



'Klopp one of us'

REUTERS, Liverpool

Liverpool fans were bidding farewell to their charismatic manager Jurgen Klopp on Sunday with songs, murals, and other tributes to an eight-year reign that brought the glory days back to one of England's greatest clubs.

The bespectacled 56-year-old German was to manage his beloved Reds for the 491st and final time against Wolverhampton Wanderers in front of a sellout crowd at Anfield.

With the Premier League game itself largely irrelevant now that Liverpool cannot win the title, all focus was on Klopp, who had fought back tears as fans serenaded him at his final away game.

"We'll never see his like again ... He's one of us," waxed John Pearman, founder of Liverpool fan magazine "Red All Over The Land" which brought out a special Klopp edition.

After leading the team to seven trophies, including Europe's Champions League in 2019 and a first English league title in three decades in 2020, Klopp is leaving of his own volition to recharge his batteries.

He has not said what he will do next, beyond ruling out managing another club in England.

"I could have grown up here," Klopp said in a club video. It was not only success that endeared Klopp to fans.

They loved his passion and personality: fist-pumps at the end of games, bear hugs for players, time for charitable causes, indignant protests at dubious decisions, and insistence on a high-energy aggressive "gegenpress" style of football.

After decades of mediocrity, when arch-rivals Manchester United were the top dogs in England, Klopp restored Liverpool's pride, his irrepressible zeal eclipsing other Premier League managers.



Liverpool fans gather to take pictures in front of a mural in support of Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp ahead of the German's final game in charge during their Premier League fixture against Wolves on Sunday. Klopp will bring the curtain down on his remarkable nine-year reign when the final whistle blows at Anfield.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Sinner back on road to French Open

AFP, Rome

World number two Jannik Sinner is back training in a race to be fit for the French Open after missing the Rome Open with a right hip injury.

The Italian posted on social media photos of himself with racquet in hand on a clay court in Monaco on Saturday evening, eight days before Roland Garros starts on May 26.

Sinner accompanied the images with a series of emojis, one a sword, another the French flag, referencing his battle to make the second Grand Slam of the season in Paris.

When the Australian Open champion pulled out of Rome he said he would only compete in the French Open if he was fully fit.

The hip injury forced him to retire from the Madrid Open at the start of the month before his quarter-final match.

Announcing his absence from Rome at a press conference he said: "I don't want to go into details (of the injury). We thought initially that it wasn't anything serious but the scans showed that there was something that wasn't right."



Can Fizz break CYCLE OF REGRET?

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

When Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman took part in his first T20 World Cup, he was still in his first year in international cricket. He came into the 2016 T20 World Cup as a prodigious talent, having already bamboozled some of the biggest stars in world cricket.

That World Cup, however, ended

BANGLADESH WITH FIZZ IN T20 WC

2016 Bangladesh won their first-round matches against the Netherlands and Oman but lost against Australia, India, and New Zealand in the Super 10.

2021 Mahmudullah Riyad-led Bangladesh were stunned by Scotland in their opening first-round fixture but came back to beat Oman and Papua New Guinea to qualify for the main stage of the tournament in which the Tigers lost all five of their encounters.

2022 Bangladesh's best outing in a T20 World Cup came in this edition as they managed to win two matches (against Zimbabwe and the Netherlands) in the main stage of the tournament for the first time. The Tigers lost the other three fixtures.

in disappointment for Mustafizur and Bangladesh, much like the ones that have followed since.

Following that first T20 World Cup, where he picked 11 wickets in four matches, Mustafizur had the mark of big player on

MUSTAFIZUR IN T20 WORLD CUPS

YEAR	MATCHES	WICKETS	ECON RATE	STK-RATE	AVERAGE
2016	3	9	7.16	8	9.55
2021	7	8	9.25	18	27.75
2022	5	3	5.6	40	37.33

him. His reputation swelled further after he helped Sunrisers Hyderabad win their maiden IPL title in his debut season, picking up 17 wickets in 16 games.

It appeared the left-arm seamer is bound to reach greater heights but struggles with injuries among other things halted his rise.

So sharp was his decline, questions were raised whether he would ever touch those heights again. After many average to underwhelming seasons at the IPL, Mustafizur conjured up some of his old magic for the Chennai Super Kings this season.

He bagged 14 wickets for Chennai, and was the joint highest wicket-taker in the tournament before his NOC ended.

There was plenty of criticism regarding his tournament being cut short, many experts feeling he would have been better served by continuing to play in the IPL and skipping the Tigers' series against Zimbabwe at home. The BCB, however, had other plans.

Mustafizur, in a literal way, is a man with the golden arm. His cutters, with great revolutions that he puts on the ball, takes a lot out of him. There is a limit to how many of those special variations he can bowl under duress in a month-long

tournament and he needs to be fresh to bowl at his best.

Cutting his IPL stint short should help him to rest, recharge and be at his effective best in the T20 World Cup.

Momentum is on Mustafizur's side as he steps into his fourth T20I World Cup, which also presents him with a chance to correct the biggest regret of his career.

"When it comes to big players, after winning a big event or a trophy one can be called a big player. So, that regret has always been there," the 28-year-old said in a video posted by the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) on social media yesterday.

This statement from Mustafizur, who is usually known as a man of few words, bears the mark of maturity. The likes of Shakib Al Hasan, who has featured in every editions of the T20 World Cup, may have similar regrets and the onus will be on Mustafizur and Shakib to lead Bangladesh's charge in the tournament.

If Mustafizur can carry his IPL form into the USA and the Caribbean, and fellow pacers like Taskin Ahmed, Shoriful Islam and Tanzim Sakib can be at their best, the Tigers can dream of putting forth a far better display than they have ever done.

SHORT CORNER



Hyderabad chase 200-plus total for first time this IPL

Indian batter Abhishek Sharma smashed 66 as Sunrisers Hyderabad chased a total north of 200 for the first time in this edition of the Indian Premier League to down Punjab Kings by four wickets on Sunday. Chasing 215 for victory, Hyderabad, who are already among the top four teams to have made the play-offs, reached the target with five balls to spare at their home.

From the boxing rings of XBC to the prestige of WBC

For the first time, a Bangladeshi professional boxer has qualified to contest under the prestigious international boxing professional organisation, WBC (World Boxing Council). Rajshahi's boy, Utshob, will contend for the WBC Asia Silver Super Flyweight Title against one of India's top super flyweight boxers, 32-year-old Mazhar Hussain.

Paolo Montero to manage Juve until end of season

Paolo Montero will take charge of Serie A side Juventus for the remainder of the season, the club said on Sunday following the dismissal of Massimiliano Allegri. Juventus sacked their former coach Allegri on Friday over his behaviour during and after this week's Coppa Italia final in which he was sent off.

*Read full stories on The Daily Star website

'Leverkusen engraved in BUNDESLIGA HISTORY'

AGENCIES

Bayer Leverkusen's undefeated run to their maiden Bundesliga title will need time to sink in as coach Xabi Alonso said that the club now have made themselves an irreplaceable part of the German top-flight football's history.

Long derided as 'Neverkusen' for their failure to win a major title for decades, Leverkusen became the first-ever team in the Bundesliga to complete a full season without a loss following a 2-1 victory over Augsburg in the season finale on Saturday.

The club hailed the achievement by giving themselves a new nickname on their social media channel - 'Bayer 04 Neverlusen'.

"It is an exceptional season, not only in Germany but in Europe," Alonso said in a press conference. "We deserve now to be part of that history of European football. In 20 years we will look back and we will say 'we did that'."

"It is an important day for the club.



We have to be proud of the way we played. 90 points and undefeated," he said. "We need a bit more time to value this title. The first Bundesliga title but a big Bundesliga title victory.

"We will remember this day. It is a special day to have the league trophy here and having done it undefeated. This team has now been engraved in Bundesliga history."

Alonso's team also stretched their European record unbeaten run across all competitions this season to 51 matches as they look to add two more titles next week.

While Xabi realises how big an achievement is to go an entire season unbeaten is for his team, he also mentioned that they barely have a moment to enjoy their exceptional season as they are chasing more trophies in an attempt to complete the treble.

Leverkusen face Atalanta on Wednesday in the Europa League final before taking on Kaiserslautern in the German Cup final on May 25.

"I believe it (the unbeaten title win), but I need more time. But we have no time because we have the next big goal (on Wednesday). It is a unique opportunity," Alonso said.



Ukraine's Oleksandr Usyk lands a punch on Britain's Tyson Fury during a heavyweight boxing world championship fight at Kingdom Arena in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on Saturday. Usyk beat Fury by split decision to win the world's first undisputed heavyweight championship in 25 years. Usyk, who remains undefeated, joins the likes of Muhammad Ali, Joe Louis and Mike Tyson as undisputed heavyweight champion, the first since boxing recognised four major belts in the 2000s.

PHOTO: REUTERS