

**14** Leverkusen miss chance to top Bundesliga; Bosz fumes



**15** Pochettino named new coach of PSG, vows to 'win with style'



**15** Kane, Son spark Spurs into life amid EPL COVID gloom



## City still too good for Chelsea

COVID-hit Man City brush outclass Chelsea 3-1



LONDON: Manchester City's US goalkeeper Zack Steffen (right) catches the ball during the English Premier League football match between Chelsea and Manchester City at Stamford Bridge yesterday. — AFP

LONDON: Manchester City brushed off a series of coronavirus-related absences to outclass Chelsea 3-1 at Stamford Bridge yesterday and reassert their Premier League title challenge. Pep Guardiola's men had scored more than twice in a league game just once since their opening match of the season, but were 3-0 up by half-time thanks to goals from Ilkay Gundogan, Phil Foden and Kevin De Bruyne. Victory lifts City to within four points of Liverpool and Manchester United at the top of the table, but with a game in hand on both to come.

Chelsea were expected to challenge for the title themselves after a £220 million (\$300 million) spending spree in the transfer market, but a run of one win in six games has left them down in eighth, seven points off the pace having played a game more than the leaders. Roman Abramovich has dismissed plenty of Chelsea managers in the past for similar spells of form and the pressure in mounting on Frank Lampard to prove he can mould a talented squad of individuals into a team capable of competing with the

standards set by Liverpool and City in recent seasons.

City were without Ederson, Kyle Walker, Ferran Torres and Gabriel Jesus due to a coronavirus outbreak that led to their clash at Everton on Monday being postponed. The visitors were unable to fill their bench due to a depleted squad, but Benjamin Mendy was named as a substitute despite City launching an investigation into his breach of coronavirus restrictions by hosting a New Year's Eve party. Goalkeeper Zack Steffen was handed his Premier League debut, but was barely tested despite Lampard being able to start £150 million trio Christian Pulisic, Timo Werner and Hakim Ziyech together in attack for the first time.

City took 10 minutes to find their feet in an unfamiliar formation with De Bruyne the most advanced forward in between Foden and Raheem Sterling. But once Guardiola's men found their rhythm, they cut Chelsea apart with an ease that will cause Lampard concern. De Bruyne fluffed City's first big chance when he fired wide from Joao Cancelo's excellent

through ball. Gundogan opened the floodgates on 18 minutes when he spun just outside the area and found the bottom corner. Three minutes later Foden doubled City's lead with a fine near post finish from De Bruyne's cross.

Guardiola had only won once in five previous visits to Stamford Bridge as Barcelona and City boss, but his side were cruising inside 35 minutes. All 10 Chelsea outfield players were caught ahead of the ball as De Bruyne released Sterling to run through on goal from inside his own half and after the England international hit the post, De Bruyne was first to react and slot home the rebound. The scoreline could have been far more embarrassing for the Blues had City been more ruthless in the final hour. Foden looped a header over when unmarked at the back post before Gundogan flicked another glorious chance wide before the break. City continued to keep the hosts chasing shadows in the second-half as Edouard Mendy tipped over Rodrigo's header, while De Bruyne fired wide from the edge of the area. —AFP

### Leicester survive Newcastle 'war'

NEWCASTLE: Brendan Rodgers said Leicester had survived a "war" as they climbed to third place in the Premier League with a 2-1 win against Newcastle yesterday. Rodgers' side struck through James Maddison and Youri Tielemans in the second half at St James' Park. Andy Carroll reduced the deficit with his first goal for Newcastle in over 10 years. Leicester were good value for their first win in three league games as they extended their unbeaten run to four matches. The Foxes are one point behind leaders Liverpool, who face Southampton on Monday, and Rodgers was pleased with the way they held firm after Carroll set up a tense finale.

"I'm delighted with that. It was always going to be a tight game. We

had some really good moments in the first half but just failed with that final ball," Rodgers said. "In the second half we stayed strong defensively. Once we got the first goal it opened it up a little bit. It became a war in the last 10 minutes. "The squad has been tremendous in terms of how they have coped with European and our league efforts. There is still a long way to go but it's a great start for us."

After missing out on a top four finish on the final day of last season, Leicester look well equipped to challenge for Champions League qualification and could even pose a threat to Liverpool's title defence. Having taken maximum points from a visit to Newcastle for the fifth successive season, Leicester have now won seven of their nine away league games this term. Newcastle are without a win in six games in all competitions as the pressure mounts on Magpies boss Steve Bruce. —AFP

### Lautaro sends six-goal Inter top of Serie A

MILAN: Lautaro Martinez scored a hat-trick as Inter Milan kicked off 2021 in blistering form with a 6-2 win over lowly Crotone yesterday to take top spot in Serie A. Inter claimed an eighth consecutive league win to move two points ahead of AC Milan who traveled to mid-table Benevento with champions Juventus hosting Udinese. Martinez and Romelu Lukaku proved decisive for Inter, the strike duo being involved in five goals with midfielder Arturo Vidal hauled off at half-time after conceding a penalty in a woeful display.

Antonio Conte's side had been pegged back 2-2 at the break with Nicolo Zanellato scoring first with a 12th-minute header for the rock bottom Calabrians with the worst attack in the league. But Martinez picked up a Lukaku cross to pull the hosts level eight minutes later. Martinez had a role



MILAN: Inter Milan's Argentine forward Lautaro Martinez (left) shoots to score an equalizer during the Italian Serie A football match Inter Milan vs Crotone yesterday. — AFP

in Inter's second just after half an hour when Crotone defender Luca Marrone turned the ball into his own net under pressure from the Argentina forward. Vladimir Golemic put the sides level six minutes later after Vidal fouled Arkadiusz Reca, with a furious Conte replacing the Chilean with Stefano Sensi at the break.

"Arturo certainly needs to work and keep his head down, and pedal because he has room for significant improve-

ment," said Conte of the former Juventus and Barcelona midfielder. "Here, nobody has a guaranteed place, and he needs to prove that he deserves to play. The up-and-down nature of his performances is something we can't afford to continue." Martinez restored the lead for Inter before the hour connecting with a Marcelo Brozovic through ball following a Lukaku back-heel, and headed in his third with 12 minutes to go off a rebound. —AFP

### India ex-captain Ganguly suffers heart attack

KOLKATA: Indian cricket chief Sourav Ganguly was under observation in hospital yesterday after a successful heart operation, doctors said, as well wishes including from the prime minister continued to pour in for the former star and captain. The 48-year-old, who heads the country's powerful cricket board, suffered a heart attack during his morning exercise session on Saturday.

He was immediately taken to Woodlands hospital in Kolkata, the capital of West Bengal state, where doctors found three blockages in his arteries, one of which needed a stent implant. "Sourav Ganguly is now stable and without support of oxygen after undergoing angioplasty," doctor Saroj Mandal told reporters outside the hospital. "Genetic history and long-term stress and other factors may have caused the disease," Mandal said, adding that a seven-member medical team is monitoring his health.



Sourav Ganguly

A crowd of well-wishers remained outside the hospital waiting for updates about "dada", a term used endearingly for an elder brother in Bengali. Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to Ganguly yesterday to inquire about his health and wish him a quick recovery, the hospital said. India's record-breaking batsman Sachin Tendulkar tweeted his support. "Just got to know about your ailment Sourav. Hope each passing day brings you closer to a full and speedy recovery! Get well soon," the cricket legend wrote. —AFP