

Manchester Derby Offers Chance To Salve Wounds, Alexander Isak Set For Liverpool Debut

Manchester City will be desperate to avoid a third successive defeat when they face neighbours Manchester United as the Premier League returns this weekend, with Alexander Isak set for his Liverpool debut. City boss Pep Guardiola and United manager Ruben Amorim are both under intense pressure just three games into the season while champions Liverpool boast the top division's only 100 per cent record. Elsewhere, following the international break, Ange Postecoglou is back in management with Nottingham Forest, just three months after he was sacked by Tottenham.

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

Manchester derby can heal wounds

The Manchester derby at the Etihad Stadium pits two troubled sides against each other, both of whom have just one win from three matches.

Manchester City's consecutive defeats against



Tottenham and Brighton have raised questions about Guardiola's expensive overhaul of his side after last season's third-place finish.

Guardiola's problems have hardly eased in the two weeks since City blew the lead at Brighton, with Egypt forward Omar Marmoush ruled out of Sunday's derby with a knee injury.

Rayan Cherki and Mateo Kovacic remain sidelined and there are also questions over the fitness of John Stones, Rayan Ait-Nouri, Rico Lewis, Nico O'Reilly and

Abdukodir Khusanov, who all withdrew from international duty this week.

Manchester United needed a last-gasp penalty from Bruno Fernandes after another error-strewn display against Burnley as they finally clinched their first win of the season.

That dramatic victory came after Amorim's team were beaten by Arsenal, drew with Fulham and suffered a humiliating League Cup exit at fourth-tier Grimsby.

Liverpool on hot streak Isak says not everyone has the "whole picture" of

the circumstances behind his record-breaking move to Liverpool, but Arne Slot's vision for the former Newcastle striker will start to become clear against Burnley on Sunday.

Liverpool paid a British-record £125 million (\$169 million) to finally lure Isak to Anfield on transfer deadline day after a prolonged pursuit of the Sweden star, whose determination to push through the move antagonised Newcastle fans.

Having boldly declared his intention to create

"history" at Liverpool, the 25-year-old trained with his new teammates for the first time this week and is expected to make his debut at Turf Moor.

Reds boss Slot has an embarrassment of riches in attack after a spending spree and it will be fascinating to see how he fits Isak into a forward line already featuring Mohamed Salah, Florian Wirtz, Hugo Ekitike and Cody Gakpo.

Chasing a record 21st English crown, Liverpool are already top of the table again with three successive victories, making Isak's arrival on Merseyside a daunting proposition for their title rivals.

Postecoglou in Forest hot seat

Just three months after he was unceremoniously sacked by Tottenham, Postecoglou will be back in north London on Saturday as the Nottingham Forest boss takes charge of his new team against Arsenal.

Postecoglou was hired by Forest this week following the dismissal of

Nuno Espirito Santo.

The engaging Australian's welcome return to the Premier League comes possibly tinged with a hint of schadenfreude.

Postecoglou was axed by Tottenham chairman Daniel Levy despite winning the Europa League last season to end the club's 17-year trophy drought, so it will not have escaped his attention that Levy was forced to step down from his role last week.

However, Forest's volatile owner Evangelos Marinakis could prove even more demanding to work for than Levy.

Nuno impressively steered Forest to their first European campaign for 30 years but paid the price for a deterioration of his relationship with Marinakis.

Marinakis immediately piled pressure on Postecoglou, who presided over Tottenham's worst top-flight finish since 1976/77 last season, as he claimed Forest were in a position to challenge for major trophies.

Athletics worlds can 'wipe away' Olympic pain, says Japan track chief



The world athletics championships in Tokyo starting Saturday can "wipe away" the painful memory of empty stands at the Olympics there four years ago, the head of Japan's athletics federation said.

The Tokyo Games, delayed a year to 2021 because of the pandemic, were held in strict conditions to prevent the spread of the virus, with fans shut out of most venues and athletes forced to undergo tests and social distancing.

The world championships will have no such restrictions and thousands of fans are expected to flock to Tokyo's National Stadium, which seats almost 70,000.

Japan Association of Athletics Federations president Yuko Arimori said Friday that she hoped the competition would remind people of the value of sport.

"Sport isn't just about the athletes but about everyone getting energy from it and lifting each other up, and I think that kind of energy is important," she said.

"I think this event will help us wipe away the emotions we felt back then and remind us what sport should be like. "Athletics is the mother of sports and I want people to take inspiration from it."

Arimori, a former marathon runner who won silver at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics and bronze in Atlanta four years later, became emotional as she considered the competition's meaning.

"I'm so happy that the world's media, top athletes from around the globe and kids and fans from all over Japan will come to this stadium to support athletics and give us their energy," said Arimori, she said.

World Athletics president Sebastian Coe said sport had "a unique ability" to bring people together.

"It's the most potent social worker in all our communities," he said. "It does it most effectively, probably more effectively than any other sector."

"It has the ability to touch the hearts and minds and lifestyles of young people in the way very few other sectors do."

Canelo vs Crawford Promises To Be 'Biggest Fight' In Las Vegas History



Even in a city known for staging some of boxing's greatest fights, the Canelo Alvarez-Terence Crawford match stands nearly alone. It will be the first fight at 5-year-old Allegiant Stadium, the Saturday night showdown underscoring the magnitude of an event that will have implications for both boxers trying to further strengthen their Hall of Fame-worthy careers.

Alvarez (63-2-2, 39 knockouts), as is typically the case when the Mexican great fights in his boxing home of Las Vegas, will have the vast majority of the crowd behind him as he defends his unified super middleweight championship. The 35-year-old is a -175 favorite at

BetMGM Sportsbook.

"This fight for me is big," Alvarez said. "It's one of the biggest fights of my career for sure."

Crawford (41-0, 31 KOs) is moving up two weight classes, and the 37-year-old from Omaha, Nebraska, already has captured two unified division titles. No male fighter has accomplished that feat in three classes.

"This is a massive fight," Crawford said. "It's talked about all over the world right now."

It's certainly a talking point in Las Vegas.

The city known as the "Fight Capital of the World" is used to hosting big-time matches, but there was no stadium like Allegiant to house some of

the great bouts of the past.

Resorts such as Caesars Palace's outdoor arena, The Mirage and Las Vegas Hilton hosted some of the more notable fights in 1980s and 1990s before giving way to MGM Grand Garden Arena and then T-Mobile Arena.

Top Rank matchmaker Bruce Trampler, who was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 2010, has booked many of those matches, but he's not involved with this one.

UFC CEO and President Dana White and Riyadh Season are promoting this card. "I think it's right up there with the great fights in Las Vegas history," Trampler said. "You've got two champions fighting. There's a lot of storylines — Crawford moving up in weight, Canelo hoping to cement his legacy. But beyond all that, on paper it's a tremendous matchup. It's two contrasting styles, two contrasting fan bases. It's got all the ingredients."

Kevin Iole, who covered combat sports for the Las Vegas Review-Journal and then Yahoo!

Legends hail Punjab Hockey League, ex-India forward says 'If such a platform existed during our time...'



The Punjab Hockey League (PHL), organized jointly by Roundglass and Hockey Punjab, has drawn strong support from India's hockey greats, who believe the league is reshaping the future of the sport in the country.

With a record prize money of INR 30 lakh -- the highest-ever for youth hockey in India -- and participation from teams across the nation, the PHL has set new benchmarks in grassroots development.

Former India forward and Arjuna Awardee Prabhjot Singh lauded the scale and vision of the tournament, calling it "the biggest platform for youngsters."

"This league from Roundglass and Hockey Punjab is a brilliant initiative. When such a league happens, all of these juniors get a chance. To add to it, there's a big prize money of INR 30 lakh,

too. It's a great platform for players to be ready for the big tournaments," he said.

Prabhjot, who won the Junior Hockey World Cup title in 2001 and twice won the Asia Cup, emphasised that the annual nature of the league gives youngsters clarity and motivation.

"Earlier, players didn't know what tournament to play. With this league, the players now know that it comes every year, so they prepare for it. They want to put their best foot forward here, so that it boosts their chances for selection in senior-level camps," he stated.

Prabhjot even noted that if such a league had existed in his time, it could have extended players' careers by several years. "If such a platform existed during our time, I think a player would've played for 4-5 more years."

Cy Young winners face off as Tigers, Marlins open series

The Detroit Tigers, who are closing in on their first American League Central title since 2014, are set to visit the Miami Marlins on Friday night for the start of a three-game series.

Both teams will pitch Cy Young Award winners on Friday: left-hander Tarik Skubal for Detroit and right-hander Sandy Alcantara for Miami.

Marlins first baseman Eric Waganman, who went 3-for-4 with three RBIs in a 5-0 win over the Washington Nationals on Thursday, was asked by the FanDuel Sports Network about facing Skubal.

"We'll go in knowing he has really good stuff, and he is doing what he's doing for a reason," Waganman said. "We will go out there and compete, and we know that Sandy will have our backs on the bump."

"It should be a really good matchup. It should be fun." The Marlins are on a mini roll with back-to-back wins. During those games, Miami pitchers logged 22 strikeouts and no walks.

"Walks are something



we struggled with early in the season," Marlins manager Clayton McCullough said. "We believe we have a lot of pitchers who have tremendous arm talent and high-quality stuff. But it's no good if you don't get the ball in the zone against major league hitters."

Alcantara, who won the National League Cy Young Award in 2022, missed the 2024 season due to Tommy John surgery and has struggled for much of 2025. However, he had his first sub-4.25-ERA month in August, going 2-2 with a 3.69 ERA. He gave up four runs in six innings during his first September start, a 4-2 loss to the Philadelphia Phillies on Saturday.

The 30-year-old veteran has never faced the Tigers. Detroit enters the series

with a magic number of eight to clinch the AL Central title. Any combination of eight Tigers wins and/or Cleveland Guardians losses would give Detroit the division championship.

Skubal, 28, went 18-4 with a 2.39 ERA and 228 strikeouts during his breakthrough 2024 season, registering a pitching Triple Crown by topping the league in wins, ERA and strikeouts.

He has been even better this season in terms of his ERA, again leading the AL, and he ranks second in the majors with 222 strikeouts. In his most recent outing, Skubal threw seven shutout innings and fanned six as Detroit downed the Chicago White Sox 6-0 on Saturday.

Transition Phase Is Always Challenging: Rani Rampal On Indian Women's Hockey Team



Former India captain Rani Rampal on Friday backed the current women's hockey team which is in a transition phase, saying that the discussion should not be solely about medals but also about progress. Rampal acknowledged the national team's history of highs and lows, and expressed hope for the side to win the ongoing Asia Cup in China and qualify for the World Cup next year. "Consistent performance is the most important thing. I hope the team wins the Asia Cup and qualifies for the World Cup," Rampal said on the sidelines of the Playcom Business of Sports Summit.

"Transition phases are always challenging, and we often talk about medals but not progress. We need to give much more attention to grassroots development," she added. After a high of finishing fourth in

Tokyo Olympics in 2021, India failed to qualify for the 2024 Paris Olympics, and the team is currently in a rebuilding phase with the likes of Rampal herself and Vandana Katariya having retired from the game.

Rampal recounted the Indian women's hockey team's remarkable turnaround at the Tokyo Olympics. After losing the first three games and being written off, the team's self-belief led them to win the next two matches and then defeat the formidable Australia in the quarterfinals. That performance, she noted, was a "real change" as the entire country watched hockey.

"After losing our first three games, everyone lost hope in us. But we believed, won the next two, and then defeated Australia. The whole country was watching hockey—that was the real change."

FIDE Grand Swiss: Nihal Stuns Maghsoodloo To Join Leaders; Vaishali Stays Ahead

Grandmaster Nihal Sarin halted Parham Maghsoodloo's unbeaten run with a brilliant victory to join the leaders after the seventh round of the FIDE Grand Swiss here, while R Vaishali also regained sole lead in the women's section. However, world champion D Gukesh's struggles continued as he slumped to a third straight defeat here on Thursday, this time against Turkey's Ediz Gurel, slipping out of contention and down to 10th in the live world rankings with four rounds still to play.

Vaishali, a winner in the previous edition held in Isle of Man in United Kingdom, outclassed her Chinese counterpart in the seventh round and now sits half a point behind Russian Kateryna Lagno.

The day however belonged to Sarin who came up with some exemplary display on both flanks.

The Queen pawn opening as white worked well for Nihal as he was able to



push for an advantage with little at stake and Maghsoodloo erred in calculation when it really mattered.

Nihal set up a brilliant finish with the help of his queen and knight and handed Maghsoodloo his first loss in the tournament.

With the victory Nihal shot into joint lead along with Germany's Bluebaum who defeated higher ranked Indian Arjun Erigaisi.

Vaishali also displayed her superior skills to get the better of Guo Qi.

The Petroff defense was met suitably and Vaishali, white, got a chance to go for a king side attack.

The Indian is known for her attacking skills and did not disappoint in finding

out the precise move order.

In the open section, defending champion Vidit Gujrathi came back in reckoning with a victory over French GM Marcandria Maurizzi while R Pragganandhaa also made a fine recovery to beat Maxim Rodshtein of Israel.

Important and Indian results round 7 open (Indians unless specified): Nihal Sarin (5.5) beat Parham Maghsoodloo (Iri, 5); Arjun Erigaisi (4.5) lost to Matthias Bluebaum (Ger, 5.5); Anish Giri (Ned, 5) drew with Abhimanyu Mishra (Usa, 5); Alireza Firouzja (Fra, 5) beat Nodirbek Yakubov (Uzb, 4); Nikolas Theodorou (Gre, 4.5) drew with Vincent Keymer (Ger, 4.5);

Nodirbek Abdusattorovi (Uzb, 5) beat Amini Tabatabaei (Iri, 4); Hans Moke Niemann (Usa, 5); beat Yagiz Kaan Erdpgmus (Tur, 4) Vidit Gujrathi (5); beat Marcandria Maurizzi (Fra, 4); V Pranav (4.5); drew with Jordan Van Forrest (Ned, 4.5); R Pragganandhaa (4.5) beat! Maxim Rodshtein (Isr, 3.5); Levon Aronian (4.5) drew! with Abhimanyu Puraniki (4); Ediz Gurel (4) beat Di Gukesh (3); Sanan Sjugirov (Hun, 3.5) drew with Pj Harikrishna (3.5); Raunak Sadhwani (3.5) drew with Alexand Predke (Srb, 3.5); Boris Gelfand (Isr, 3.5); drew with S L Narayanan (3.5); Jeffery Xiong (Usa, 3.5) drew with Aditya Mittal (3.5); Aryan Chopral (3) drew with Amin, Bassem (Egy, 3); Divyaj Deshmukh (3.5) beat Velimir Ivic (Srb, 3.5); Joni Ludvig Hammer (Nor, 1.5); lost to Murali Karthikeyan (2.5) Women: Antoaneta Stefanova (Bul, 5) drew with Kateryna Lagno (Fid, 5.5); R Vaishali (6) beat! Guo Qi (Chn, 4.5).

Minakshi Hooda Cruises To World Boxing Championships Semifinals, Assures India of Medal



Minakshi Hooda assured India of its fourth medal in the ongoing World Boxing Championships as she entered the semifinals even as the men's campaign ended without a podium finish for the first time in 12 years following Jadumani Singh Mandengbam's quarterfinal loss in Liverpool on Friday. The lanky Minakshi, competing in the non Olympic 48kg category, outclassed U-19 world champion Alice Pumphrey of England by unanimous decision in the quarterfinal. Preferring to box on the backfoot, she made optimum use of her long reach to dominate from the outset, landing straight shots at will while counter-attacking effectively. She will face 2023 silver medalist Lutsaikhany Altantsetseg of Mongolia in the semifinals.

With her win, Minakshi joined Jaismine Lamboria (57kg), Pooja Rani (80kg) and Nupur Sheoran (80kg)

in assuring medals for India. Jadumani bows out after valiant fight

The tenacious Jadumani Singh tested reigning world champion Sanzhar Tashkenbay of Kazakhstan to the hilt before bowing out with a 0-4 split verdict in a fast-paced men's 50kg quarterfinal. With his exit, India's 10-member men's squad finished without a medal for the first time since the 2013 edition. The disappointing campaign comes on the back of 2023's high in Tashkent, where India returned with three bronze medals through Deepak Bhorla (51kg), Mohammad Hussamuddin (57kg) and Nishant Dev (71kg). In the quarterfinal bout, the Manipuri put up an aggressive display, rushing forward to cornering the Kazakh boxer but the two-time Asian medallist landed some accurate punches to edge out Mandengbam 4-1 in the opening round.