

SPORTS

SOCCER

Jota gotta lotta love for rampant Reds

Hat-trick hero says Sane, Salah taking him to next level

BERGAMO, Italy — Liverpool forward Diogo Jota credited playing alongside the likes of Mo Salah and Sadio Mane with lifting his game as he scored a hat-trick in the Reds' 5-0 Champions League win over Atalanta on Tuesday.

"I'm playing in the best team of my career so far," said the 23-year-old, who has now scored in four consecutive games since his move from Wolves in September.

The Portuguese became just the second player to score on his first two starts in the Champions League for Liverpool since Robbie Keane in 2008, after notching the opener in a 2-0 win over Midtjylland last time out.

Jota scored a first-half brace, completing his hat-trick after 55 minutes in Bergamo after Salah and Mane added two more just after the break in northern Italy.

"Obviously they (Mane and Salah) are two world-class players, we all know their quality which makes it easier for me to do my job because they are outstanding and we had a great game together today.

"Five goals, that doesn't happen so often. We scored early so that's a good moment for me and the team and then we can manage the game our way.

"The clean sheet as well, if we can keep a clean sheet against City we will win the game," he added of the Reds' next Premier League game at Etihad Stadium in Manchester.

Jurgen Klopp's 2019 Champions League winner is top of Group D with a maximum nine points and is five clear of both Atalanta and Ajax, who won 2-1 at Danish champion Midtjylland.

"That was a performance we



Diogo Jota (right) high-fives Gini Wijnaldum after completing his hat-trick in Liverpool's 5-0 UEFA Champions League Group D rout of Atalanta at Stadio Atleti Azzurri in Bergamo, Italy, on Tuesday. REUTERS

needed tonight," said Klopp.

"I don't think anyone could have defended against Sadio Mane, Mo Salah and Diogo Jota so it wasn't about the tactics or our system it was about the team.

"My boys played an incredible game, the front-line defending and attacking was outstanding. Midfield organization, desire, readiness."

Klopp insisted Jota's form does not give him a selection problem

with Roberto Firmino rested ahead of the City clash.

"Good performances never give me a headache," said the German.

"For tonight it was clear that it made more sense to use the good shape that Diogo is in and because of the way Atalanta plays in defense it made sense that the skill set of Diogo helps.

"The world is sometimes a really bad place that in the moment when

someone is shining we speak immediately of a player who played for us it feels like 500 games in a row, and we would not be in the Champions League if Bobby Firmino would not be with us.

"He will be in the team and for a lot of people in the world if you ask them 'what makes Liverpool something special?', they would say the way Bobby Firmino is playing.

"For us it's important that we have

more than 11. Tonight Diogo played a super, super game but that says nothing about Bobby."

City slickers

Meanwhile, Kevin De Bruyne warmed up for Sunday's clash with Liverpool by setting up two goals in Manchester City's 3-0 win over Olympiakos.

That gave the Belgium midfielder 14 assists in the competition since

the start of the 2017-18 season, one short of Paris Saint-Germain forward Kylian Mbappe's competition-leading 15.

De Bruyne set City on its way by cushioning a pass through to Ferran Torres who drove home in the 12th minute.

De Bruyne then sent substitute Gabriel Jesus through on goal to score on his return from injury nine minutes from time.

City only requires a draw in the return match in Greece to secure progress to the knockout stage with two group games to spare.

City boss Pep Guardiola has been without a natural striker as both Jesus and Sergio Aguero have had an injury-hit start to the season. And Guardiola welcomed the option of having a striker fit for Sunday's blockbuster clash.

"We played an exceptional first half, but unfortunately we cannot finish the games, we struggle a bit for the second goal," said Guardiola.

"Finally, an incredible goal from Gabriel (finished the game). In general, it is good news that he is back."

In Group B, Real Madrid captain Sergio Ramos scored his 100th goal across all competitions for the club in a 3-2 victory over Inter Milan — not bad for a centerback.

The defender nodded in to give Madrid a 2-0 lead — his 55th headed goal for his club.

Vinicius Junior set up his fellow Brazilian substitute Rodrygo to lash in the decisive goal 10 minutes from time to keep Inter, which was without the injured Romelu Lukaku, winless.

Defending champion Bayern Munich got late goals from Jerome Boateng, Leroy Sane, Robert Lewandowski and Lucas Hernandez in a 6-2 win at Salzburg to preserve its perfect start in Group A.

AFP

Swiss Re flags China as most important market for growth

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Swiss Re, one of the world's leading reinsurance companies, has said China is its most important growth market and will become the world's largest insurance market.

Swiss Re was founded in 1863 and started business in China in 1995 as one of the first international reinsurers to enter the country. The company anticipates and manages a range of risks from natural catastrophes to climate change, from aging populations to cybercrime.

"We remain hugely optimistic about China. As the country is opening up its financial sector, it is expected to contribute 60 percent of additional premiums in Asia in the next decade," said Russell Higginbotham, CEO of Reinsurance Asia of Swiss Re, in an interview with China Daily.

The strong confidence is thanks to increasing domestic consumption, government initiatives and more "insurtech" — or insurance technology — solutions led by digitalization from production to consumption in China, according to the company.

In recent years, China has improved the opening-up of its financial industry, including measures to relax foreign share ownership restrictions in the insurance sector.

"It's a milestone for many global brands to enter the Chinese market and illustrates the government's determination to offer a fairer and more transparent business environment," Higginbotham said.

Other national strategies — including "the Healthy China 2030", regional integration and development plans, such as the Yangtze River Delta region, the Belt and Road Initiative and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area development — present huge opportunities for foreign reinsurers and insurers, he added.

"We have witnessed the transfor-



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Russell Higginbotham, CEO of Reinsurance Asia of Swiss Re

mation of China's insurance industry to become the world's second-largest insurance market, and we will be there when it becomes the world's biggest.

"Swiss Re will continue to leverage the knowledge and research and development capabilities to partner with the clients to develop innovative, technology-based solutions which help close protection gaps and deliver better products and services to the end-consumer," Higginbotham said.

The company has launched some innovative solutions in China. One of these is the Agricultural Insurance Risk Management Platform, which aims to help to narrow the protection gap for agriculture in China. It offers an automatic index product design engine that helps insurance companies develop index products and offer protection to farmers in short time and saves

more than 90 percent of the time taken with the previous method.

The company also launched a first-ever fully digital environmental risk assessment platform, providing systematic analysis and pragmatic improvement measures to address the industry's pain point. In the life and health sector, it also has Magnum, an automated underwriting system that helps insurers when selling products and guides customers to the right insurance products.

During the COVID-19 outbreak, Swiss Re carried out a survey in China and found some positive signals.

The survey shows awareness and understanding of insurance has increased with Chinese consumers more keen to add on to their policies because of the pandemic, and consumers' strong preference for an end-to-end online experience when interacting with insurers and making insurance decisions.

A paradigm shift in the global supply chain to mitigate future business disruption risks will give rise to new pockets of growth. The relocation of production out of China will likely give rise to new opportunities in sectors like property and engineering, especially in emerging markets, according to Swiss Re.

"The dynamics generated by three new trends of infrastructure, economy and consumption will accelerate the digitalization of the insurance industry and create new ecosystems," Higginbotham said.

The company is participating for the first time in the third China International Import Expo, held in Shanghai from Nov 5-10.

"Transforming tomorrow together is our theme. As one of the world's leading risk knowledge and risk management companies, Swiss Re is committed to working with its clients and partners to close the protection gap and make the world more resilient," Higginbotham said at the CIIE.

The section is sponsored by Swiss Re.



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