

Sports

Quadruple-chasing Liverpool reach FA Cup final, ending Man City's treble bid

LONDON: Jurgen Klopp hailed one of Liverpool's "best ever" performances as the quadruple chasers reached the FA Cup final with a "special" 3-2 win against Manchester City on Saturday. Klopp's side kept alive their bid to win all four major trophies in a single season thanks to Ibrahima Konate's opener and Sadio Mane's double at Wembley.

Liverpool were three goals up by half-time as they tore City apart with a scintillating display that Klopp rated among the very finest of his reign. City hit back with second half goals from Jack Grealish and Bernardo Silva, but it wasn't enough to stop the Reds reaching their first FA Cup final since 2012. "Absolutely proud, incredible. The first half was one of the best we ever played. We did all the right stuff, we scored in the right moments. We were outstanding. I loved each second of it," Klopp said.

"The second half started with the goal for Man City and then it opens up. The quality of City is insane. We respect City so much and it's so difficult to win against them. But because we have these boys in our dressing room we have a chance." Liverpool are embroiled in a fierce title fight with City, who are one point clear of Klopp's men at the top of the Premier League with seven games left.

They shared a pulsating 2-2 draw in Manchester in the league last weekend, and could still meet in the Champions League final. Asked if their FA Cup semifinal success could be the springboard to pip City in both the Premier League and Champions League, Klopp said: "It's not a statement, we are just in the final. I think City knew beforehand that it could be difficult against us, that's how it has been between us most of the time." While Liverpool are a step closer to football immortality,

Klopp insists the fixture congestion caused by their progress to another final will make the quadruple harder to achieve.

'Special moment'

"The quadruple talk I can't believe it. Qualifying for this final makes the quadruple even more difficult," he said. "I don't think we have a full free week before the last matchday. But we beat the strongest team in the world and that's a pretty special moment." There is no rest for Liverpool in their trophy chase as they host Manchester United on Tuesday. "In three days we play against United, who are fighting for a Champions League place. Historically it is not a friendly game," he said. "Then we play Everton, with the situation they are in it will not be a friendly game. It (the quadruple) is just incredibly unlikely but let's go for it."

Pep Guardiola's decision to field a weakened team will be second-guessed, but City's manager is adamant he was right to leave Kevin De Bruyne on the bench after the Belgian needed stitches in a foot injury. With City's treble bid over, Guardiola has to revive his fatigued players quickly if they are to hold off Liverpool in the Premier League and beat Real Madrid in the Champions League semi-finals.

"I have a lot of confidence in my players and the selection. We had a terrible time in terms of fixtures and travel. That's why we need the fresh legs," he said. "The first half we were so passive. We were scared to support our team-mates. In the second half we showed incredible pride when you talk about being tired. We had chances for extra-time. We tried to put energy in the players, but some-



LONDON: Manchester City's Dutch defender Nathan Ake heads the ball next to Liverpool's Dutch defender Virgil van Dijk during their English FA Cup semifinal match at Wembley Stadium on April 16, 2022. —AFP

times it happens. It is Liverpool."

Guardiola refused to blame Zack Steffen for City's defeat as the American keeper's mistake led to Mane scoring Liverpool's second goal. "It was an accident. Ederson was close (to doing it) in the

other game. The way we use our keepers, the way we move them around, I would say the averages, it can happen," he said. "We have four days until the next game (against Brighton). We have to recover well for the two competitions we are in." —AFP

Ronaldo hat-trick saves Man Utd as Spurs, Arsenal lose

MANCHESTER: Cristiano Ronaldo scored a hat-trick as Manchester United claimed a 3-2 win over Norwich on Saturday to take advantage of defeats for Arsenal and Tottenham in the race for a place in next season's Champions League. Spurs' winning run was brought to an abrupt halt by a 1-0 home defeat by Brighton, while the Gunners were beaten 1-0 at Southampton to slump to a third consecutive loss.

Ronaldo's 50th club hat-trick tempered a revolt among the fanbase at Old Trafford as United move above Arsenal into fifth on goal difference, three points behind Tottenham. There was unrest among the United fans before the game even began as many did not come into the stadium until the 17th minute to protest against the 17 years of the Glazer family's ownership of the club.

Those late to take their seats missed Ronaldo's first goal of the afternoon as he swept home Anthony Elanga's cross. The 37-year-old then powered home Alex Telles' corner for his 20th goal of the season despite United's struggles. However, the Red Devils' defensive problems were laid bare by the bottom-of-the-table Canaries who had scored just 20 goals in their previous 31 league games.

Kieran Dowell halved the arrears in first-half stoppage time before Teemu Pukki levelled seven minutes into the second half. David de Gea then had to produce a brilliant save to deny Pukki completing the comeback. United players were then met with chants of "you're not fit to wear the



MANCHESTER: Manchester United's Portuguese striker Cristiano Ronaldo celebrates with teammates after scoring his third goal during the English Premier League football match against Norwich City at Old Trafford on April 16, 2022. —AFP

shirt", with Paul Pogba singled out for abuse when he was substituted.

But Ronaldo had the final say when his free-kick flew through the grasp of Tim Krul 14 minutes from time to set up a huge week for United. Ralf Rangnick's men face a daunting trip to Liverpool on Tuesday before facing Arsenal next weekend. "Ronaldo has scored three very important goals for us," said De Gea. "We know we aren't playing very well but we got three points.

"Earlier in the season we would have lost this match, so let's look at it as a glass that's half-full," said Juve coach Massimiliano Allegri, who didn't comment on the bizarre sequence of events on which the match turned. Adama Soumaoro was sent off six minutes from the end for his desperate attempt to stop Morata from equalising, which after a VAR check - and Juan Cuadrado hitting the post in front of an open goal - was ruled to have happened outside the area.

In the confusion, Gary Medel became so livid with referee Juan Luca Sacchi that he was booked twice within seconds and also off the field, while Juve were baffled at how the VAR officials could have ruled Soumaoro's challenge outside the area. Bologna thought they had held out in a bizarre end to a match but Vlahovic struck for fourth-placed Juve, who are now looking over their shoulders at contenders for the final Champions League spot.

Roma can close to within three points of Allegri's side with a win at title-chasing Napoli on Monday while Fiorentina are a point behind Jose Mourinho's team with a game in hand after beating Venezia 1-0. Lazio are level with Fiorentina in seventh after Ciro Immobile snatched a 1-1 draw against Torino in stoppage time with his 25th league goal of the campaign. "We need to be more clear-headed," added Allegri. "We were missing that after we equalized because even though there were only a few minutes

substituted in the second half, with a reported injury to his right hamstring.

The 30-year-old will undergo tests on Sunday to diagnose the extent of the problem. Villarreal have 10 days before they play the first leg against Liverpool at Anfield. Moreno has endured a difficult year with injuries, having already suffered problems in October and February, when he was out for just over a month each time. "We are going to see how serious it is, but it has been a bad year for him," said Villarreal coach Unai Emery after the game. "It's been frustrating for everyone, let's see how he is."

After knocking Bayern Munich out in the Champions League quarter-finals with a surprise 1-1 draw in Munich on Tuesday, Villarreal claimed victory against a Getafe side trying to secure survival in Spain's top flight. Despite their Champions League heroics, Emery's team are adrift of the European qualification places, with this win taking them six points behind Real Sociedad in sixth.

Villarreal took the lead in the seventh minute through Moreno after Manu Trigueros' long ball over the top found Paco Alcacer, who passed across for Moreno to send a deflected

We should control the game more against Norwich at home."

Brighton halted Tottenham's charge towards the Champions League as Leandro Trossard struck a 90th-minute winner. But Antonio Conte's men were bailed out by another defeat for Arsenal as they failed to close the gap against a Southampton side that had been thrashed 6-0 by Chelsea last weekend. Brighton were Arsenal's conquerors last time out to snap a seven-game winless run. —AFP



TURIN: Bologna's Chilean defender Gary Medel attempts to tackle Juventus' Spanish forward Alvaro Morata during their Italian Serie A match on April 16, 2022 at the Juventus stadium. —AFP

left there was still enough time to win the game."

Franck Ribery believes that Salernitana can perform a miracle escape from relegation after a 2-1 win at fellow strugglers Sampdoria kept alive their hopes of staying up. Goals from Federico Fazio and Ederson in the first six minutes in Genoa were enough to take Salernitana to 19 points and continue the southern team's bid for safety after an entire season at the bottom of the league. —AFP

finish in. Nine minutes later, the visitors doubled their advantage after this time Moreno slipped in Trigueros, who guided a smart finish into the far corner. Enes Unal pulled one back for Getafe shortly after the hour mark and Unal wanted a penalty late on after a clumsy challenge from Aissa Mandi. Villarreal, though, survived to leave Getafe 15th, four points above the bottom three. Valencia had earlier suffered their first defeat in eight games at home to Osasuna, whose 2-1 win at Mestalla sees them leapfrog their opponents into ninth. —AFP

Haaland hits double as Dortmund thrash Wolfsburg

DORTMUND: Erling Haaland netted twice to end his mini dry spell as Borussia Dortmund hammered Wolfsburg 6-1 on Saturday ahead of next weekend's Bundesliga showdown against leaders Bayern Munich. Haaland, 21, who is widely tipped to leave Dortmund at the end of the season, netted twice in emphatic style having drawn a blank in his previous five games.

Haaland's performance was all the more impressive as he is carrying a leg injury. "It's getting better. He still has pain, but he showed today that he tolerates it well," said Dortmund coach Marco Rose. "It was a good performance by him in a good team display." The thumping win over mid-table Wolfsburg leaves second-placed Dortmund six points behind Bayern. Bayern, who exited the Champions League on Tuesday, are chasing a 10th straight Bundesliga title.

In spring sunshine, and in front of 79,200 fans at Signal Iduna Park, Dortmund turned on the style with five goals in a devastating 14-minute spell in the first half. Tom Rothe, 17, marked a dream Bundesliga debut when the Germany Under-19 defender headed in Dortmund's opening goal from a corner after 24 minutes. The floodgates opened with four more goals in quick succession.

Axel Witsel fired under the feet of visiting goalkeeper Koen Casteels, Manuel Akanji tapped in a free-kick and Emre Can scored with a long-range shot. The Wolfsburg defense was shredded again when Marco Reus served up a tap-in for Haaland, who applauded his teammate after netting his first goal since late January. It was the first time Dortmund held a 5-0 half-time league in Germany's top flight since April 2013.

Reus, who claimed assists for Akanji and Haaland's first goal, went close when he fired just over the crossbar. Dortmund's captain then linked with Julian Brandt to release Haaland, who hammered in his second goal to make it 6-0 after just 54 minutes. Wolfsburg grabbed a late consolation when Ridle Baku fired in the rebound after Dortmund goalkeeper Gregor Kobel's stunning save had denied Lukas Nmecha.

Boateng shines for Hertha

Veteran midfielder Kevin Prince-Boateng put in a commanding display as Hertha Berlin earned a 1-0 win at Augsburg to climb out of the bottom three. Boateng, 35, bossed the midfield as Suat Serdar scored early in the second half to give Hertha only their second win in nine games. Hertha's win pushed VfB Stuttgart, who held Mainz to a goalless away draw, down into 16th, which carries a relegation play-off at the end of the season.

Hertha host Stuttgart next weekend at Berlin's Olympic Stadium. Freiburg stay in the fight for a Champions League place next season with a 3-0 home win over Bochum. Freiburg are fifth, but only remain outside the top four on goal difference. "It would be a dream (to play Champions League), we are very close and have to fight until the end," said Freiburg winger Roland Sallai, who scored twice.

Bochum had Greek defender Konstantinos Stafylidis sent off for a dangerous tackle. The visitors' coach Thomas Reis was also shown a red card soon after for his overzealous protest and banished to the stands. Cologne later won 3-1 at Borussia Moenchengladbach where veteran striker Anthony Modeste, 34, bagged his 75th goal on his 152 appearance for the visitors. —AFP

Moreno helps Villarreal to Getafe win

MADRID: Villarreal's star striker Gerard Moreno could miss the first leg of their Champions League semifinal against Liverpool after he scored and then went off injured in a 2-1 win over Getafe on Saturday. Moreno scored one goal and then made another against Getafe before being