

"It was obviously the hardest decision I think I have ever had to make. I've been with Mercedes, I think it's 26 years they've supported me and we've had an absolutely incredible journey together. We have created history within the sport and I'm very proud of what we've achieved. But ultimately I'm writing my story and... it was time to start a new chapter."

Lewis Hamilton on his decision to leave Mercedes for Ferrari



Liverpool eye 'special' League Cup triumph

AFP, London

Liverpool have their sights on a "special" League Cup triumph in Sunday's final against Chelsea as Jurgen Klopp reaches the first milestone moment of his long goodbye.

Klopp is in his last season as Liverpool manager after the German's bombshell announcement that he will step down at the end of the current campaign.

Although Klopp is convinced he no longer has the energy to drive Liverpool's relentless quest for silverware, there has been little sign of the feared decline in his side's fortunes following his stunning revelation.

Liverpool have won five of their six matches in all competitions, scoring 21 goals in the process, since the 56-year-old revealed his plan to quit.

Extending that hot streak at Wembley this weekend would give Liverpool their first trophy since 2022, when they beat Chelsea in both the FA Cup and League Cup finals.

Klopp has won six major trophies during an iconic nine-year reign and his quadruple-chasing players are desperate to give him a silverware-filled farewell.

As well as this weekend's date with Chelsea, Liverpool sit four points clear at the top of the Premier League, face Southampton in the FA Cup fifth round on Wednesday and take on Sparta Prague in the Europa League last 16.

"We want to make it a special day and get our first trophy of the season," Liverpool captain Virgil van Dijk said.

"The end of the season will probably be very emotional for a lot of people, including the manager, but we are not there yet."

The Reds' resolve will be tested at Wembley by a mounting injury crisis that leaves them without Alisson Becker, Trent Alexander-Arnold, Curtis Jones and Diogo Jota.

Meanwhile, Mohamed Salah, Darwin Nunez and Dominik Szoboszlai face late fitness tests.



Bayer Leverkusen's German midfielder Robert Andrich (L) celebrates with teammates after scoring the winning goal in a 2-1 victory over Mainz in their Bundesliga fixture in Leverkusen on Friday. The win helped Xabi Alonso's side extend their unbeaten run to record 33 matches, and put them 11 points clear at the top of the table.

PHOTO: AFP

My head is here: Alonso

AFP, Leverkusen

Xabi Alonso said on Friday links to Liverpool and Bayern Munich were "just speculation" and that his "head is here" as he strives to take his record-breaking Bayer Leverkusen side to a first Bundesliga title.

Leverkusen beat Mainz 2-1 at home, extending their unbeaten run this season to 33 games, breaking the German record set by Hansi Flick's Bayern between 2019 and 2020.

The win took Leverkusen 11 points clear of Bayern, who host RB Leipzig on Saturday.

Leverkusen's stunning run has attracted the interest of several top

European sides, including Alonso's former clubs Liverpool and Bayern, both of whom will have vacancies in the dugout this summer when Jurgen Klopp and Thomas Tuchel respectively leave.

"Right now it's just speculation" the 42-year-old told DAZN after the win.

"My head is here. We have a lot to do. We're in a great situation. We should enjoy it and continue to prepare, and that's all I'm thinking about."

On Friday, Granit Xhaka opened the scoring after three minutes for the hosts but Mainz's Dominik Kohr equalised four minutes later.

The league leaders needed a long-

range Robert Andrich goal, which was helped by a poor goalkeeping effort by Robin Zentner, with just over 20 minutes remaining to secure the three points.

Alonso admitted his side were "too emotional in the first half" saying "we did well but it wasn't great. The second goal was very important."

The manager, who won titles in Spain, England and Germany as a player, said his team were "focused on themselves" rather than a pursuing Bayern.

"We're not looking elsewhere. We know what we need to do and what we must do. The next objective is the derby in Cologne."

Garcia's superb hatrick propels Police

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Police's Colombian forward Horacio Ibarguen Garcia scored the second hatrick of the Bangladesh Premier League season in a 4-1 thrashing of Brothers Union at the Muktijuddho Smriti Stadium in Rajshahi yesterday.

Ibarguen scored all three goals in the second half after Brothers Union had taken a surprise lead in the 43rd minute of the match through Ruhul Hossen, only for Syed Shah Quazem Kirmani to equalise in the stoppage time of the first half.

All three goals from the Colombian were spectacular – the first one with a back-flick, the second one a side-volley and the third one a powerful header.

Brothers, who had suffered an identical-margin defeat to Sheikh Russel in their previous match, remained rooted to the bottom of the 10-team table with three points while Police moved up seventh position with 10 points.

Meanwhile, Fortis FC ended Chittagong Abahani's six-game unbeaten run with a 2-1 win as the league went into more than one month's break following the end of the first phase of matches yesterday.

The port city side hosted Fortis FC at the Shaheed Bir Sreshtho Flight Lieutenant Matiar Rahman Stadium in

Munshiganj, having stitched four draws and two victories since back-to-back defeats in the first two matches of the league.

It seemed they would get away with their fifth draw of the campaign, despite being under pressure from the Fortis forwards, before an own goal from Lawla Muritala in the 77th minute ended their resistance. The Nigerian midfielder was helpless as Ashraful Islam Rana's block on a free-kick from Valerii Hryshyn.

The second goal took only five more minutes to come as Gambian forward Omar Sarr turned in compatriot Pa Omar Babou's cross with Rana having no chance to make an effort on goal.

The win lifted Fortis, who came into the match following a victory against Police, to fifth position with 12 points from nine matches. Chittagong Abahani, on the other hand, dropped to eight position with 10 points from same number of matches.



*Actual Drone Photograph

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