

Man City in Brighton test as Arsenal face Chelsea clash

AFP- Manchester City face a crucial clash with Brighton as the pressure mounts in the race to finish in the Premier League's top four.

Arsenal's faint title hopes will be effectively over if they lose to Chelsea, while Wolves can take a giant step towards securing their survival.

AFP Sport looks at three key talking points ahead of the weekend's action:

Dias urges Man City to push for top four

Ruben Dias has challenged spluttering Manchester City to make one last push to salvage their miserable season by qualifying for the Champions League.

City slumped to their ninth league defeat of the season last weekend, losing 1-0 at third-placed Nottingham Forest.

It is the first time since 2019-20 that City, champions in the last four seasons before this term, have suffered so many losses in a top-flight campaign.

With City languishing in fifth place, Portugal centre-back Dias knows Pep Guardiola's men cannot afford many more slip-ups as they aim to reach the Champions League for the 15th successive season.

Finishing in the top four guarantees a place in Europe's elite club competition, while fifth place could be enough depending on the results of the remaining English clubs in continental action this season.

Trailing two points behind fourth-placed Chelsea and sitting

only one point ahead of seventh-placed Brighton, who visit the Etihad Stadium on Saturday, City have no margin for error.

“Well, we’re not going to be thinking about ifs and maybes. We know our target. It is very clear,” Dias said.

“We have got to push and we have to do our best. We’re not used to playing every week as well, but that is a different challenge for us. We need to make it.”

Arsenal in last-chance saloon

Arsenal’s slender chance of winning the Premier League will be all but over if they fail to beat London rivals Chelsea on Sunday.

The second-placed Gunners’ run of three consecutive league games without a win has effectively gift-wrapped the title for Liverpool.

Having finished as runners-up to Manchester City in 2023 and 2024, Arsenal’s likely failure to win a first title in 21 years is a bitter blow.

But Arsenal still have a Champions League quarter-final against Real Madrid to prepare for, and boss Mikel Arteta won’t give up on their title challenge until it is mathematically impossible to catch Liverpool.

With Liverpool in League Cup final action against Newcastle this weekend, Arsenal can close the gap on the runaway leaders to 12 points if they win their game in hand when Chelsea visit the Emirates Stadium.

Arsenal’s midweek draw against PSV Eindhoven in the Champions League last 16 second leg booked their blockbuster clash with Real and allowed Arteta to rest a host of key players.

Martin Odegaard, William Saliba, Gabriel Martinelli, Thomas Partey and Leandro Trossard will all be refreshed for the

clash with fourth-placed Chelsea, who are aiming to move a step closer to Champions League qualification.

Wolves show teeth in survival battle

Wolves boss Vitor Pereira believes his relegation fighters have the spirit required to extend their seven-year stay in the top flight.

Pereira's side head to bottom-of-the-table Southampton on Saturday looking for a victory that would edge them closer to survival.

Fourth-bottom Wolves are six points above the relegation zone entering a defining moment in their survival scrap.

The Southampton game is followed by a home clash with West Ham, who are just one place above them, and a trip to third-bottom Ipswich.

A significant points haul from those three matches would leave Wolves on the verge of banishing their relegation fears.

Confident they are up to the task, Pereira said: "I'm proud of my players. The spirit, the quality, the confidence. I'm very happy with my team and very confident in the future."

Fixtures:

Saturday (1500 GMT unless stated)

Everton v West Ham, Ipswich v Nottingham Forest, Manchester City v Brighton, Southampton v Wolves, Bournemouth v Brentford (1730)

Sunday (1330 GMT unless stated)

Arsenal v Chelsea, Fulham v Tottenham, Leicester v Manchester United (1900)

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