

Closest Derby in Years Predicted as City visit United

The Saturday lunchtime kick-off in the Premier League will see first host third at Old Trafford; a ground where City have won just once in the last 26 league matches.

United, no longer undefeated in the league following a poor outing against relegation-strugglers Wolves last weekend, are missing two key central defenders for what is being billed as one of the most crucial Manchester derbies in recent history.

Sir Alex Ferguson is almost certain to be without both Rio Ferdinand and Jonny Evans, meaning England under-21 defender Chris Smalling will join Nemanja Vidic in the heart of United's defence.

In their quest for a 19th league title, Ferguson will be hoping forward Wayne Rooney can add to his slim goal tally.

The England forward's under-par season could easily be forgotten by those in the Stretford End should he net a handful of goals against 'the noisy neighbours'.

The Manchester United manager will be able to call upon South Korean midfielder Park Ji-Sung after his international period in the Asian Cup concluded. An important cog in the big games, Park's man-marking abilities and tireless, consistent performances has helped United on more than one occasion, and his inclusion may allow Michael Carrick to be rested for their European ventures in midweek.

City have injury worries of their own; Italian striker Mario Balotelli is unlikely to feature due to a knee injury, and he could be joined on the sidelines by midfielder Nigel de Jong and defender Micah Richards.

Mancini's men returned to winning ways at the weekend with a comfortable 3-0 victory over West Brom; a result that saw the end of Roberto Di Matteo as Baggies boss.

Mancini will be hoping for new striker Edin Dzeko to prove his price tag in the Bosnian's first British derby match. His strike partner Carlos Tevez will also feature after being left out of the Argentina squad due to his behaviour. The ex-United striker has scored four times against his former employers and is fresh off the back of a birthday hat-trick.

Premier League 09/10:

Manchester United 4-3 Manchester City
Manchester City 0-1 Manchester United

Premier League 10/11:

Manchester City 0-0 Manchester United