Liverpool’s old guard thriving despite uncertain futures

Liverpool (AFP) – Arne Slot can seemingly do no wrong as Liverpool manager but uncertainty over the futures of Mohamed Salah, Virgil van Dijk and Trent Alexander-Arnold is casting a shadow over a spectacular season.

Liverpool head into Wednesday’s heavyweight Champions League clash against Real Madrid top of the table in Europe and eight points clear in the Premier League thanks to a near flawless start from Slot.

The Dutchman has won 16 of his 18 matches to make light of a predicted hangover after Jurgen Klopp’s emotional farewell at the end of last season.

Salah, 32, has spearheaded the flying start with 12 goals and 10 assists in all competitions.



Liverpool’s Trent Alexander-Arnold is out of contract at the end of the season © Paul ELLIS / AFP/File

Yet the Egyptian further fuelled speculation over where he will be next season after scoring twice to beat Southampton 3-2 on Sunday, saying he is “more out than in”.

Salah, captain Van Dijk and homegrown hero Alexander-Arnold, 26, are out of contract at the end of the season and can begin speaking to foreign clubs in just over a month’s time.

Van Dijk, 33, revealed last month he has started talks about extending his deal.

Alexander-Arnold could be facing his future employers in midweek, with Madrid understood to be keen on making him their next big-name signing to arrive for free.

Score to settle

Rather than destabilising Slot’s start to life at Anfield, the

chance for potentially one last shot at glory has galvanised Liverpool’s old guard.



Arne Slot has won 16 of his first 18 games in charge of Liverpool © JUSTIN TALLIS / AFP

“I’m just playing, focusing on the season and I’m trying to win the Premier League and hopefully the Champions League as well,” said Salah.

The Egypt international is among those with a score to settle with the Spanish giants, who have won the competition 15 times compared with Liverpool’s tally of six.

Liverpool have failed to win in their past eight meetings with Madrid, including two Champions League finals, in 2018 and 2022.

Salah was forced off with his arm in a sling after being wrestled to the ground by Sergio Ramos in the 2018 final and denied several times by the brilliance of Thibaut Courtois in Paris four years later.

This time Liverpool appear primed to exact their revenge against a Madrid side beset by injuries and struggling to find the right balance since the arrival of French superstar Kylian Mbappe.



Liverpool’s Dutch defender Virgil van Dijk © Adrian Dennis / AFP/File

A hamstring injury to Vinicius Junior has added to Carlo Ancelotti’s woes, with defenders Dani Carvajal and Eder Militao ruled out for the season.

The European champions are far more desperate for the points after losing two of their four games so far.

Liverpool are sitting pretty with a perfect return of 12 points.

Madrid’s visit may not even be the biggest game at Anfield this week for the hosts as struggling Premier League champions Manchester City are next up on Sunday with the chance for Slot’s men to land a fatal blow in the title race.

Yet there is a thirst on Merseyside for their new manager to do what Klopp failed to achieve in six matches against Madrid and get one over on Real’s superstars.

“We indeed have incredible fixtures coming up,” said the former Feyenoord boss on facing Madrid and City over the course of five days.

“They are two teams who have dominated football the last few years.”

With an uncertain future, Liverpool are thriving off living in the moment.

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