

Klopp plays down Salah reaction after substituting top striker



Jurgen Klopp greets Mohamed Salah as he is substituted off
AFP | London

Jurgen Klopp has played down any potential fallout following Mohamed Salah's show of displeasure after his substitution in Liverpool's 1-0 defeat by Chelsea.

The Egypt international made no secret of his annoyance at being withdrawn just after the hour mark at Anfield on Thursday as the champions slipped to a fifth successive home league defeat for the first time in their history.

Liverpool are languishing in seventh place in the Premier League and are four points behind fourth-placed Chelsea ahead of Sunday's home game against lowly Fulham.

Klopp said he could not make substitutions on the basis of what reaction it created, adding he took off the Premier League's leading scorer because he thought he was feeling the intensity of the game.

"I'm not even sure if this situation is now a reason for a 'proper talk' about it," he said yesterday.

17
Premier League goals have been scored by Mohamed Salah this season and needs only one more to register 25 for the campaign in all competitions

"We are 1-0 down, that makes no player happy. You go off and you react in different ways because you are not happy.

"You get subbed, you are a striker and you think you should stay on the pitch. That's all completely clear and not an issue, it is just normal life."

Klopp said managers were forced to make quick judgments on the basis of what they saw on the pitch.

"We make these decisions in the moment and not with any thoughts in behind, the problem only is you only have to explain it after the game and the day after the game," he said.

World-class match-ups added to BRAVE CF 49 fight card

BRAVE CF 49 to feature rematch between Jose Torres and Sean Santella

● The event will also feature the return of return of Luan Santiago

TDI | Manama

BRAVE CF 49: Super Fights is the third of four consecutive events scheduled for Kombat Kingdom and the last one before the truly global promotion reaches the landmark 50th fight night. As BRAVE Combat Federation is ready to kick-off a month of intense action, officials released the full fight card of the March 25th event.

The card will be headlined by the much-anticipated rematch between Jose "Shorty" Torres and Sean "Shorty Rock" Santella, as part of the prestigious BRAVE CF Flyweight World Title Tournament.

The stakes are even higher as Shorty and Shorty Rock step once again into the cage, after their first encounter, a back-and-forth, instant-classic match, ended up in a draw.

The co-main event of the evening will see the return of former BRAVE CF Lightweight champion Luan "Miau" Santiago, who's now on the hunt for the Super Lightweight title.

Santiago will take on the un-



defeated French powerhouse Benoit "God of War" St. Denis, whose rising through the BRAVE CF ranks has been one of the biggest stories in the promotion over the last couple of years.

The main card will also witness the rise of potential world title contenders in two different divisions, as Ikram Aliskerov is

set to take on Enrico Cortese in the Middleweight division, and fellow South Americans Gabriel Fly and Dumar Roa meet in the Featherweight division. It has been announced the winner of this bout will take on whoever comes out on top between Valeriu Mircea and Abdulmutalip Gairbekov for the vacant 145lbs

title.

BETTER YOU KNOW
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Muhammad Mokaev takes on Abdul Hussein in a match-up of amateur world champions, while another IMMAF stand-out makes his pro debut - Axel Sola faces off against Frieh Harahsheh in a Super Welterweight contest.

Elsewhere there are returns for Zvonimir Kralj, who takes on Todd Stoute, and former Middleweight title challenger Chad Hanekom, who takes on Dominic Schober.

Philippines to send 'best team' for Olympic qualifiers

TDI | Manila

The Philippines is raring to compete in the Fiba Olympic qualifying tournament in Belgrade, Serbia following New Zealand's withdrawal from the competition.

The world's basketball governing body has announced that the Philippines, known as Gilas Pilipinas, will be headed to the qualifiers for being the next best ranking team in the Asia-Oceania region after New Zealand decided against participating due to rising costs of sending a team abroad amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The Philippine team is bundled with the host Serbia and Dominican Republic in Group A.

Gilas needs to win at least one game in the group phase to advance to the crossover knockout semifinals against Group B teams Puerto Rico, Italy and Senegal.

The champion of the qualifiers will make the Tokyo Olympics in July.

"This is truly a welcome development and we're very happy that Gilas Pilipinas Men will be given a chance to compete for a spot in the Olympics," said Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas (SBP) president Al Panlilio.

SBP has also pledged to send the best roster for the qualifiers, which grants slots for the coronavirus-delayed Tokyo Olympics, from June 29 to July 1.

"Whenever we compete in international tournaments, we always aim to send the best team possible to make our Filipino fans proud," said Panlilio, who



The Philippine team is facing a tough task to qualify for the Olympics

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SAMAHANG BASKETBOL NG PILIPINAS (SBP) PRESIDENT AL PANLILIO

is hopeful that naturalization candidate Angelo Kouame will be able to join the team by then.

Kouame's bid for a Filipino citizenship just passed the Senate justice committee last month.

"We will be coordinating with the PBA to plot our plans moving forward and we're hopeful that Ange Kouame's naturalization will be signed into law by then to give Gilas Pilipinas Men that added boost it needs to be more competi-

tive," Panlilio said.

On February 24, the Senate's Committee on Justice approved on first reading the Senate Bill 1892, which seeks to grant Filipino citizenship to Ateneo big man Kouame, who hails from Ivory Coast.

The bill needs to hurdle three more readings before President Rodrigo Duterte approves or disapproves it.

The other challenge the SBP and the PBA need to hurdle is the struggle of the latter in lending its players since the OQT schedule will coincide with the 46th Philippine Cup, eyed to begin in April and likely to run for three months.

SBP, though, may use the 2019 PBA-Gilas draftees Rey Suerte, Allyn Bulanadi, Isaac Go, and the Nieto brothers Mike and Matt, as well as this year's would-be Gilas draftees Will Navarro, Jordan Heading, Tzaddy Rangel and Jaydee Tungcab as the foundation of the Gilas pool.

Tottenham captain Lloris praises 'professional' Alli



Dele Alli and Hugo Lloris

AFP | London

Tottenham Hotspur captain Hugo Lloris has lauded Dele Alli for the way he has responded after being prevented from leaving the club.

It appeared the England international would move from the north London side during the January transfer window having been sidelined by manager Jose Mourinho, with former Spurs boss Mauricio Pochettino reportedly keen to take Alli to Paris Saint-Germain on loan.

Spurs, however, decided to keep Alli in their squad and the midfielder made his first Premier League start since the opening day of the season during Thursday's 1-0 win against Fulham.

France goalkeeper Lloris said he was pleased by the way Alli had put any "disappointment" aside.

"Well, I don't want to talk about January. It's his personal situation and I don't want to talk on behalf of the club, I'm not the right person to do it," Lloris said.

Guardiola wary of 'difficult' United ahead of Manchester derby

AFP | Manchester

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola says Manchester United will be "difficult" opponents despite a huge gap in form between the two sides ahead of Sunday's derby. City are on a run of 21 successive wins in all competitions -- a record for an English top-flight team.

They are top of the Premier League table, 14 points clear of second-placed United, who have won just one out of their past five league matches and are struggling to score goals.

But the City boss said he was wary of Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's team, who are unbeaten away from home in the league for more than a year.



Pep Guardiola

"I know how difficult United are," he said yesterday. "Every year they get better from the previous season. They (have gone) more than one year not losing away and they have good results at the Etihad."

"We have the good opportunity to increase the distance. We spoke in training about what we have to do to beat them."

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