

Liverpool hit Leeds for six



LEEDS: Liverpool's Egyptian striker Mohamed Salah shoots to score their second goal against Leeds United at Elland Road on April 17, 2023. — AFP

LEEDS: Liverpool crushed Leeds 6-1 as Cody Gakpo's controversial opener provided the spark for the Reds' first win in five Premier League games on Monday. Jurgen Klopp's side took the lead at Elland Road when Gakpo's goal was allowed to stand despite the ball striking Trent Alexander-Arnold's arm in the build-up. It was reported the VAR official did not check the incident because it happened too far back in the move, but Leeds were furious at the perceived injustice.

Mohamed Salah rubbed salt into Leeds' wounds when he increased Liverpool's lead four minutes later before Luis Sinisterra got one back for the struggling hosts. Diogo Jota's double, another Salah strike and Darwin Nunez's late effort ensured Liverpool ended their five-game winless run in all competitions. After coming within a whisker of winning a quadruple last season, Liverpool have been reduced to scrambling to reach next season's Europa League or Europa Conference League, with the Champions League seeming out of reach.

With that target in mind, the eighth-placed Reds

are now within two points of seventh-placed Brighton. "It's the best game we've played this season from all different perspectives," Klopp said. "My favorite part was in the 92nd minute when we chased the poor boy on the ball from Leeds. The counter-pressing was the best for, I want to say, decades!"

Klopp has compared fan criticism of Liverpool potentially not making big-money transfers in the coming close-season as like a five-year-old asking for a Ferrari for Christmas. But on the evidence of this composed display and the recent fightback from two goals down to draw 2-2 with leaders Arsenal, Liverpool still have the foundations in place for a return to prominence next term.

"The second half against Arsenal was super important to us. We have to do what we did tonight again and again," Klopp said. "I hope these one-and-a-half games gives us the right sign for the end of the season. I would like to see us with the same desire and passion. That's the job, to bring it consistently."

Leeds crumbled again eight days after their 5-1

home defeat against Crystal Palace and sit just two points above the relegation zone with seven games left. Javi Gracia's team were booed off after becoming only the second club to concede five or more home goals in successive Premier League games.

Rampant Reds

After marking the 34th anniversary of the Hillsborough disaster before kick-off, Liverpool quickly seized the momentum before their dubious opener in the 35th minute. Alexander-Arnold blocked Junior Firpo's pass with his elbow before picking out Salah. When Salah passed back to Alexander-Arnold, the right-back squared for Gakpo to slot home from close range.

Leeds were fuming, only for VAR to opt against checking the incident despite their protests. Gakpo's fifth goal since signing from PSV Eindhoven in January was followed by the latest example of Salah tormenting Leeds. Salah's eighth goal in six appearances against Leeds came in ruthless fashion. Jota

was allowed to advance unchecked before slipping a pass to Salah, who finished with unerring precision.

Ibrahima Konate handed Leeds a goal in the 47th minute when the Liverpool center-back allowed himself to be dispossessed by Sinisterra on the edge of the area. Sinisterra gratefully accepted the gift as he clipped his shot over the exposed Alisson Becker. But Leeds' comeback hopes were extinguished within five minutes as Curtis Jones' raking pass picked out Jota, who drilled past Illan Meslier from just inside the area for his first league goal in 12 months.

VAR did disallow a Liverpool goal when Salah's effort was ruled out for offside against Virgil van Dijk, but the rampant Reds still bagged their fourth of the night in the 64th minute. Gakpo took Andrew Robertson's pass and teed up Salah for an emphatic finish from six yards. Jota swept in Jordan Henderson's cross after 73 minutes before Nunez put the final flourish on Liverpool's powerful performance when he controlled Alexander-Arnold's pass on his chest and fired home in the 90th minute. — AFP

Kenya double as Chebet, Obiri rule Boston Marathon

BOSTON: Evans Chebet and Hellen Obiri stormed to victory in the men's and women's races at the Boston Marathon on Monday to complete a third straight Kenyan double in the 127th edition of the long distance-running showpiece. In rainy, cool conditions, defending men's champion Chebet upstaged world record-holder Eliud Kipchoge to become the first man to defend the Boston title since Robert Kipkoech Cheruiyot's 2006-2008 hat trick.

Chebet finished in a time of 2hr 5min 54sec, with Tanzania's Gabriel Geay second in 2:06:04, and Chebet's training partner and fellow Kenyan Benson Kipruto third in 2:06:04. But there was disappointment for two-time Olympic champion Kipchoge, widely regarded as the greatest marathon runner of all time, who had been bidding to add the Boston crown to previous marathon victories in Berlin, Tokyo, London and Chicago.

Kenyan icon Kipchoge trailed home sixth in 2:09:23, around three-and-a-half-minutes adrift of Chebet. The 38-year-old had looked perfectly poised through the opening and mid-stages of the race but was broken after a bold attack by Geay at around the 19-mile mark. As the pack gave chase to Geay, Kipchoge was rapidly left behind and was soon nearly 100 meters off the pace. Geay remained in the lead through 24 miles in a leading trio alongside Chebet and Kipruto.

But Chebet and Kipruto kicked on in the final two miles and Chebet led with a mile to go before pulling away to retain his crown. "I'm happy because I know this course very well," Chebet told ESPN following his win. "I won last year, and now I've won this year — so maybe next year I'll come back again."

While Chebet was able to draw on his experience from last year to master Monday's course, Obiri pulled off a stunning victory in the women's event in what was only her second ever marathon. The



BOSTON: Evans Chebet and Hellen Obiri of Kenya pose with the trophy on the finish line after winning the professional men's division and professional women's division respectively during the 127th Boston Marathon on April 17, 2023. — AFP

33-year-old has spent most of her career racing over shorter distances, winning two world championship gold medals in 2017 and 2019 over 5,000m, as well as silvers over the same distance at the 2016 and 2020 Olympics.

Obiri, who only raced a marathon for the first time in New York last November where she placed sixth, kept her composure in a hard-fought race to win in 2hr 21min 38sec. Ethiopia's Amane Beriso was second in 2:21:50 while Israel's Lonah Salpeter took third in 2:21:57. It was a remarkable performance by Obiri, who only confirmed her participation in Boston last month following urging by her coach.

"First of all I didn't want to come because my heart was somewhere else, but the coach told me 'My heart says you should go for Boston,'" Obiri said afterwards. "I said no, because it's a strong field. But he said, 'You've trained well, something tells me go to Boston.' I'm very happy because it's a surprise to me. But I was feeling like my body was ready, and everything was ready."

Obiri bided her time before hitting the front with around half a mile to go, pumping her arms and driving her legs through the rain to drop the chasing pack. "The coach told me that marathons are about patience, patience, patience until the last minute," Obiri said. "So I just tried to be patient." — AFP

Argentina replaces Indonesia as U-20 World Cup host

BUENOS AIRES: Argentina will host the Under-20 World Cup from May 20 to June 11, FIFA said Monday, after taking the tournament from Indonesia just weeks before kick-off. Having been awarded hosting rights, Argentina will also participate in Indonesia's place. The team had failed to qualify on merit. "FIFA is delighted to announce that this year's edition of the FIFA U-20 World Cup will take place in Argentina, as the home of the world champions opens its doors to tomorrow's superstars of world football," FIFA pres-

ident Gianni Infantino said in a statement. FIFA withdrew hosting rights from Indonesia last month after protests against the Zionist entity's participation in the tournament. Indonesia and the Zionist entity do not have formal diplomatic relations, and support for the Palestinian cause in the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation runs high. Argentina put itself forward as an alternative host, and FIFA conducted an on-site inspection of facilities last week. The draw will take place on April 21 in Zurich.

Hours before Monday's FIFA announcement, the Argentine government expressed its full backing for the hosting bid by the Argentine Football Association (AFA). This despite the country facing deep economic woes, with tens of billions in IMF debt and year-on-year inflation exceeding 100 percent. World champions Argentina have won the most Under-20 World Cups, with six in total. — AFP

UK climate activists disrupt World Snooker Championship

SHEFFIELD: Climate activists from the 'Just Stop Oil' group were arrested after disrupting the World Snooker Championship on Monday, with one throwing orange powder on the table at the Crucible Theatre. Joe Perry's first-round match against Robert Milkins had to be stopped when a man jumped onto the table and emptied a bag of orange powder across the green baize.

Stunned fans watched on as half of the table and many of the balls were covered in the cloud of powder, with the man kneeling on the baize for several seconds before a security guard dragged him away. The man was wearing a white t-shirt emblazoned with the slogan 'Just Stop Oil' on the back.

On the other table at the Sheffield arena, the match between Mark Allen and Fan Zhengyi was interrupted when a woman, also wearing a 'Just Stop Oil' t-shirt, tried to get on the baize at the same time as the male protestor. She was dragged off by referee Olivier Marteel before any powder was thrown.

"Two people were detained after protesters gained entry to The Crucible earlier this evening," a South Yorkshire Police statement said. "A 30-year-old man and a 52-year-old woman were arrested on suspicion of criminal damage. Both are in police custody."

In a press release, Just Stop Oil said two supporters had staged the stunt to highlight the group's demand that the government stop all new UK fossil fuel projects. It named those responsible as Margaret Reid, a 52-year-old former museum professional from northwest England, and Eddie Whittingham, 30, a student at Exeter university.

"I did not take this action lightly, but I cannot remain a passive spectator while our government knowingly pushes us down a path to destruction," Reid said in comments provided in the press release. "I can no longer justify watching from the sidelines."

Play was immediately suspended as vacuum cleaners were brought into the arena, with master of ceremonies Rob Walker among those helping to sweep up the mess. Allen and Fan were given a standing ovation on their return to the arena later on Monday after the clean-up operation. Former world champion Stephen Hendry, working as a commentator for the BBC, said: "I have never seen that before at a snooker event. It's a first. 'It is scary. Wow! You just hope the cloth can be recovered from that. It caught us all by surprise and then this happens.'" — AFP