



Liverpool's James Milner (right) and Midtjylland's Pione Sisto lock arms during the Champions League Group D soccer match between Liverpool and FC Midtjylland at Anfield stadium in Liverpool, England on Oct 27. (AP)

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Injured Fabinho out of West Ham game

Rookies to step up as Liverpool reel from defensive crisis

LONDON, Oct 29, (AP) — Such is the defensive crisis unfolding at Liverpool that a teenager who spent last season on loan at sixth-tier Kidderminster is set to be entrusted to hold together the injury-hit backline of the Premier League champions over the next few weeks.

Expect to be seeing a lot of 19-year-old Rhys Williams in the coming matches. With his 6-foot-5 (1.97-meter) frame and a man-bun that is becoming a common sight in England's top division, he is hard to miss.

Williams is highly regarded, too, having played for England's under-18, under-19 and under-21 teams.

Still, his likely presence at the heart of Liverpool's defense for Saturday's match against West Ham at Anfield — and probably for a few more games after that — will be ringing some alarm bells among Liverpool fans, and is hardly the kind of predicament Jurgen Klopp can be relishing as he juggles domestic and European commitments in a packed schedule.

When the Liverpool manager signed off on the sale of two center backs — backup Dejan Lovren and young prospect Ki-Jana Hoever — in the offseason, he was content that

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he had three senior players in that position and could also fall back on midfield anchorman Fabinho in an emergency.

However, in a run of misfortune over the past two weeks, Virgil van Dijk sustained a serious knee injury that could rule him out for the season, Joel Matip had a setback on his return from a long-term absence, and then Fabinho pulled up with an injury to his right hamstring during the win over FC Midtjylland in the Champions League on Wednesday.

"Exactly the last thing we needed," Klopp said of Fabinho's injury that will certainly keep the Brazil midfielder out of the West Ham game.

Joe Gomez, a defender searching for his form of last season, stands alone as the sole fit, senior center back available to Klopp. The options alongside him are all young and inexperienced, headlined by Williams but also including 23-year-old Nat Phillips and French 17-year-old Billy Koumetio.

The number of Premier League appearances combined among that trio? Zero.

It is Williams who is set to get the nod initially, with the teenager having performed solidly after replacing Fabinho against Midtjylland. He also went on for the final minutes of the win over Ajax in the opening round of the Champions League's group stage.

"The only problem we have now," Klopp said of Williams after the Midtjylland game, "is that, unfortunately, we have four days to the West Ham game and you will make a story every day about him and then he has to prove he can deal with that as well. "But he is a talent."

Klopp is facing criticism for not signing a replacement for Lovren, the Croatia international who joined Zenit St Petersburg in July.

"It's hard to have four world-class center halves," Klopp said last week, when told former Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher had questioned why another player hadn't been brought in.

"If anyone wants to tell us we made a mistake — I think Carragher mentioned already — there are a few reasons why they don't do this job."

Even when at full strength, Liverpool's defense — the tightest in the Premier League for the last two seasons — has been unusually sloppy this campaign, notably in that astounding 7-2 loss at Aston Villa in the league. The 14 goals Liverpool has conceded so far is tied for the most in the league, along with West Bromwich and Fulham — promoted teams widely considered the favorites for relegation.

Having goalkeeper Alisson Becker back from a shoulder problem is a positive for Klopp, as is the likely absence because of injury of West Ham striker Michail Antonio, a battering ram of a forward who has been one of the Premier League's most prolific players since the resumption of soccer following the coronavirus outbreak.

Next week, though, Liverpool are up against two of the most free-scoring teams in Europe — Atalanta in the Champions League on Tuesday and Manchester City in the Premier League the following Sunday.

It is sink-or-swim time for Williams, who surely cannot have envisaged being in this situation when playing against amateurs in the National League North last season.



Minnesota United forward Aaron Schoenfeld (12) attempts a shot as Colorado Rapids' Lalas Abubakar (6) defends during the first half of an MLS soccer match on Oct 28, in St Paul, Minn. (AP)

Union break tie with Toronto for MLS lead

Timbers clinch playoff berth

CHESTER, Pa., Oct 29, (AP) — Cory Burke scored on a header in the 65th minute and the Philadelphia Union beat the Chicago Fire 2-1 on Wednesday night to break a tie with Toronto FC for the MLS lead.

Philadelphia (13-3-5) have won five of their last six. Chicago (5-9-6) are winless in their last three.

Kacper Przybylko scored on a penalty kick for the Union in the 28th minute.

Robert Beric tied it in the 42nd minute on a pass from Djordje Mihailovic.

Goalkeeper Andre Blake blocked Beric's left-footed shot from a difficult angle in the 64th minute. Beric also missed a header attempt from close range in the 76th.

Timbers 5, Galaxy 2

In Portland, Ore., Jaroslav Niezgodza scored a pair of first-half goals and Portland clinched a spot in the playoffs.

It is the fourth straight season that the Timbers (10-5-5) have made the

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postseason.

Cristian Pavon scored twice for the Galaxy (5-11-3), who have lost eight of their past nine games.

The Timbers went up early on Niezgodza's header to the far post in the sixth minute. He got his second in the 19th minute, giving him seven goals on the season. Portland captain Diego Valeri added a penalty kick in the 30th minute.

Eryk Williamson scored in the 60th minute and Andy Polo's volley in the 74th padded Portland's lead.

Earthquakes 2, RSL 0

In San Jose, Calif., Chris Wondolowski scored twice and San Jose blanked Real Salt Lake.

San Jose (7-8-6) moved into seventh place in the Western Conference, one point behind LAFC and FC Dallas.

Bennett wins Vuelta 9th stage

AGUILAR DEL CAMPOO, Spain, Oct 29, (AP) — Sam Bennett timed the final sprint perfectly to win the ninth stage of the Spanish Vuelta on Thursday.

There were no major changes in the overall standings, with Richard Carapaz keeping a 13-second lead over defending champion Primoz Roglic.

It was the second stage win for Bennett, the Deceuninck-Quick Step rider who also prevailed in the sprint at the end of the fourth stage. It was his eighth win of the year, and 50th of his career. The Irishman won two stages at the Tour de France this year.

Roglic, celebrating his 31st birthday, needed a bicycle change with about 13 kilometers (eight

miles) left because of a mechanical issue but was able to rejoin the peloton.

The final 40 kilometers (24.8 miles) of the stage were a loop around the Aguilar reservoir.

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The peloton stayed bunched up until about five kilometers (3.1 miles) left in the 157-kilometer (97-mile) stage that favored the sprinters.

On Friday, riders will travel 185 kilometers (115 miles) bordering the Cantabrian coast in a mostly flat 10th stage that includes a Category 3 climb near the end.

In the 16th minute, Shea Salinas later crossed to Wondolowski, who tapped in his sixth goal of the season in the 74th minute.

LAFC 2, Dynamo 1

In Los Angeles, Diego Rossi and Eddie Segura scored to lead Los Angeles FC to the victory.

Rossi, despite missing three games on international duty with Uruguay, have an MLS-leading 13 goals this season.

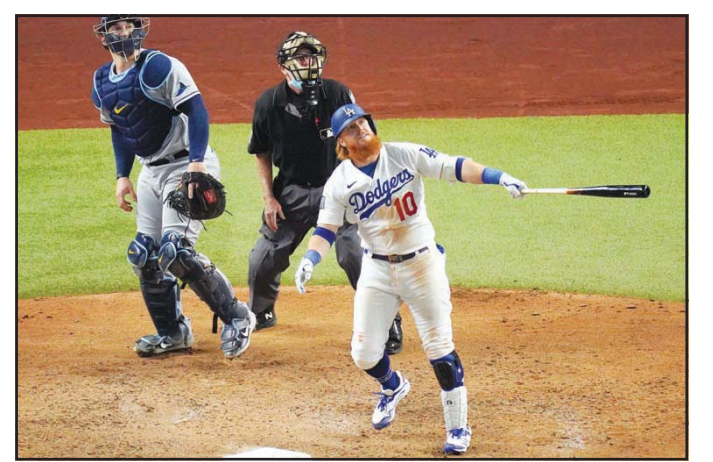
Los Angeles (9-7-4) have won back-to-back games for the second time this season — both in October.

Kenneth Vermeer misplayed the ball as he came off his line and Ariel Lassiter — the 26-year-old son of former MLS star Roy Lassiter — tapped in from point-blank range in the 46th minute to cap the scoring.

Sporting KC 1, FC Cincinnati 0

In Cincinnati, Roger Espinoza scored and Sporting Kansas City clinched a playoff berth with the victory over FC Cincinnati.

Sporting Kansas City (11-6-3) also moved into the Western Conference lead. Cincinnati (4-13-4) lost their third straight match and were eliminated from playoff contention.



Los Angeles Dodgers' Justin Turner flies out against the Tampa Bay Rays during the sixth inning against the Tampa Bay Rays a baseball World Series Game 6, on Oct 27 in Arlington, Texas. (AP)

MLB starts full investigation

'Turner violated protocols when he returned to field'

ARLINGTON, Texas, Oct 29, (AP) — Justin Turner violated coronavirus protocols when he celebrated with his Los Angeles Dodgers teammates and he refused instructions from security to leave the field, behavior that Major League Baseball said risked the safety of others.

The commissioner's office said Wednesday it is starting a full investigation of the 35-year-old third baseman.

The Dodgers won their first World Series championship since 1988 with a 3-1 victory over Tampa Bay in Game 6 on Tuesday night at Globe Life Field.

Turner was pulled from the game following the seventh inning after MLB was notified that he had tested positive for COVID-19. He was quarantined in a doctor's office off to the side, Dodgers president of baseball operations Andrew Friedman said.

Turner later returned to the field with a mask to celebrate the Dodgers' title. He then took down his mask and posed for a team photo on the field.

"Immediately upon receiving notice from the laboratory of a positive test, protocols were triggered, leading to the removal of Justin Turner from last night's game," MLB said in a statement Wednesday. "Turner was placed into isolation for the safety of those around him. However, following the Dodgers' victory, it is clear that Turner chose to disregard the agreed-upon joint protocols

and the instructions he was given regarding the safety and protection of others.

"While a desire to celebrate is understandable, Turner's decision to leave isolation and enter the field was wrong and put everyone he came in contact with at risk. When MLB Security raised the matter of being on the field with Turner, he emphatically refused to comply."

Turner became a free agent when his \$64 million, four-year contract expired following the victory.

Turner's agent, Greg Genske, did not immediately respond to a text from The Associated Press seeking comment.

"Last night, nasal swabs were conducted on the Dodgers' traveling party," MLB said. "Both the Rays and Dodgers were tested again today and their travel back to their home cities will be determined after being approved by the appropriate authorities."

Both teams traveled home from the Dallas area on Wednesday in coordination with their local health authorities, a person familiar with the arrangements said, speaking on condition of anonymity because no announcement was made.

No additional players received positive results from rapid PCR tests early Wednesday, the person said, but the wife of one Rays player tested positive, the person said. The wife and the player did not travel with the team and were to travel on their own, the person said.