

Messi and Umtiti close to fitness for vital forthcoming games

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MADRID, Oct. 6 (Xinhua) -- FC Barcelona are working hard to recuperate injured duo of Leo Messi and Samuel Umtiti for their forthcoming games at home to Deportivo la Coruna and Manchester City.

Messi has been sidelined for two weeks after suffering a groin strain during Barca's 1-1 draw at home to Atletico Madrid, while Umtiti has been out for a similar amount of time with a ligament injury in his left knee.

Although Barca's 4-3 defeat away to Celta Vigo on Sunday was down more to defensive and goalkeeping errors than Messi's absence, the fact is that the Argentinean is a talisman for his side.

His ability to create chances around rival penalty areas and pull defenders out of position is vital to Barca and his presence seems to generate confidence among his companions.

Meanwhile before his injury Umtiti had quickly established himself as first choice central defender alongside Gerard Pique at the club and neither Javier Mascherano or Jeremy Mathieu, who scored a very avoidable own goal in Vigo, have looked comfortable in recent games.

Both Messi and Umtiti have worked on the training pitch in recent days to put the final touches to their recoveries and although Messi spent Thursday in the gym, the current international break gives him a further nine days to recover.

Barcelona entertain Deportivo in the Primera Liga on October 15 in a game they are clear favorites to win before welcoming Manchester City to the Camp Nou on October 19.

The visit of the team coached by former Barca boss, Pep Guardiola is likely to be vital in deciding which side finishes top of their qualifying group and ideally Barca coach Luis Enrique would like to see both Messi and Umtiti in his starting 11.