

Arsenal focus on Atalanta ahead of Man City showdown

AFP – Jorginho has challenged Arsenal to use their Champions League opener against [Atalanta](#) on Thursday as a springboard to success in their crucial clash with [Manchester City](#) this weekend.

Mikel Arteta's side are in the midst of a demanding seven days that started with a 1-0 victory at Tottenham in the north London derby last Sunday.

The Gunners now head to Atalanta to kick off their European campaign before Sunday's vital trip to Premier League champions City.

Arsenal's daunting schedule was made trickier by the absence against Tottenham of key midfielders [Declan Rice](#) and [Martin Odegaard](#) due to suspension and injury, respectively.

But, with Jorginho filling in admirably for Rice, Arsenal ground out their third win in four league games this term thanks to Gabriel Magalhaes' second-half header.

Rice should be back in the starting line-up against Atalanta, but Arteta is still waiting to discover when skipper Odegaard will be able to return from the ankle problem he suffered on [Norway](#) duty.

The fixture list has not been kind to Arsenal, with City having an extra 24 hours rest before the seismic showdown at the Etihad Stadium.

City face [Inter Milan](#) at home on Wednesday, with Arsenal having to travel to [Italy](#) for their game a day later.

However, Italian veteran Jorginho believes a positive performance and result at Atalanta will pave the way for more

of the same against City.

“If you want to achieve big things you need to have the mentality of trying to win every single game,” he said.

“That is what we need to do and that is what we want to do. You have to keep believing in what you are doing.

“We are doing that and we keep working hard to improve and doing right the things. We are on the right path and we need to keep it going.”

– ‘Thick skin’ –

Already two points behind leaders City, Arteta’s men cannot afford a defeat in Manchester and will not want to open the revamped Champions League with a loss.

Arsenal can take heart from an impressive record on the road in 2024.

The triumph at Tottenham was Arsenal’s 10th win in 11 away league games, with their only draw coming at City in March.

Eliminated from the Champions League quarter-finals by [Bayern Munich](#) last season, Arsenal hope to go even deeper in the tournament this term.

The north Londoners have never won the Champions League and, while a first English crown since 2004 remains their priority, success in Europe would be further evidence of Arteta’s remarkable transformation of a club in turmoil when he arrived in 2019.

Arteta, who recently signed a long-term contract extension, has only the 2020 FA Cup to show for his Arsenal overhaul, but the Spaniard is convinced his side have the character to win more major honours.

“We have people that are hard and have thick skin. They love

the game and we love winning,” he said.

“In order to love the game and win you have to do things that people call ugly. Enjoying those ugly things is a big compliment to this team right now.”

Atalanta will pose an intriguing first hurdle for Arsenal after their unexpected Europa League triumph last season.

Gian Piero Gasperini’s side bounced back from successive Serie A defeats against [Torino](#) and Inter Milan with a 3-2 win against [Fiorentina](#) on Sunday.

“It will be a really tough and physical game,” Jorginho said.

“They are a very physical team. It is not going to be easy, and it will be a hot atmosphere in Italy. We need to be ready for another battle.”

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