters



**LIVERPOOL:** Crystal Palace's Christian Benteke (centre) in action with Everton's Ashley Williams (left) and Phil Jagielka during their English Premier League soccer match Everton versus Crystal Palace at Goodison Park, Liverpool on Friday, Sept 30, 2016. — AP

## LUKAKU, BENTEKE STRIKE AS PALACE HOLD EVERTON

 Everton	1
 Palace	1

**LONDON:** Everton moved up to third place in the Premier League despite being held to a 1-1 draw by Crystal Palace as Belgium strikers Christian Benteke and Romelu Lukaku both got on the scoresheet in a battling encounter on Friday. Benteke headed the equaliser for Palace five minutes into the second half after Lukaku opened the scoring in the 36th and remarkably it was the Everton forward's first Premier League goal from a direct free kick out of the 65 he has scored. The draw took Everton to 14 points from six matches before their rivals play this weekend with a top-of-the-table clash that sees leaders Manchester

City, who have a maximum 18 points, visiting Tottenham Hotspur in second on 14.

"It's a good point in the end. We defended set plays and second balls well against a difficult team," said Everton manager Ronald Koeman. "The team performance was outstanding, although we'd like to create more opportunities. We've had a good start to the season. The position in the table is not everything at the moment and we need to improve, but we're doing a good job." Having lost their unbeaten league record at Bournemouth last weekend, Everton looked hungry to make amends and, propelled by the fleet-footed Yannick Bolasie playing against his former club, they quickly took the initiative.

A Bolasie cross came close to picking out Lukaku at the far post after 14 minutes before the Belgium targetman did make his mark on the scoreboard 10 minutes before the break. He bent a superb free kick over the wall after Damien Delaney was penalized for a high boot on Phil Jagielka, although the Everton defender

had handled the ball as he raised both arms to protect himself. "I have chased the ball and put my head in," said Jagielka. "I got a bit scared and tried to protect myself and ended up handballing it. It is a natural reaction to a high boot. The ref knew that. It was his decision."

Alan Pardew thought his Palace side were hard done by with the foul given against them. "I was a bit disappointed that the referee gave the free-kick. It was a bit harsh," he said. Palace have proved lucky opponents for Lukaku, who has scored four goals in his last five top-flight appearances against the south London side who stay in seventh spot. However, his Belgium team mate Benteke denied Everton the victory when he powered a header past helpless goalkeeper Maarten Stekelenburg from Joel Ward's cross. He has now scored five goals in six games against Everton. There were nine yellow cards handed out at Goodison Park the most in the top flight this season-but it was more competitive than dirty as both sides battled for points in another of this season's Friday night matches. —Reuters

## MAN CITY'S GUARDIOLA EXPECTS SPARKS TO FLY AT TOTTENHAM

**LONDON:** After a ding-dong 3-3 draw with Celtic in the Champions League, Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola anticipates another breathless encounter in this weekend's Premier League showdown with Tottenham Hotspur. With six wins from six matches, City are the league leaders and early title favorites, but Tottenham, four points back in second place, are enjoying their best start to a top-flight campaign since 1965.

Guardiola and his Spurs counterpart Mauricio Pochettino employ an aggressive, high-pressing style and the City manager thinks the fans at White Hart Lane today could be in for a treat. "What I like is teams who are active and you see that when they play, they want the ball," said Guardiola, who could become the first manager to win his first seven Premier League matches. "They want to keep it and they are so aggressive without the ball. I like to see that and Liverpool

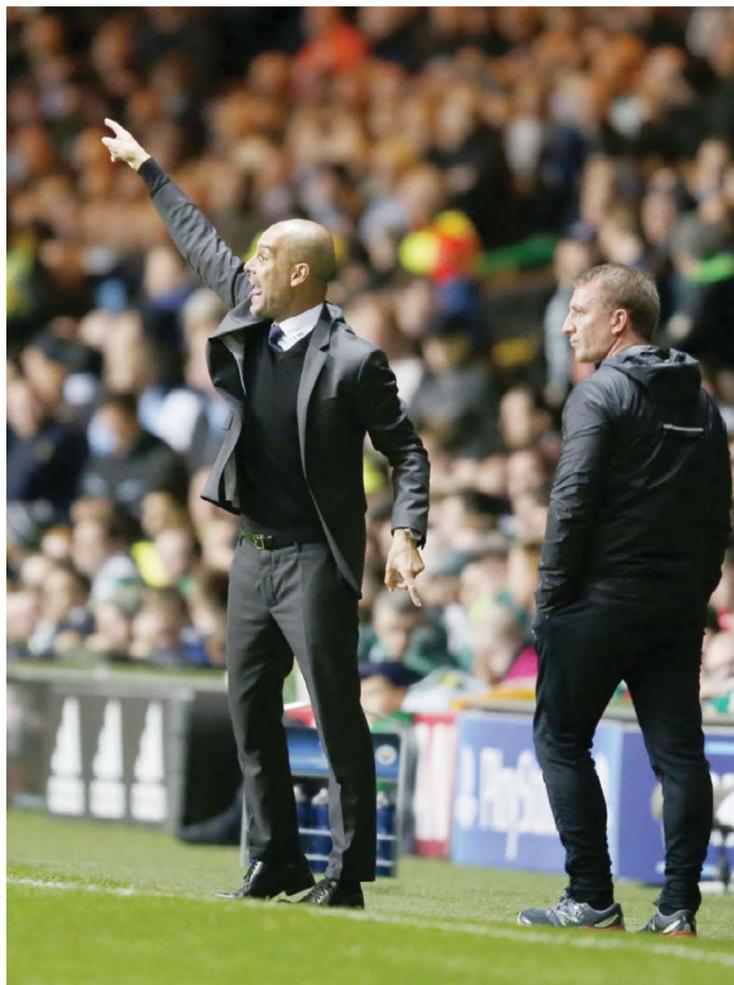
and Tottenham are both teams in that way.

"I think it's fantastic what happened in Glasgow. One attacked, then the other did, it was 3-3 and the fans enjoyed it and the people here watching did too. The fans for Man City were disappointed because they didn't win, but were happy with what they saw. They saw until the last moment they tried to win. That is what I am after. Until the last minute, try to win the games, it doesn't matter what happened. At the end I went to the locker room and the players were tired. They were exhausted. So much so that they couldn't talk and that is what I want from my players."

Pochettino's managerial career has been closely entwined with Guardiola's, the two men having started life as top-level coaches in the same city and during the same season. In his first game as a head coach, former Argentina centre-back Pochettino saw his Espanyol team hold Guardiola's Barcelona to a 0-0 draw in a Copa del Rey tie in January 2009. A month later, Espanyol sensationally won 2-1 at Camp Nou to end a 27-year wait for a derby victory and give Pochettino his first win as a manager. It was Barcelona's first league loss in six months and one of only three home defeats that Guardiola suffered in a maiden season that concluded with a league, Copa del Rey and Champions League treble.

### Kane, De Bruyne absent

Guardiola and Pochettino were effusive in their praise of each other in Friday's pre-game press conferences. The Spaniard called Pochettino "one of the best football managers in the world", while Pochettino branded Guardiola "the best manager in the world". But underpinning the mutual affection is a keen awareness of the threat posed by the other and with Spurs already four points adrift of City, Pochettino is desperate not to lose further ground. "It's very early to start to speak about whether it's an important game to prove something," he said. "It's only the beginning, but we know three points is already important to reduce the gap. It's a very important game for us and them, but it's only a game. At the beginning of the season, we play against City, who are unbeaten in the Premier League. It's first against second in the table, a very tough match, and very important for both teams." Spurs recorded a league double over City last season, cruising to a 4-1 home win in the equivalent fixture a year ago. Pochettino hopes to have Eric Dier, Moussa Dembele and Danny Rose back after hamstring injuries, while Moussa Sissoko is expected to overcome a bang to the head sustained during the 2-1 win at Middlesbrough. Striker Harry Kane, a scorer in last season's 4-1 win over City, remains sidelined by an ankle injury, with Vincent Janssen due to deputise again. Guardiola reported no new injury problems. Vincent Kompany, Kevin De Bruyne and Fabian Delph all have muscular injuries and are only expected to return following the international break. —AFP



**GLASGOW:** Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola gives instructions during the Champions League, Group C soccer match, Celtic versus Manchester City, at Celtic Park, Glasgow on Wednesday Sept 28, 2016. — AP