

Slick Citizens back in the groove says Silva

Liverpool lay down the gauntlet to Man City on opening weekend

LONDON, Aug 13, (AFP): Liverpool lived up to their billing as the biggest threat to Manchester City retaining the Premier League title as both sides shone on the opening weekend of the season.

So often outgunned by the oil wealth of Abu Dhabi backed City or commercial giants Manchester United in recent years, Liverpool were the biggest spenders from the world's richest league this summer with a reported £170 million (\$217 million) splurge in the transfer market.

The first return on that investment came in Sunday's 4-0 thrashing of a limited West Ham that even Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp admitted "are not the Uniteds or Citys." City showed just what a task overturning a 25-point deficit last season will



Klopp

be for Liverpool in outclassing Arsenal in a 2-0 win at the Emirates despite a far more disrupted preparation for the campaign due to the World Cup commitments of most of their squad.

On the contrary, Liverpool have benefited from Mohamed Salah and Sadio Mane's early exits in Russia with Egypt and Senegal as they returned in time to join the club's pre-season tour of the United States.

Salah started where he left off from an incredible 44-goal debut campaign at Anfield by opening the scoring before Mane struck

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twice and Daniel Sturridge added a late fourth.

Keita impresses – Klopp conceded it had been impossible to ignore the excitement and expectation among the club's fans that a near three-decade wait to win the league could come to an end in May.

That hype is because Liverpool have built from a position of strength. After reaching the Champions League final last season, key areas of the team have been bolstered.

Midfielder Naby Keita was a bundle of energy and the star performer of the new boys that showed why Liverpool were willing to shell out £52.75m and wait a year for the Guinean after agreeing a deal with Leipzig last summer.

"You can only imagine how good he's going to be with more time," said Liverpool midfielder James Milner.

Finding the net is nothing new for Klopp on opening day. His side scored four at Arsenal in 2016 and three at Watford last season, but also conceded three on both occasions.

As he was quick to point out, the clean sheet was just as pleasing as his side's attacking play.

Goalkeeper Alisson Becker, signed for £65 million from Roma, was rarely troubled, but looked assured in starting attacks from the back, while Virgil van Dijk was imperious in sniffing out any sense of danger.

Liverpool beat City in three of their four meetings last season, but the key to a title challenge will be a consistency Klopp has so far failed to nail in nearly three years in charge.

The German, though, now has a wealth of options never previously afforded to him as evidenced by the sight of new signings Fabinho and Xherdan Shaqiri plus England internationals Jordan Henderson and Adam Lallana on the bench on Sunday.

"I am not blind. I can see them and I can read the line-up and see then who is on the bench," said Klopp when quizzed if he will have a difficult balancing act to keep all of his squad engaged over the campaign.

"The plan is they are all happy because they played an important part in our season, so from my point of view all good." Despite the positivity and investment, Klopp has insisted Liverpool remain just the challenger to champions City.

"We are still Rocky Balboa, not Ivan Drago," he said on the eve of the season, invoking the underdog spirit of the fictional American boxer.

No knockout blows have yet been landed, but Liverpool have come out swinging.

Bernardo Silva has warned Manchester City's Premier League rivals that their impressive 2-0 win over Arsenal proved the champions remain hungry for more silverware.

Silva killed off Arsenal with City's second goal after Raheem Sterling had opened the scoring at the Emirates Stadium on Sunday.

The Portugal midfielder's fine finish capped a typically incisive



Bayern Munich players celebrate with the trophy after winning the German Super Cup football match between Eintracht Frankfurt and Bayern Munich in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany, on Aug 12. (AFP)



Liverpool's Egyptian midfielder Mohamed Salah (right), vies with West Ham United's Italian defender Angelo Ogbonna during the English Premier League football match between Liverpool and West Ham United at Anfield in Liverpool, north west England on Aug 12. (AFP)



Orlando City defender P.C. Giro (left), battles for ball against D.C. United midfielder Zoltan Stieber (18) during the second half of an MLS soccer match on Aug 12, in Washington, D.C. United won 3-2. (AP)

Sounders stop FC Dallas

Rooney inspires Utd to 'last-gasp' victory

WASHINGTON, Aug 13, (Agencies): A moment of magic from Wayne Rooney fired DC United to a last-gasp 3-2 victory over Orlando in Major League Soccer on Sunday.

The two sides had appeared to be heading for a 2-2 draw at Audi Field as Orlando broke out following a United corner in the fifth minute of stoppage time.

With United goalkeeper David Ousted stranded upfield, Orlando's Will Johnson advanced past halfway with an empty net ahead of him.

But a superb last-ditch tackle from Rooney upended Ousted, and the former England and Manchester United star then launched a long ball into the area met by Luciano Acosta, who nodded home the winner.

Argentinian striker Acosta's goal completed a hat-trick and gave United a vital three points as they attempt to move off the bottom of the Eastern Conference. United remain rooted to the foot of the standings however with 21 points from 20 games.

United have several games in hand over the teams above them however, and could yet conceivably mount a charge towards the playoffs in the closing months of the season. Rooney had also been instrumental in setting up Acosta's first goal of the game in stoppage time at the end of the first half.

Rooney, England and Manchester

United's all-time record goalscorer, confirmed his move to MLS in June after a season with Everton in the Premier League. Nicolas Lodeiro had a goal and an assist as the Seattle Sounders continued their hot streak with a 2-1 win over visiting FC Dallas.

The two-time defending Western Conference champion Sounders (9-9-5, 32 points) extended their unbeaten run to eight matches (6-0-2). Seattle moved past Minnesota United into eighth place, one point behind the Vancouver Whitecaps. They Sounders are three points behind Real Salt Lake for the conference's sixth and final

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playoff berth, and Seattle has a game in hand.

Conference-leading Dallas (12-5-6, 42 points) took its second consecutive defeat.

Lodeiro's tiebreaking goal in the 63rd minute was somewhat of a fluke. His cross from the right wing sailed over the head of its intended target, Chad Marshall, and bounced into the side netting just inside the left post, with Dallas goalkeeper Jesse Gonzalez unable to recover in time. The goal was Lodeiro's sixth of the season, tying Will Bruin for the team lead.

City raid that suggested Pep Guardiola's side have picked up where they left off.

City won the English title with a

record 100 points last season and Silva believes they are already back in the groove.

Asked if the result was a state-

Lewan treble leads Bayern to Frankfurt Cup 'revenge'

Kovac makes memorable start to his reign at Bavarian giants

FRANKFURT AM MAIN, Aug 13, (AFP): A brilliant hat-trick from Robert Lewandowski led Bayern Munich to a comfortable 5-0 victory over Eintracht Frankfurt in the German Super Cup, giving former Frankfurt coach Niko Kovac a memorable start to his reign at the Bavarian giants.

Kovac returned to Frankfurt for his first competitive game in charge of the Bundesliga winners, having ended two successful years at Eintracht with a shock win over Bayern in last season's German Cup final. Yet there was no time for sentimentality on Sunday, as Bayern took brutal revenge for their cup humiliation, Lewandowski leaving the Frankfurt defence in tatters.

"It was a really good performance today, we scored at all the right moments," Kovac told ZDF. "Of course I feel some sympathy for my former players and my former club, but I think it will still be a good season for Frankfurt."

"I am very optimistic for this season. I have a great team and a lot of strength in depth."

A ruthless Bayern took the lead with their first chance on 21 minutes.

Joshua Kimmich's cross picked out Lewandowski at the far post and the Polish star fired a header across Frederik Roennow in the Frankfurt goal.

The striker nodded in a second from almost exactly the same position five minutes later, heading Ar-

jen Robben's corner past the stranded Roennow.

The game could have turned in Frankfurt's favour just before half-time when Mats Hummels escaped with a yellow card after bringing down Mijat Gacinovic in front of goal.

At the other end, Lewandowski faced increasingly rough treatment from the Frankfurt defence, and Eintracht captain David Abraham was also lucky to escape a red card when he appeared to elbow the Polish striker late in the game.

There was no stopping Lewandowski, however, who danced free of Abraham to rifle in his third goal on 54 minutes.

Kovac's perfect evening was sealed in the 63rd minute when Kingsley Coman bundled in Bay-

ern's fourth.

The new Bayern coach had focused on low crosses in training the week before, and watched happily on as David Alaba's low cross found Coman at the far post to make it 4-0. Thiago delivered the final flourish five

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minutes from time, gratefully receiving a pass from Coman to slot home Bayern's fifth.

Sandro Wagner could even have made it six, missing an open goal from two yards out, but that didn't stop Bayern celebrating a winning start under Kovac and a successfully defended Super Cup title.



Bayern Munich's German defender Niklas Sule (left), and Frankfurt's French forward Sebastian Haller (right), vie for the ball during the German Super Cup football match between Eintracht Frankfurt and Bayern Munich in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany, on Aug 12. (AFP)

Emery needs time to rebuild Arsenal: Cech

LONDON, Aug 13, (AFP): Arsenal goalkeeper Petr Cech pleaded for patience after Unai Emery's first match as Arsene Wenger's successor ended in a 2-0 defeat to Manchester City.

The Gunners were largely outclassed by the Premier League champions on Sunday and struggled to implement some obvious changes demanded by Emery in the off season.

Cech nearly scored an embarrassing own goal and looked uncomfortable in trying to play out from the back as City pressed high. After a series of risky passes, a long clearance by Cech was met with huge cheers from the Arsenal fans, but the veteran called for Emery's methods to be given time.

ment for City, he said: "Yes, I think so."

"We have started the season well and knew we were going to play against a very strong team at a difficult stadium but we did it, it was a very good game for us, a well-deserved win."

"But it is just the start, we have

"I think they have to understand that when you start building a new team with a new manager and a completely new way it may take time," said Cech, who kept his place in goal ahead of new signing Bernd Leno.

A tough start for the Spanish coach continues next weekend against Cech's old club Chelsea at Stamford Bridge.

Chelsea's new boss Maurizio Sarri did get off to a winning start in his Premier League debut at Huddersfield.

But Cech believes Arsenal can take heart from Chelsea's own struggles to cope with City in losing the Community Shield 2-0 last weekend.

"Next week we have another big game but we will be better prepared

because we have this game behind us. I believe we pushed them more than Chelsea did in the Community Shield," he added. Many of the concepts Emery wants to implement at Arsenal are similar to what Pep Guardiola has mastered in raising the bar at City.

And the difference between a project now into its third season under Guardiola and Emery's early days was obvious on the opening weekend of the season.

"We try and build the team and create our own way of playing," said Cech. "Obviously we have been doing that for five weeks, they have been doing that for three years now so obviously they have a big advantage."

to keep working knowing it was just the first game, only three points, and we go game by game again to win the Premier League knowing we are only in August." Although City look strong again, Silva claims it could be more difficult to retain the crown now that their rivals know what to expect.

"We want to (win the league), knowing we are playing against a lot of tough teams and that it won't be easy," he said.

"The opponents now know what to expect from us but we will try and do it again, work very hard to win each game week after week and we will see what happens."