

I want to see the reaction from us next season: Kompany

City eye EPL dynasty after relentless march to title

LONDON, United Kingdom, April 16, (AFP): Manchester City are setting their sights on establishing a dynasty in English football and finally conquering Europe after their relentless march to a third Premier League title in seven seasons.

Pep Guardiola's men have already matched one of the greatest sides of the Premier League era by winning the league with five games to spare to equal Manchester United's record in 2000/2001.

The Premier League points and goals records are also likely to be smashed but the true test of whether City deserve their status in the list of all-time greats will be what comes next.

"I want to see the reaction from us next season as I've never been able to retain a title," said club captain Vincent Kompany, a three-time Premier League winner.

Since City's Abu-Dhabi owners started pouring in hundreds of millions to the club's coffers a decade ago, Manuel Pellegrini and Roberto



Guardiola

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Mancini have also delivered titles but never sustained success.

This year's title triumph is just the fifth in the club's history, putting them well behind fierce rivals United, with a record 20 titles, but Guardiola's side are now the pre-eminent team in the city and in the country.

"Retaining a title is the next step and City were not in the right state of mind," said United's former boss Alex Ferguson after retiring in 2013, having won the title back from City.

"When I won the league for the first time in 1993, I didn't want my team to slacken off. The thought appalled me."

Fortunately for City, they now have a coach as relentlessly dedicated to winning as Ferguson was.

Guardiola has now won seven league titles in nine seasons as a senior coach in three countries after conquering La Liga and the Bundesliga with Barcelona and Bayern Munich on multiple occasions.

The workaholic Catalan's eye for detail in changing the culture at City has gone as far as dictating to the millimetre how long the grass should be at the club's many training pitches and turning off the Wi-Fi at City's Etihad campus to foster interaction between team-mates.

Guardiola's intensity can provoke burnout in himself and his players. He required a sabbatical after four draining years at Barcelona during which he won 14 trophies and he

Blue Jackets extend series lead

Crosby dominates as Pens pound Flyers

WASHINGTON, April 16, (AP): Matt Calvert scored 12:22 into overtime, Sergei Bobrovsky made 54 saves and the Columbus Blue Jackets overcame two goals from Alex Ovechkin beat the Washington Capitals 5-4 on Sunday night to take a 2-0 lead in the first-round playoff series.

Calvert's goal held up after the NHL situation room reviewed the play for a possible off-side. Calvert was just inside when Josh Anderson brought the puck into the zone.

Columbus heads home for Games 3 and 4 on Tuesday and Thursday two victories away from advancing to the second round for the first time in franchise history. The Blue Jackets stunned the Metropolitan Division-champion Capitals with back-to-back overtime wins.

Cam Atkinson scored twice, Anderson had a goal at even strength and Zack Werenski added one on the power play for the Blue Jackets, who have the odds on their side. In Stanley Cup playoff history, 86.4 percent of teams that take a 2-0 lead in a best-of-seven series have gone on to win it.

Jay Beagle and TJ Oshie also scored for Washington, with Oshie tying it on a power play with 3:35 left in the third period.



Dion Phaneuf #3 of the Los Angeles Kings battles Tomas Nosek #92 of the Vegas Golden Knights for a loose puck during the first period in Game Three of the Western Conference First Round during the 2018 NHL Stanley Cup Playoffs at Staples Center on April 15, in Los Angeles, California. (AFP)

only ever planned to stay at Bayern for three seasons.

His City contract expires at the end of next season but the club are confident he will extend for at least one extra year.

"City hope to tie Guardiola to a new contract," wrote Oliver Kay in The Times.

"They are delighted with his impact, but winning the title was just one part of the mission ... they want to be champions again and again, establishing them as the dominant force in the Premier

League."

Backed by a level of spending never seen before in English football, Guardiola has amassed a squad capable of dominating for years to come.

Of the more than 500 million spent in transfer fees alone during Guardiola's reign, the vast majority has been on players under the age of 25 in Gabriel Jesus (21), Leroy Sane (22), John Stones (23), Benjamin Mendy (23), Bernardo Silva (23), Aymeric Laporte (23) and Ederson (24).

"There will always be those who see the money spent as detracting from the beauty but Guardiola has also improved players and he has blended them to accentuate their assets," said Jonathan Wilson in the Guardian. "Yes, money has been spent but City have got full value for it."

Seven trophies have been won since Sheikh Mansour's takeover, but one glaring one is missing.

Even Guardiola's record-breakers have fallen short again in the Champions League, losing 5-1 on

aggregate in the quarter-finals to Jurgen Klopp's Liverpool.

"Sooner or later it's going to happen," insisted Guardiola, who has consistently stated City's need to grow gradually on the European stage, having made the Champions League semifinals just once in their history.

Guardiola has taken City back to the pinnacle of the English game. Keeping them there and finally breaking through their Champions League glass ceiling is now the challenge.

Penguins 5, Flyers 1

In Philadelphia, Sidney Crosby had a goal and three assists and Matt Murray stopped 26 shots to help Pittsburgh silence a raucous Philadelphia crowd and take a 2-1 lead in the first-round playoff series.

Two of the so-called fiercest rivals in the NHL have provided three lopsided games: Pittsburgh's 7-0 win in Game 1 and Philadelphia's 5-1 victory in Game 2 could about qualify as nail-biters in this series.

Game 4 is Wednesday night in Philadelphia.

Crosby scored his fourth goal of the series in the first period, and Derick Brassard, Evgeni Malkin and Brian Dumoulin scored in the second to make it 4-0. Malkin and Dumoulin scored 5 seconds apart.

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Justin Schultz made it 5-1 in the third on Pittsburgh's third power-play goal of the game.

Brian Elliott, yanked in Game 1, had another rough outing and might need to borrow fellow Wells Fargo Center tenant Joel Embiid's black mask to have a better look at the puck.

Wild 6, Jets 2

In St Paul, Minn., Mikael Granlund and Zach Parise scored power-play goals in the first period for the spark Minnesota was missing on the road, and the Wild used a four-goal second to roar back against Winnipeg in the Western Conference series.

The Wild will try to tie the best-of-seven series 2-2 in Game 4 at home Tuesday night.

Jordan Greenway scored his first NHL goal just 20 seconds after Eric Staal sent a wrist shot past a struggling Connor Hellebuyck, who was pulled for Steve Mason at the second intermission.

Matt Dumba and Marcus Foligno bookended the furious middle frame with goals for the Wild, who won a postseason home game for only the second time in their last nine contests.



Paris Saint-Germain's players celebrate after winning the French L1 football match between Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and Monaco (ASM) on April 15, at the Parc des Princes Stadium in Paris. Paris Saint-Germain won the match and claimed their seventh French League title. (AFP)

FIFA to begin Morocco World Cup inspection

South Africa backs Morocco for 2026 WC

JOHANNESBURG, April 16, (Agencies): South African soccer leader Danny Jordaan has promised Morocco "unqualified support" to host the 2026 World Cup in a contest against a combined North American bid.

The South African federation said Monday that Jordaan assured a visiting Morocco bid delegation "he will personally lobby" African officials ahead of the scheduled vote in Moscow on June 13.

Morocco is up against a United States-Canada-Mexico bid to stage the continent's second World Cup South Africa hosted in 2010, after beating Morocco and Egypt in a vote.

That South African bid is being investigated by the US Department of Justice for a suspicious \$10 million payment to FIFA voters in the North American region. In indictments published by the justice department in 2015, two of the listed "co-conspirators" are South African soccer officials who are not identified.

Now, Morocco is competing against the Americans to co-host the 48-team tournament. Up to 207 FIFA member federations will vote at their congress on the eve of the World Cup in Russia.

North American bid leaders targeted the 14-member southern African soc-

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cer body COSAFA at a February meeting in Johannesburg.

Meanwhile, FIFA inspectors arrived in Morocco on Monday ahead of a three-day assessment of the north African country's ability to host the 2026 World Cup, the local bid committee said.

The five-member FIFA Task Force will begin its inspection on Tuesday, visiting stadiums, training facilities, fan sites and media centres.

Morocco is offering FIFA and the global football family an innovative

and compact concept to ensure operational efficiency, outstanding profitability and a lasting legacy in Morocco and Africa, said the bid committee's president, Moulay Hafid Elalamy in a statement.

The World Cup in Morocco would not only be a source of pride but also a great catalyst for development.

The only other bid is a joint one from the United States, Mexico and Canada.

Due to FIFA's intention to spread the hosting rights for the World Cup more evenly across the globe, European and Asian countries were not allowed to bid for 2026 this year's World Cup will be in Russia with the next one in 2022 in Qatar.

A decision on the 2026 hosts is due to be made on June 13 at the FIFA Congress, the day before the World Cup begins in Russia.

Should neither candidate be chosen, bidders from Europe and Asia will be invited to submit their proposals.

There is a solid tool for the future: Emery

'Champs PSG must keep building'

PARIS, France, April 16, (AFP): Paris Saint-Germain coach Unai Emery said the club must continue to strengthen as the French champions try to transform their dominance at home into success in the Champions League.

Angel Di Maria and Giovanni Lo Celso scored twice as PSG secured a fifth Ligue 1 title in six seasons on Sunday with a 7-1 rout of last year's champions Monaco.

Unai Emery's team blew Monaco away in a first-half blitz that saw PSG score four times in 14 minutes at the Parc des Princes with Lo Celso striking either side of goals from Edinson Cavani and Di Maria.

Rony Lopes pulled a goal back for Monaco as he scored for the eighth game in a row, but Di Maria

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added a fifth before Radamel Falcao turned into his own net and Julian Draxler struck late on as PSG romped to the club's seventh championship.

"Other teams have more titles than us. Monaco, Nantes, Saint-Etienne, Marseille, Lyon ... but we must keep on building," Emery, who is likely to be replaced in the summer, told Canal+.

"There is a solid tool for the future, to remain number one in France and become that elsewhere with patience and hard work."

With a fifth successive League Cup already won, PSG completed the second leg of a domestic treble — they are also through to the French Cup semifinals — and could yet break their record 96-point haul from the 2015-16 campaign.

PSG also became the first team in Europe's top leagues this season to reach 100 goals on a night they were without the injured Neymar and Kylian Mbappe, the teenager left on the bench after a bout of illness.

But a second successive last 16 exit in the Champions League means heads will roll at the end of this season in preparation for another attempt to muscle in among Europe's elite.

"That defeat (to Real Madrid) hurt us but we continued to work with the players, the staff and the president who is always at our side," said PSG captain Thiago Silva.

"It was a difficult moment but I think in the end it's a good season. We have taken back our title but we must continue to work, we have a French Cup semifinal (against Caen) on Wednesday."

Monaco arrived in Paris unbeaten on their last eight league visits to the capital but any prospect of them prolonging PSG's wait for the title quickly eroded.

Kamil Glik's absence in the heart of the visiting defence was acutely felt as Lo Celso started the move that resulted in the opening goal on 14 minutes, sauntering into the box to tap in a Dani Alves cross.

While Cavani's second half of the campaign has proved less prolific than the blistering spell that yielded 19 goals before Christmas, the Uruguayan bagged his league-best 25th goal with a powerful header from a Yuri Berchiche cross.

Cavani then released Di Maria with a superb hooked pass from inside his own half and the Argentine raced clear before lifting an exquisite chip over the advancing Danijel Subasic.

Javier Pastore supplied Lo Celso to head in PSG's fourth on 28 minutes and Monaco suffered further misfortune when France international Djibril Sidibe was stretched off with a leg injury, a worrying sign for Didier Deschamps ahead of the World Cup.

Monaco briefly held up the onslaught as Lopes turned home an Alamy Toure cross seven minutes before half-time for the in-form Portugal international's 13th goal this term.

But PSG continued to attack at will and Pastore's nonchalant assist for Di Maria allowed the winger to grab his second of the game on 59 minutes.

The hosts were gifted another goal when Falcao's attempt to clear a corner went horribly wrong, summing up Monaco's misery as the ball looped beyond Subasic on 77 minutes.

Germany international Draxler rounded out the demolition, firing home via a deflection as PSG clinched the title at home for the first since 1994 while shattering Monaco's 17-match unbeaten run.

Monaco later tweeted that they would reimburse the fans who had made the fruitless trip to the capital.



Paris Saint-Germain's French midfielder Adrien Rabiot (left), vies for the ball with Monaco's Malian defender Alamy Toure during the French L1 football match between Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and Monaco (ASM) on April 15, at the Parc des Princes Stadium in Paris. (AFP)