



Manchester City Pre-Season 2026: Maresca's Era Begins With 1-1 Draw Against Inter in Hong Kong

Description

Manchester City's **Manchester City pre-season 2026 Enzo Maresca** era has officially begun and it started with a lesson in fine margins. In their first match of the pre-season Asia Tour in Hong Kong, City drew 1-1 with Inter Milan in regulation before losing 1-3 on penalties. But the scoreline told only part of the story: this was a debut that offered real encouragement for what lies ahead under the Italian head coach.

With Phil Foden wearing the armband and Elliot Anderson making his first appearance in sky blue, the visit to Hong Kong was about more than just results. It was the first real look at how Maresca intends to set up his side and there was plenty to be excited about.

Foden Leads, Anderson Impresses on His City Debut

In the absence of Erling Haaland still on an extended break following Norway's run at the World Cup Phil Foden stepped up as captain for the evening. The England international produced a lively performance in the Hong Kong heat, showing the kind of intelligent movement and quick combination play that Maresca's system demands.



Source: Manchester City FC official website (mancity.com)

The headline act, however, was **Elliot Anderson**. The 22-year-old, who joined City in a deal reported to be worth £116 million from Newcastle United, wasted no time making an impression. Anderson's driving runs from midfield and sharp pressing gave a glimpse of why Maresca made him the centrepiece of the summer's transfer business. He covered every blade of grass, drew fouls in dangerous positions and showed a composure on the ball that belied his age.

Inter Milan, meanwhile, fielded a side that included John Stones – the former City defender who made the move to the San Siro this summer. Stones' composed defensive performance will have raised a few eyebrows among the Hong Kong crowd, many of whom were familiar with his eight years at the Etihad.

Maresca's Blueprint: High Press, Quick Transitions



Source: Manchester City FC official website (mancity.com)

Enzo Maresca arrived at the Etihad with a reputation built on his work at Chelsea, where he guided the Blues to successive top-four finishes playing a possession-based, positionally disciplined style. At City, he is inheriting one of world football's finest squads but also a team that needs reshaping after Pep Guardiola's long tenure finally concluded last season.

Against Inter, Maresca's fingerprints were clearly visible: City pressed from the front, recycled possession quickly, and looked to exploit the half-spaces through midfield runners. The penalty shootout defeat was, in the context of a friendly, nothing to dwell on but Maresca will have noted

the moments where his team's structure broke down in the final third.

"I'm pleased with much of what I saw tonight," Maresca said after the match. "Pre-season is about getting the ideas across, getting minutes into legs, and beginning to build the relationships on the pitch. There is a lot of work ahead, but I'm encouraged."

City's summer transfer window has been active beyond Anderson's blockbuster arrival. The club has also moved to bolster their forward options and added depth across the squad ahead of a season in which they will compete on four fronts: the Premier League, Champions League, FA Cup, and League Cup. With Haaland's return imminent from his World Cup break, the goals are expected to flow once the season begins in earnest.

Asia Tour Continues: K-League All Stars and Atletico Madrid Next

The Hong Kong friendly was just the first leg of City's Asia pre-season programme. Next up is a clash against the K-League All Stars in South Korea on **5 August**, before the tour concludes with a glamour tie against Atletico Madrid on **9 August**. The match against Diego Simeone's side will provide a far sterner test of Maresca's tactical ideas as Atletico are one of Europe's most defensively organised outfits, and City will need their creativity and pressing game to be functioning at full capacity.

For City's growing fanbase in Asia, this tour is a rare opportunity to see some of the world's best players up close. The atmosphere in Hong Kong underscored just how popular the club has become across the region and Maresca's City, with its exciting young talents and attacking philosophy, looks set to continue that momentum.

The Premier League season begins on 22 August, and City will be hoping to have their main men – particularly Haaland – firing on all cylinders by then. If Anderson's debut is anything to go by, the Etihad faithful have a great deal to look forward to.

Looking ahead to the new campaign? Don't miss our preview of [the Premier League opening weekend 2026 and how to catch it in Singapore](#). For more on City's summer activity, see [how Manchester City began their 2026-27 pre-season build-up](#).

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