

## Sports

# Pochettino faces tough task to lift Spurs after Bayern thumping

## Biggest-ever margin of defeat for an English team at home in European competition

LONDON: Mauricio Pochettino has urged Tottenham to face their problems "like a man" but he has a huge job on his hands to mend shattered morale after their 7-2 Champions League mauling by Bayern Munich.

The team are at a crossroads just four months after they appeared in the final of the competition against Liverpool, winning just three out of 10 matches so far this season. In truth, reaching the showpiece in Madrid helped paper over the cracks after a rocky end to the last campaign in which their form dropped alarmingly.

A summer of uncertainty saw key players including midfielder Christian Eriksen linked with moves that did not materialise, which has had an unsettling effect on a club that is desperate to claim a regular place at Europe's top table.

Tottenham have been patchy this season, with a B-string crashing out of the League Cup late last month at the hands of fourth-tier Colchester United. After that defeat Pochettino talked about "different agendas in the squad", hinting that all was not well in the dressing room.

But Tuesday's punishing loss against the five-time European champions in their gleaming new stadium will do far more psychological damage. It was the biggest-ever margin of defeat for an English team at home in European competition and the first time the club had ever conceded seven goals in a home match in any major competition.

Former Spurs and England winger Chris Waddle said off-field issues were getting in the way. "I don't think Serge Aurier wants to be there, Christian Eriksen hasn't signed a new contract. There is so much going on off the pitch," he said. "It should have been dealt

with over the summer. Instead all the contract questions are still going on. It's a shambles."

It is impossible to know what Pochettino said to his players behind closed doors at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium but when he spoke to the press after the game he was measured. "I think we are very critical of ourselves, to find always the way to fix problems," he said. "We need again to try to work, to try to move on. I think it's more psychological now."

"The most important thing is to stay calm, no rushed analysis, no rushed judgement, no rushed assessment," he added. "You need to show your quality like a man first. To face it like a professional. This type of situation you have to show your quality, how you are strong."

Spurs at their best play an incisive, fluent brand of attacking football with Eriksen, Son Heung-min and Harry Kane a handful for any opposition, but they can be surprisingly brittle. The unsettled Eriksen was not in the starting line-up on Tuesday, dropped in favour of the out-of-form Dele Alli but Spurs had plenty of chances in a gripping first half before being rocked on their heels by goal from Robert Lewandowski on the stroke of half-time.

The second half was a horror show as they fell apart, with salt rubbed into the wound by the fact that former Arsenal youngster Serge Gnabry scored four times. Pochettino talked about how last season's Champions League run was the end of a cycle and spoke of the need for a reset.

"For me after the final of the Champions League was a chapter closed and now the club is in a period that they need to open another chapter and design a project medium, long-term," he said.



LONDON: Bayern Munich's French midfielder Corentin Tolisso (L) vies with Tottenham Hotspur's English midfielder Dele Alli (R) during the UEFA Champions League Group B football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Bayern Munich at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in north London. — AFP

The problem he faces is convincing players such as Son and Kane that he is the man to deliver long-overdue silverware. Pochettino, now in his sixth season at

the club, appears to have a vision for taking the club forward but he must communicate that vision quickly. And the players must listen. —AFP

## Guardiola 'unfair' on Foden as City close on last 16

MANCHESTER: Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola said Phil Foden's lack of minutes for the English champions is "unfair" as the 19-year-old came off the bench to score in a 2-0 Champions League win over Dinamo Zagreb on Tuesday.

Foden has been limited to just one start, in the League Cup against Preston, so far this season as the return of Kevin De Bruyne and signing of Rodrigo has seen the England under-21 international fall further down the pecking order.

But he made the most of barely a few minutes on the field against the Croatian champions after being introduced as a substitute in stoppage time to fire home after fellow sub Raheem Sterling had opened the scoring.

"I know he deserves to play. I want to give him minutes, every time he doesn't play I am completely unfair to him, I'm sorry," said Guardiola. "But Kevin De Bruyne is there, David Silva, Bernardo Silva, Rodri, (Ilkay) Gundogan. It's what it is."

"I know the best way to grow up is play minutes and minutes, but he is so young. "I don't know how many players of that age played as many minutes in the recent past he played in these last seasons with us. "He is going to be an incredible future player for us because we count on him and we trust a lot in him." Sterling even hopes Foden will get enough chances to shine to make a late run to be included in the England squad for next year's European Championship.

"I am buzzing for Phil and I want him in the national team," said Sterling. "If he keeps going he will be there." However, City's local hero Foden is happy to play a patient game with such an array of midfield talent to compete with.

"You have to show the manager what you can do each day in training," said Foden. "Every young kid wants to play but you have to keep patient." City enjoyed 71 percent possession and had 19 attempts on goal, but had to wait until 24 minutes from time to make the breakthrough when Sterling rounded off an excellent team move.

The English champions have maximum points from their opening two games with back-to-back matches against bottom-of-the-group Atalanta to come. "It was good. We didn't concede one shot on target, with our huge possession we created enough chances to score earlier, but we were patient," added Guardiola. "We need two more victories to qualify for the last 16 and hopefully we can make against Atalanta almost the definitive step to be there."

Despite missing the injured De Bruyne, Sergio Agüero, Bernardo Silva and David Silva were all guilty of missing guilt-edged chances before half-time, while Gundogan hit the bar.

Dinamo had romped to a 4-0 victory over Atalanta on matchday one, but barely ventured over the halfway line and their brave resistance was finally ended with a wonderfully worked team goal.

Rodrigo's pass opened up the Zagreb defence and Riyad Mahrez's low cross left Sterling with the simple task of forcing the ball over the line from point-blank range. That should have alleviated City's frustrations for the night, but Guardiola was shown a yellow card by Dutch referee Serdar Gozubuyuk and cut an increasingly annoyed figure on the touchline as the hosts saw a number of penalty claims turned away.

"Nobody is going to give us anything," said Guardiola. "We did it ourselves and that's top. That's why I love this team." There was little for the Catalan coach to be concerned about, though, as City were never in danger of conceding and finally made the game safe deep into stoppage time when Sterling led a counter-attack and teed up Foden to blast into the far corner. — AFP



ISTANBUL: Paris Saint-Germain's Spanish midfielder Pablo Sarabia makes an assist despite Galatasaray's Uruguayan goalkeeper Fernando Muslera during the UEFA Champions League football match between Galatasaray and Paris Saint-Germain (PSG), at Ali Sami Yen Spor Kompleksi in Istanbul. — AFP

## Icardi opens PSG account to claim victory at Galatasaray

ISTANBUL: Mauro Icardi scored his first Paris Saint-Germain goal as the French champions beat Galatasaray 1-0 to move four points clear at the top of their Champions League group on Tuesday. Argentina forward Icardi, who joined PSG on loan from Inter Milan last month, opened his account for the club to maintain their perfect start to their European campaign after downing Real Madrid 3-0 two weeks ago.

The Turkish champions sit third in the standings with a single point from the draw at Club Brugge on September 18 and have not registered a win in four games in all competitions. PSG were without Neymar, serving the last match of his European suspension for abusing a referee on social media, Edinson Cavani due to a hip injury, and Kylian Mbappe who started on the bench as he continues to recover from a thigh injury as Icardi led the attack in Istanbul. "It wasn't the hardest goal to score but it came from excellent build-up play. He's worked a lot," coach Thomas Tuchel said. "It's good because we were without Neymar and Cavani, and Kylian didn't start."

"I am very happy because the team did what was needed. It was hard but it was deserved." Fatih Terim brought in Ryan Donk and Jean Michael Seri to his side after

Saturday's Super Lig draw with Fenerbahce as Algerian international Sofiane Feghouli dropped to the bench.

"For me PSG are favourites for the competition. Our match against Real Madrid is now more important after the results we've had," Terim said. "We have nothing to lose and we'll play until the end."

The first sight of goal for either side came as Angel Di Maria tested Galatasaray goalkeeper Fernando Muslera on two minutes. Icardi, returning to PSG's starting line-up after recovering from an injury sustained in the victory over Real, was shown a yellow card in the seventh minute for a foul on captain Muslera.

Galatasaray's first chance arrived three minutes later as Seri's shot curled the wrong side of Keylor Navas's left-hand post. Five minutes into the second half Di Maria, who starred in the victory over his former club Madrid, wasted a one-on-one to claim the lead as Muslera saved his weak shot. A matter of seconds later, Icardi grabbed his first PSG goal to break the deadlock after some tidy interplay. Marco Verratti found winger Pablo Sarabia inside the box who squared a pass to Icardi at the back post.

Icardi was substituted on the hour mark for World Cup winner Mbappe. Playmaker Feghouli came onto the field a minute later, replacing Younes Belhanda, who wore a face mask to protect the jaw he broke last month.

Radamel Falcao, who moved from Ligue 1 side Monaco in September, had a chance to equalise for the Turkish side with 20 minutes to go but his right-footed free-kick from 20 metres out skimmed the crossbar.

PSG held on to claim victory as Tuchel brought on midfielder Ander Herrera for Di Maria during the final 10 minutes. Next for PSG is a trip to Club Brugge, who drew 2-2 at Real Madrid earlier in the day despite leading 2-0 at half-time at the Santiago Bernabeu. Galatasaray host the Spanish giants on October 22. — AFP

## Cardiff to appeal FIFA ruling over Emiliano Sala transfer payment

LONDON: Cardiff said yesterday they would appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport against FIFA's decision to make them pay Nantes the first instalment of the transfer fee for Emiliano Sala. The world governing body this week ordered Cardiff to pay French club Nantes an initial six million euros (\$6.5 million) in their dispute over the payment of the transfer fee for Sala.

The amount corresponds to the first instalment of the 17 million-euro fee Cardiff had agreed to pay Nantes before the Argentine, 28, died in a plane crash in January while travelling to join his new club.

The Championship club, who argue that Sala's revised contract was not signed and that his playing registration was not complete, said they were "extreme-

ly disappointed" by the FIFA Players' Status Committee's decision.

"It would appear the committee has reached its conclusion on a narrow aspect of the overall dispute, without considering the full documentation presented by Cardiff City to FIFA," the statement said.

"Nevertheless there remains clear evidence that the transfer agreement was never completed in accordance with multiple contractual requirements which were requested by Nantes, thereby rendering it null and void."

"We shall be appealing to CAS (Court of Arbitration for Sport) in order to seek a decision which considers all of the relevant contractual information and provides clarity on the full legal situation between our two clubs." — AFP

## Ronaldo scores as Juventus brush aside Leverkusen

TURIN: Cristiano Ronaldo scored his first goal in this season's Champions League, sealing a 3-0 win for Juventus over Bayer Leverkusen in their Group D game in Turin on Tuesday. Ronaldo blasted in the third goal in the 89th minute to extend his record to 127 strikes in the competition to add to Gonzalo Higuain and Federico Bernardeschi's earlier efforts.

Juventus move top of their section, level on four points with Atletico Madrid, who defeated Lokomotiv Moscow 2-0 in Russia. The Italian champions had been held 2-2 by the Spaniards at the Wanda Metropolitano in their opener.

"We had a good match against a team who love possession and are not easy to deal with," said Juventus coach Maurizio Sarri. "They took a lot of energy out of us in the first half. After the break, they slowed down a little and we took control."

Leverkusen face an uphill battle after their shock 2-1 defeat at home against Lokomotiv Moscow and are rooted to the foot of the table. "It was a clear defeat," said Leverkusen coach Peter Bosz. "We played well in the first half even if we didn't have chances, and then we made the mistake which led to the first goal."

"It's the difference between a team who has experience in the Champions League and one that is beginning its journey at this level." Juventus next host Lokomotiv and Leverkusen travel to Atletico on October 22.

Sarri opted for Higuain and Bernardeschi up front alongside five-time Ballon d'Or winner Ronaldo. Leverkusen were struggling from the outset after losing captain Lars Bender in the warm-up to a thigh problem, with defender Mitchell Weiser stepping in.

The Germans showed little to threaten the hosts, with Lucas Alario shooting over on three minutes with what would be their best chance of the game. The breakthrough came for Juventus when Leverkusen defender Jonathan Tah failed to head clear Juan Cuadrado's long ball for Higuain, with the Argentine pouncing to drill home after 17 minutes. The 31-year-old Higuain, back in Turin after loan spells at AC Milan and Chelsea, had a chance for a second on 38 minutes but was denied by Leverkusen goalkeeper Lukas Hradecky. Juventus piled on the pressure after the break as Ronaldo tried unsuccessfully to pull off an overhead kick in the 55th minute.

Ronaldo then sent Higuain in behind, but although the Portuguese failed to connect with his teammate's return pass, Bernardeschi was lurking to provide the finishing touch just after an hour.

Juventus almost had a third with Hradecky failing to control the ball and almost turning it into his own net before grappling to save on the line. But the Finnish international did well to deny Ronaldo in front of goal after a Higuain charge down the flank. Welsh international Aaron Ramsey was introduced in place of Bernardeschi with Dybala replacing Higuain for the closing stages. And in the dying minutes, substitute Rodrigo Bentancur picked out Dybala who slid the ball through for Ronaldo, allowing the 34-year-old to equal Real Madrid great Raul's record of scoring against 33 different sides in the Champions League.

"It was an important match, after the draw in Madrid we had to win to get closer to the qualification," said Higuain. "Now we head to Sunday, because another battle awaits us," added the Argentine of next weekend's Serie A clash with leaders Inter Milan. — AFP