

# Liverpool a 'mess', says Van Dijk

Captain says players are responsible for team's disastrous run of form

● Six defeats in seven games

● Players letting Slot down

● New signings lack impact

AFP | London

Virgil van Dijk said Liverpool's players are letting manager Arne Slot down after the Premier League champions' collapse continued with a 3-0 home defeat to Nottingham Forest.

Liverpool have lost six of their last seven league games to slide into the bottom half of the table, putting Slot under pressure after the club's record spend of nearly £450 million (\$590 million) in the transfer market.

"We are definitely letting him (Slot) down but we've let ourselves down as well," said Van Dijk.

"You look at yourself first and



Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen celebrates after winning the Las Vegas Formula One Grand Prix

then you help each other, you help each other get out of this mess because at the moment it is a mess - that's just a fact.

"As the champions we can't be in the situation we are in right now. What are we going to do about it? We're going to

try to turn it around and that's the mentality everyone should have."

None of Liverpool's big mon-



Despite the team's disastrous league form, none of Liverpool's major summer signings, including the £125 million British transfer record holder Alexander Isak, have made a positive impact

ey summer signings have yet to make a positive impact.

Alexander Isak, who cost a British transfer record £125 million, is still to score a league goal for the Reds and looked a shadow of the player he was at Newcastle during an ineffectual 68 minutes against Forest.

But many of last season's title winners have also suffered a slump in form with Van Dijk's

centre-back partner Ibrahima Konate also replaced early by Slot after another poor performance.

"What I want is for everyone to take responsibility on the pitch. We have to do that in order to push each other, to make each other better," added Van Dijk.

"We have been through it together and won the league and everyone was part of it and happy and when you go through a tough time you have to stick together and not point fingers.

"You have to be a man and face the toughness and go again, again and again because if you want to give up then you are at the wrong place in my eyes because this club has gone through much adversity over those years and we've always come out of it."

Liverpool's form in the Champions League has been much better with three wins from four games.

The return to European competition could offer some relief for Slot's men when PSV Eindhoven visit Anfield in Liverpool's next outing on Wednesday.

## England slammed as 'brainless' after first Ashes Test capitulation

AFP | Perth

A stunned England woke Sunday to savage criticism after their meek capitulation in the first Ashes Test, branded "brainless" and "damaged" by former greats after their cavalier approach backfired.

Ben Stokes's men lost the opening battle in Perth by eight wickets inside two days on the back of batting collapses and Travis Head slamming a sensational 69-ball century.

Since last claiming an Ashes series in Australia 15 years ago, they have now lost 14 Tests, drawn two and won none Down Under.

England had a perfect opportunity to snap the dire streak and earn a psychological advantage heading into the day-night second Test in Brisbane on December 4.

But after reaching 160-5 the tourists lost five wickets for 12 runs to be bowled out for 172 on day one before regaining the advantage after dismissing Australia for 132.

They were on track for a big lead after reaching 65-1 in their second innings, but again threw away five wickets in quick succession to leave Australia chasing 205 which they achieved with ease.

Leading into Perth, Stokes



England's Ben Stokes (C) and teammates celebrate a wicket

called the former players who had criticised England's low-key build up as "has-beens" -- and that came back to bite him.

"Well, from this has-been the message is simple: when you keep throwing away Test matches by doing the same stupid things, it is impossible to take you seriously," batting great Geoffrey Boycott said in a newspaper column.

"They never learn, because they never listen to anyone outside their own bubble, because they truly believe their own publicity.

"Now it has bitten them in an Ashes Test, the biggest challenge of all, and unless they

mount a spectacular comeback, they will regret it for a very long time.

"It is simple. Brainless batting and bowling lost England the match."

Former captain Michael Vaughan also had some choice words, suggesting the manner of the loss will leave mental scars.

"This is going to hurt England, it's going to damage them I think," he told broadcasters.

"They have the tools to be really competitive, but you can't be competitive without brains."

Stokes admitted the team was "shell-shocked" and he and coach Brendon McCullum had a big job ahead to lift their

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ENGLAND BATTING GREAT GEOFFREY BOYCOTT

players.

"When we get to Brisbane we need to be back up to that mindset of how we came into this game, still very confident of our abilities and achieving the goal," he said.

"It's crucial not be taking any baggage from this result into Brisbane."

They are facing an ominous task in Brisbane where England have won just twice since World War II, but another former England captain is not yet ready to throw in the towel.

"They need to remember they played a lot of good cricket in this game, and remember that when you get ahead be ruthless and smart," Nasser Hussain told Sky Sports.

"It is a mountain to climb for England but they have a lot of character and a captain with a lot of character. They are going to need that."

## Head shapes up as solution for Australia's opening woes

AFP | Perth

Travis Head may have battled himself into a permanent role as Australian opener after his swashbuckling 123 against England, casting doubt on the future of an ageing Usman Khawaja.

The 38-year-old Khawaja failed to open in either innings in Perth because of back spasms, paving the way for Head to seize the opportunity with all guns blazing.

His 123 from just 83 balls drove Australia to a crushing eight-wicket victory, with the knock hailed as one of the best in Ashes history by skipper Steve Smith.

Australia have been searching for a new opener since David Warner retired early last year with Khawaja going through six different partners.

Debutant Jake Weatherald got the nod for Perth.

But instead of striding out



Australia's Travis Head (L) celebrates during the match

alongside Khawaja he padded up with Marnus Labuschagne in the first innings then Head, promoted from number five in the order, in the second.

Weatherald fell for a second-ball duck first up, but did enough with a composed 23 alongside Head to warrant another crack in the second Test at Brisbane.

## Rahul to lead India in ODIs against South Africa

AFP | New Delhi

Senior batsman KL Rahul will captain India in the upcoming three one-day internationals against South Africa in the absence of injured Shubman Gill as the selectors announced the team Sunday.

India's Test and ODI captain Gill was forced out of the ongoing second South Africa Test after he injured his neck in the opener of the two-match series.



KL Rahul

Rahul, who is India's first choice wicketkeeper in ODIs, will lead the 15-member squad including stalwarts Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma in the matches starting November 30 in Ranchi.

Both Kohli and Rohit only play the 50-over format after they quit T20 cricket following the team's 2024 World Cup victory and earlier this year retired from Tests.

India's ODI vice-captain

Shreyas Iyer is recovering from a lacerated spleen he suffered when falling heavily in a one-day clash against Australia in Sydney last month.

Left-arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja and wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant return to the ODI team.

The second and third ODIs are scheduled for December 3 and 6 before the teams head into five T20 matches.

## BOC strengthens ties with US



Faris Mustafa Al-Kooheji, Secretary-General of the Bahrain Olympic Committee, met with Ambassador Paolo Zampolli, Special Envoy of the President of the United States of America, Donald Trump, for Global Partnerships. They discussed with him avenues of cooperation and ways to enhance bilateral relations. The two sides exchanged commemorative gifts and reaffirmed their commitment to ongoing joint efforts that benefit the sporting movement in both nations