

## Chelsea Eye Club World Cup Progress as Maresca Dismisses Focus on £97M Prize

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Chelsea are on the brink of a pivotal moment in their FIFA Club World Cup campaign, but manager Enzo Maresca is adamant that the pursuit of silverware is not being driven by the tournament's eye-watering £97 million prize fund. As the Blues prepare to face Club Tunis in a crucial group-stage encounter, Maresca has made it clear that the focus remains firmly on performance, not profit.

Having suffered a 2-1 defeat to Flamengo in their second match, Chelsea now require at least a draw to progress to the knockout stage. The stakes are undeniably high, with a

potential quarterfinal against Bayern Munich or Paris Saint-Germain looming. However, Maresca has rejected any suggestion that club owners Todd Boehly and Behdad Eghbali are applying financial pressure.

“The owners haven’t spoken to me about the prize money,” Maresca told reporters. “There’s been no demand to win this tournament for financial reasons. Their focus is on building success for the club, the players, the fans, and everyone involved.”

His comments arrive at a time when the club remains under scrutiny from UEFA and the Premier League over financial fair play (FFP) compliance. With a major cash injection from the Club World Cup potentially easing those pressures, speculation has grown around the financial motivations behind Chelsea’s campaign. Yet Maresca remains focused on the footballing challenge ahead.

“As Chelsea manager, the pressure to win is always there, regardless of the tournament or the prize involved,” he added. “This is about performing at the highest level and representing the club with pride.”

Maresca will be forced to make adjustments to his starting XI, with striker Nicolas Jackson suspended following his red card against Flamengo and club captain Reece James absent from training due to illness. One possible beneficiary of the required rotation is Christopher Nkunku, who has impressed in training and may be in line for increased minutes amid recent speculation linking him with a move away.

“Christo has trained very well in the last few days,” said Maresca. “He is certainly in contention, and we’re likely to rotate the squad to manage player fatigue.”

While progression would set up a daunting next round, Maresca remains cautious and grounded.

“We’ll talk about Bayern or PSG only if and when we qualify,” he noted. “Right now, all focus is on Club Tunis. In football, underestimating any opponent can lead to unpleasant surprises. We must be fully prepared.”

As Chelsea prepare for a high-pressure fixture, Maresca’s composure and clarity offer a stabilising presence. His emphasis on values over valuation suggests a long-term vision where winning means more than just financial return, a stance that could serve Chelsea well as they navigate both the tournament and the broader challenges ahead.

