

Liverpool spend big to hold off Arsenal, Man City in Premier League title fight

Big summer spending raises hopes for a dramatic and unpredictable season ahead

- **Liverpool spend £260m on reinforcements**
- **Arsenal target Gyokeres to end drought**
- **City rebuild after trophyless season**
- **Chelsea emerge as dark horses**
- **United overhaul attack after poor season**

AFP | London

Liverpool have splashed out to defend their Premier League title as champions but face stiff competition from an Arsenal side desperate to shake off their tag as nearly men and a rejuvenated Manchester City.

After storming to a record-equalling 20th English top-flight title in Arne Slot's first season in charge, Liverpool have looked to build from a position of strength during a summer marked by tragedy.

Portuguese forward Diogo Jota was killed in a car accident alongside his brother last month, plunging the club into mourning.

Tributes to Jota will continue throughout the season with "Forever 20" -- his shirt number, which the club have now retired -- printed on Liverpool's jerseys.

The Reds have already spent £260 million (\$350 million) on Florian Wirtz, Hugo Ekitike, Milos Kerkez and Jeremie Frimpong.

However, after the departures of Luis Diaz and Darwin Nunez, they are not yet done in strengthening their forward



Liverpool's players train ahead of their pre-season friendly football match (file photo)

line and are expected to launch a fresh bid for Alexander Isak, with Newcastle demanding a British transfer record fee for the Swedish striker.

Liverpool's rivals will hope Wirtz and Ekitike take time to adapt to the rigours of the Premier

League after shining in Germany's Bundesliga, while there are defensive doubts for Slot's men to answer.

The Dutch coach said his side need to defend better after leaky performances in pre-season were followed by defeat in the Community Shield to Crystal Palace on Sunday after twice blowing the lead.

Can Gyokeres fire?

After finishing second for the past three seasons, Arsenal are longing for their first title in 22 years and have backed Mikel Arteta with another near £200 million investment in the transfer market.

Spanish international Martin Zubimendi will be the new anchor of the midfield, while the signings of Christian Norgaard, Cristhian Mosquera, Noni Madueke and Kepa Arrizabalaga add depth to the squad.

But Arsenal's season is likely to be defined by whether Viktor Gyokeres proves to be the answer to their need for a prolific striker.

The Swede struck 97 times in 102 games during two years at Sporting Lisbon, but the Arsenal forward Viktor Gyokeres takes part in a training session

27-year-old failed to make a breakthrough in the Premier League during his previous experience in England.

After coming up short at Brighton, Gyokeres scored 41 goals in 121 games in England's second tier with Coventry and Swansea.

"He's a player that, when you leave him with the space one against one, he's going to destroy you," said Arteta of his new striker.



Manchester City's players react during a match



Liverpool will wear "Forever 20" on their shirts this season to honour Diogo Jota, whose number has been retired after he and his brother were killed in a car accident last month

to lift the title back in 2017 and showed they are a coming force once more by winning the Club World Cup in the US last month.

The Blues finished fourth, 15 points behind Liverpool last season, but their transfer policy of investing heavily in scores of young prospects is beginning to bear fruit.

Joao Pedro made an instant impact with three goals in three games at the Club World Cup after a £55 million move from Brighton and could solve Chelsea's need for a world class goalscorer.

Manchester United have transformed their forward line with the signings of Benjamin Sesko, Matheus Cunha and Bryan Mbeumo after finishing 15th last season.

Beating United in the Europa League final was not enough for Ange Postecoglou to keep his job as Tottenham manager and former Brentford boss Thomas Frank has taken over in north London.

Promoted trio Leeds, Sunderland and Burnley are aiming to avoid a worrying trend for the competitive balance.

For the past two seasons all three promoted clubs have gone straight back down as the gap between the riches of the Premier League and the second tier continues to grow.

World champions Chelsea

Chelsea were the last side other than City and Liverpool

Last Liverpool goal had special meaning for Jota

AFP | London

Diogo Jota revealed the emotional meaning behind his last Liverpool goal in a touching interview before his death in a car crash.

Jota and his brother Andre Silva died when their Lamborghini went off the road in the accident in northern Spain on July 3.

The Portugal forward was on his way back to England to start pre-season training after helping Liverpool win the Premier League title last term.

Jota's final goal for Liverpool was the vital winner in the Merseyside derby against Everton at

Anfield in April.

Speaking in an interview just weeks before his death, Jota admitted he felt proud to be able to contribute to Arne Slot's team by scoring in such an important game.

"It was a very tough season for me but I was always there fighting and I could help the team that day and I'm proud of what I could still do," he said in the documentary titled "Champions 24-25: The Inside Story".

"It's hard to describe. That's the feeling I look for when I play football, that's why you put all your life and all your efforts to moments like that, moments

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DIOGO JOTA

where you can decide an important game."

Jota, 28, spent five years with Liverpool after joining from Wolves in 2020.

He won the Premier League, FA Cup and League Cup during his time at Anfield.

"It is something I could not even dream as a kid, I wanted to play in the Premier League but I could never imagine to win it," Jota said in the documentary about his Liverpool success.

"Pictures that will be shown forever. It is a remarkable achievement for a small guy that came from Gondomar, where I had this dream."

Liverpool have posthumously retired his number 20 shirt and the club have announced that Jota will be remembered with a permanent sculpture outside Anfield, while a mural of the star already adorns the wall of a building near the stadium.



A fan stands in front of a mural by artist Paul Curtis, of Liverpool's late Portuguese striker Diogo Jota and his brother Andre Silva