



Heat is on Mark Hughes: Manchester City boss has to lift the gloom at Eastlands

Mark Hughes led a 30-minute dressing room inquest after Manchester City lost to Spurs on Wednesday night as the club's directors left White Hart Lane stoney-faced.

There was no time for a leisurely drink with Tottenham manager Harry Redknapp as City boss Hughes picked up the pieces of a defeat that could have enormous implications.

One major betting company, William Hill, suspended betting on Hughes being the next Barclays Premier League manager to be sacked after a flurry of wagers. That may not mean anything in the short term, but nerves are beginning to fray at City.

According to informed sources, Hughes had the away dressing room locked for a long period

after City's dismal 3-0 defeat, though he still found time to say a brief farewell to rival Redknapp.

City midfielder Gareth Barry admitted tempers had been raised. 'There were a lot of hurt players in there and the lads were really at each other's throats,' said Barry. 'It's the way we've lost — we've lost a lot of pride.'

In the boardroom, the mood of the visiting party was equally sombre.

'The City directors didn't hang around long,' a Tottenham source told Sportsmail. 'They just looked totally fed up.'

According to those there, the mood around White Hart Lane was that of a club, management and playing staff who know they have to put things right very soon.

City may have lost only twice in the league this season, but a series of draws and Wednes-

day's capitulation has left the Premier League's richest club looking at a series of fixtures as important as Hughes has faced.

Sunderland are first up at on Saturday, then City entertain Stoke City on Boxing Day before travelling to Wolves on December 28.

Hughes must find a way to take at least five points — ideally it would be seven — from these games if he is not to go into an FA Cup clash at Middlesbrough and a two-legged Carling Cup semi-final against Manchester United under unbearable pressure.

Hughes has enjoyed support from the club's owners in Abu Dhabi. However, it is understood that there is some nervousness within Hughes's circle now, especially about the thoughts of City's football administrator Brian Marwood.

The former Arsenal player is an increasingly important figure

at Eastlands and is the eyes and ears of the owners in Manchester.

Defensively, City need players in January. Joleon Lescott is out for eight weeks, Kolo Toure is heading for the Africa Cup of Nations and has been poor anyway.

Micah Richards has been so bad that midfielder Vincent Kompany was nearly switched to right back a few weeks ago. Emmanuel Adebayor and Carlos Tevez have not found an understanding while Robinho may as well be sold.

He has flattered to deceive and now doesn't even do that. Hughes can only hope Craig Bellamy stays fit.

Just as they were last season, City remain a fragile outfit, often at the mercy of confidence and momentum. Hughes has tried to instil mental toughness and he has tried to buy it. It hasn't worked. It must do soon.

Aguero reckons he was born to be a Blue

The Atletico Madrid and Argentina striker expects to complete a £32million move to Chelsea in next month's transfer window.

And if he plays the game anything like the way he talks it, he will be a smash hit at Stamford Bridge.

Aguero has spoken for the first time about joining the Premier League leaders and insisted that he will quickly settle into English football.

Why? Because Chelsea's style is perfect for the all-action Argentina forward and he cannot wait to play with 'the best players in the world'.

He revealed: 'Chelsea are interested in me because they think I can play an important role for the team.'

'And I think I fit with their style of play.'

'Of course I watch the Premier League on TV and I think it is the best league in the world, along with the Spanish league.'

Blues boss Carlo Ancelotti has been tracking the 21-year-old all season and negotiations with Atletico about the transfer are almost complete.

Aguero scored a sensational volley against the Blues in their 2-2 Champions League draw in Madrid during the group stage of the competition on November 3.

Now Aguero is confident he will be scoring goals for Chelsea and ranks Didier Drogba as the best striker in the business.

That is some praise, too, coming from someone who has played alongside Fernando Torres at the Vicente Calderon.

Aguero said: 'There are a lot of very good players but, right now, the top striker in the Premier League is without doubt, Drogba.'

'After comes Fernando Torres, but Drogba is the best.'

'I am not surprised by how well Fernando has done in England though.'

'He did things here at Atletico Madrid but perhaps they didn't work for him much because there's not much space here. Things always depend on the type of player - if he's a quick player and a finisher, or a different type of player.'

'Moving to the Premier League has really worked for him and I'm delighted.'

'He's been fortunate enough to score a lot of goals. We still talk but not so often - we mainly stay in touch by texting.'

Aguero clearly believes he could become just as important a player for Chelsea as Spanish superstar Torres is for Liverpool.

But his admiration of all things English also extends to England players, as well as the foreign stars who ply their trade here.

In fact Aguero reckons Three Lions boss Fabio Capello has some of the best players on the planet at his disposal.

He said: 'The defenders I like are John Terry and Rio Ferdinand because they are both very strong and they are the

finished article.'

'They are good in the air and are tough to beat in one-on-one situations.'

'I have changed my mind on midfielders though.'

'Before I liked Cristiano Ronaldo, but now, maybe Steven Gerrard and Frank Lampard are two of the very best.'

'They have similar styles, while Javier Mascherano and Michael Essien are the best defensive midfielders.'

'But it depends on how the team plays. Liverpool are more direct, while Chelsea play the ball around more.'

Aguero admits he talks regularly with his Argentina team-mate Mascherano, who has been at Liverpool since 2007, and the subject is often Premier League football.

But while he rates the English game highly, he still thinks the best team in the world plays in La Liga.

He said: 'Mostly I speak with Javier. Generally we talk about how our two teams have been doing, though we don't criticise anyone.'

'We just talk about various aspects of the game, which is nice.'

'I think that right now, the best team is Barcelona because they have won three trophies and they are still going just as well.'

'Chelsea are a very good team with very good players. The two teams are at a very high level.'

