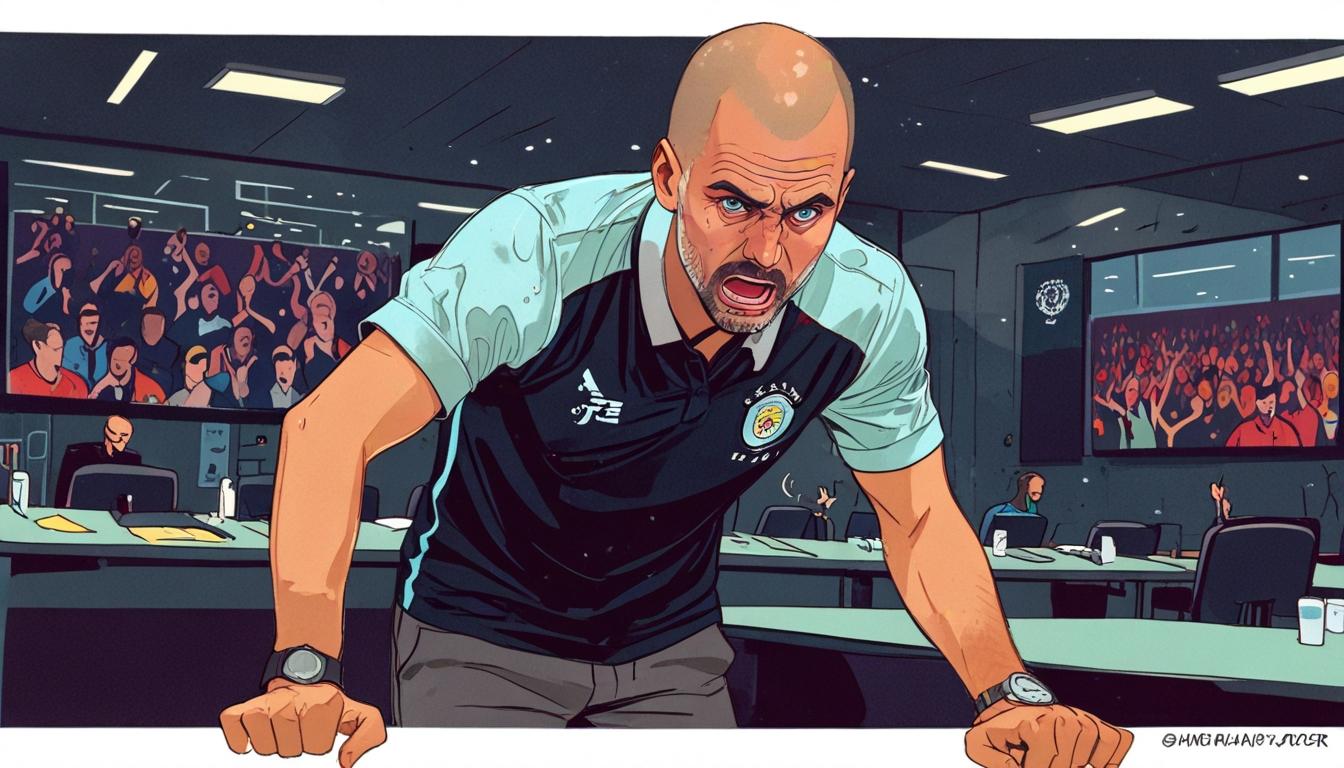
# Guardiola defends Haaland amid Carragher criticism



In a developing controversy surrounding Manchester City, manager Pep Guardiola has publicly expressed his frustration with former player and current pundit Jamie Carragher's comments regarding striker Erling Haaland. This incident arose following City’s recent exit from the Champions League, where they were defeated by Real Madrid with an aggregate score of 6-3.

Haaland, who was an unused substitute during the Madrid match on Wednesday, had informed Guardiola prior to the game that he was unfit to play due to a knee injury sustained in a prior match against Newcastle. Carragher, while analysing the match for CBS, suggested that Haaland’s absence could be linked to a fear of facing Real Madrid defender Antonio Rüdiger, referring to it as “Rüdiger-itis”. This comment provoked an immediate response from Guardiola.

Upon hearing Carragher’s statement, Guardiola appeared taken aback, pausing before responding. "Oh, God. Did he say that? Jamie Carragher said that? Oh God. Don’t laugh. I don’t know why he makes that suspicious, you know that? Did he say that Haaland didn’t want to play the game? It’s not nice – and it’s not true," he remarked. Guardiola continued to clarify that Haaland was eager to participate but simply could not due to his knee injury.

The situation grew more intense as Guardiola indicated his displeasure about Carragher questioning Haaland’s commitment. He left the media room shortly after, clearly exasperated, to avoid further aggravating the situation.

As Manchester City prepares for their upcoming Premier League match against Liverpool, the team struggles with injuries, notably missing centre-backs John Stones and Manuel Akanji, both expected to be sidelined for up to three months following injuries sustained in the match against Madrid. Meanwhile, the uncertainty surrounding Haaland's fitness adds to Guardiola’s challenges as they seek to regroup and focus on domestic competitions.

Guardiola has set the goal of finishing in the top four of the Premier League this season after the disappointing Champions League exit. Reflecting on the struggles faced, he acknowledged the team's past resilience but stated, “This amount of the problems that we have, you know I could not handle it.” He expressed a determination to secure qualification for next season's Champions League, emphasising that it would be a significant accomplishment.

As City navigates through this tumultuous period, attention turns to their forthcoming clash with Liverpool, where Haaland's participation remains unclear.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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2. <https://www.bbc.com/sport/football/65512358> - This URL would typically provide coverage of Manchester City's Champions League exit and the subsequent reactions from Guardiola and Carragher, though it is not directly available in the search results.
3. <https://www.espn.com/soccer/report/_/gameId/637130> - This URL would typically report on the match between Manchester City and Real Madrid, including the score and key events, though it is not directly available in the search results.
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