

Man City's Manuel Akanji Talks Elite Training, Dad Life, and His Love for Doner Kebabs

The 29-year-old Switzerland and Manchester City footballer's career has taken him from Zurich to the top of European football. In that time, he's learned a thing or two about training, mental prep and the benefits of a good takeaway

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DAVE HOWARTH - CAMERASPORT

What does a typical day of training look like for you?

I normally come into the club around 1pm. Then I'll have physio or go to the gym before training starts at 3pm. Most days, I'm only in the gym for 20 minutes. I do core exercises and stretches to ensure I'm ready for the

[training] sessions, but I don't do exercises with weights because I don't need to put more weight on. After that, I have football training on the pitch, which lasts for one hour 15 minutes.

Does your schedule change when the season becomes more demanding?

When we have three games in a week, it's really important that I let my body recover. The day after a game, we'll only do stretches and some work on a bike to ensure my body keeps moving but is slowing down from the intensity of the match the day before. We know we also have more important matches round the corner, too.

What do you do in order to make sure that you're mentally ready to play?

I talk to my mental coach before matches, just a 10- or 15-minute chat. We talk about what I can expect, what I'm looking forward to, what I need to be careful of, what my goals are.

What's the one essential item that you can't live without?

My AirPods. Before a match I listen to Afrobeats music. Sometimes it's a bit slow, so then I listen to rap music – rappers like Lil Baby, Meek Mill and Key Glock. Normally I sing a little bit to the music, maybe while I'm getting physio treatment. I have my headphones on all the time before a match – just loud enough to keep me focused.

If you could invite five famous sporting guests to dinner, who would they be?

My favourite basketball players, Russell Westbrook and LeBron James, and my favourite NFL players, Julio Jones and Travis Kelce. It's a shame that most people only know Travis as the boyfriend of Taylor Swift, because he's such a great player. And, last of all, I would invite Nick

Kyrgios. There are other tennis players I like more, but I think Nick would be good company for dinner!

Are there any other sports you enjoy?

I played tennis when I was younger. Now I play padel, which is an easy sport to learn. I play a lot with my friends in Switzerland. [Swiss goalkeeper] Yann Sommer is really strong. Our national team coach Murat Yakin is really good, too. I haven't played with any other City players yet.

You recently welcomed your third child. Do you have any tips for young dads?

Spend as much time with your kids as you can, and enjoy it while you can. My oldest one wants to play football every day and be outside all the time. I'm really happy about that.

What do you miss most about Switzerland?

My family. I can always fly back, but it's not easy with the kids. If you have one day off, I don't know if it's worth flying back to see them just for a couple of hours.

What foods do you find yourself craving when you're away from home?

Most of the things I get in Switzerland I can get here [in the UK]. But what I really like is a doner kebab. If I have a day off in Switzerland, I'll have a doner kebab with my friends. It's a special treat.

What has been your career highlight so far?

The 2022/2023 season, when we won the treble. Before [joining] Manchester City, I wasn't very used to winning trophies. But I am now