

AT THE END OF THE STORM



STORIES FROM
LIVERPOOL'S HISTORIC TITLE WIN

OLIVER KAY · JAMES PEARCE · SIMON HUGHES

AND OTHER AWARD-WINNING WRITERS OF

The Athletic

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[A coherent boardroom vision from US owners FSG has fuelled success on and off the field since the appointment of Jurgen Klopp in 2015, steered by key figures such as former chief executive Ian Ayre \(far left\) who left in 2017, principal owner John W. Henry \(centre left\), chairman Tom Werner \(centre right\) and president Mike Gordon \(far right\). *Getty Images*](#)

[Fabinho dominated the midfield as Liverpool equalled a club record of 12 successive league wins with a 3-1 victory over Arsenal at Anfield in August 2019. Against the same opponents less than a year earlier, in his second start for Liverpool, 'The Lighthouse' had been overwhelmed by the intensity of the Premier League. *Getty Images*](#)

[Sadio Mane receives a calming hand on the shoulder from team-mate Joe Gomez after an outburst following his substitution in the closing stages of their 3-0 win over Burnley on August 31 2019. The Senegal international had been furious when Mohamed Salah failed to pass to him in front of goal. *Getty Images*](#)

[However, the two remain friends as well as team-mates and by November both were on target in a pivotal win over Manchester City. Salah celebrated his strike with Jordan Henderson and Roberto Firmino *Getty Images*](#)

[Before embracing Mane as the forwards focused on their common goal. *Getty Images*](#)

[A group of Sadio Mane's extended family pose outside the huge mansion the Liverpool striker built for them in his home village of Bambali, Senegal, while a young relative watches the game inside. *The Athletic's* Oliver Kay travelled to the village in a remote part of Senegal to watch Liverpool's 3-1 win over Manchester City in their company. Mane did not disappoint, scoring Liverpool's third goal to spark wild celebrations among the watching family. *The Athletic*](#)

[The teeth and the talent. The arrival of Roberto Firmino from Hoffenheim in a £29 million deal in June 2015 has been one of the club's masterpieces in recruitment. The creative forward also has a big personality: when asked what shade he would like his teeth whitened, he answered "*maximo*". *Getty Images*](#)

[Red Bull Salzburg was a crucial staging post in Sadio Mane's journey to Liverpool. He enjoyed a very productive spell in Austria, scoring 23 goals in all competitions during his second season. Mane also adapted to life off the field and once wore lederhosen to a friend's wedding. *Getty Images*](#)

Goalkeeping coach John Achterberg first started tracking Alisson Becker in 2013 as he rose through the ranks at Internacional and his arrival from Roma in 2018 for £65 million has been transformative. After missing 10 weeks at the start of the 2019-20 season, he returned to help inspire his team to the title. *Getty Images*

Trent Alexander-Arnold took the most famous corner in Liverpool's history in their 4-0 win over Barcelona in the Champions League semi-final second leg in 2019. *Getty Images*

The right-back made decisive contributions throughout the title-winning season, including the final strike in a 4-0 win over Leicester City on Boxing Day, after which he imitated Kylian Mbappe's celebration, with his arms across his chest. "Anything Mbappe can do . . ." Alexander-Arnold later tweeted. *Getty Images*

The Athletic's James Pearce sits down with Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp for an exclusive interview in November 2019. "When we start a team meeting the only thing I really know I am going to say is the first sentence," Klopp told Pearce. *The Athletic and Getty Images*

Klopp delivers some final words to his team ahead of kick-off at the 2019 Champions League final. *The Athletic and Getty Images*

The Athletic covered the remarkable rise of Jurgen Klopp from his playing days at FSV Mainz *Getty Images*
To his successful spell as manager of the club (seated with Zeljko Buvac, the assistant who followed Klopp to Liverpool before leaving in 2018). *Getty Images*

Klopp got Mainz promoted to the Bundesliga in 2004 for the first time in their history, and the self-styled 'carnival club' partied for a week. *Getty Images*

When Liverpool scored late to salvage a 2-2 draw with West Brom in 2015, Klopp led his team in front of the Kop to thank the fans for the support they had shown. It was a move that drew criticism, but proved a key turning point in turning Anfield into a fortress. *Getty Images*

Klopp's conviction that true happiness is a social emotion is best conveyed in the image of his autograph card, which does not show his face at all but rather captures him from behind, lifting the Champions League in front of thousands of fans.

Jurgen Klopp prepares to lift the Champions League trophy in 2019. *Getty Images*

After beating Tottenham in the final, before his players throw him in the air in celebration of the club's sixth European Cup. *Getty Images*

Pep Lijnders was at Liverpool before Jurgen Klopp arrived and the club's US owners were insistent that he should form part of the German's staff. The Dutchman has developed a close relationship with Klopp. 'Jurgen surprises me every day. His brain works differently to other people', Lijnders told *The Athletic's James Pearce. Getty Images*

Michael Edwards' journey from frustrated IT teacher to Liverpool's sporting director has been remarkable. It was Edwards who identified Jurgen Klopp as the successor to Brendan Rodgers and his vision that helped bring a roster of world-class talent to the club. Edwards is happy to remain in the shadows and refuses all media requests. *Getty Images*

Mona Nemmer, Liverpool's head of nutrition, poses with the FIFA Club World Cup alongside Andreas Kornmayer (left) head of fitness and conditioning, and first-team physiotherapist Christopher Rohrbeck. Nemmer has revolutionised the players' refuelling habits by bringing in individual diet plans. *Getty Images*

Klopp has frequently praised the contribution of his backroom team in contributing to his marginal gains strategy. (Left to right) Jack Robinson, assistant goalkeeping coach, assistant manager Peter Krawietz, goalkeeping coach John Achterberg, Jurgen Klopp, elite development coach Vitor Matos and assistant Pep Lijnders. Getty Images

Andy Robertson screams at team-mate Mohamed Salah during the shock 3-0 loss to Watford in February 2020, which ended Liverpool's Premier League record 44-game unbeaten run. The result did not derail their title ambitions. Getty Images

Social distancing regulations prevented fans attending matches after the Premier League restarted in June, but 15 fans were allowed into Anfield to make it feel more like home for the players and Liverpool crushed Crystal Palace 4-0 on June 24. "The best behind-closed-doors, counter-pressing football ever," was Jurgen Klopp's verdict. Getty Images

Liverpool's 2019-20 Premier League title was as much a triumph for the city as the football club. The social and political history of the city – and its famous docklands – has been inextricably linked to the football club, exemplified by the celebrations after their Champions League win in 2019. Getty Images

Jordan Henderson ends Liverpool's 30-year wait by lifting the Premier League trophy after their 5-3 win over Chelsea in July. Getty Images

The players celebrate in the dressing room. The club's status as champions had been confirmed the previous month when the Stamford Bridge side beat Manchester City 2-1. Getty Images

INTRODUCTION

When it comes to writing about sports, and particularly football, you always want as much time as possible.

An extra minute can be the difference between making a deadline and falling apart. A late goal can, if you haven't made adequate preparations, completely sink your entire piece.

For Liverpool fans who had waited 30 years for a league title, every extra minute of this season felt like agony. Stretched over months, the seeming inevitability of a first domestic title in three decades didn't temper the concern of wondering if this most unprecedented of seasons, a pandemic-disrupted campaign, might never be allowed to conclude.

Those fears had been narrowed by the Reds' final game before football was put on hold. A shock defeat to Atletico Madrid saw the holders of the Champions League eliminated. A week earlier, Chelsea had knocked them out of the FA Cup to leave Liverpool with a singular objective: the Premier League.

If the tagline for the season of Champions League glory a year earlier was 'this means more', the feeling was that, when it came to the Premier League title in 2020, 'this meant everything' to Liverpool.

Jurgen Klopp's men headed into football's pause with a virtually unassailable 25-point lead and needed just two wins after a three-month break to seal the league championship that had eluded them. Eventually, when Chelsea beat Manchester City in the final week of June, Liverpool won the Premier League title. It was the latest championship ever won, but better late than never.

At *The Athletic*, we took you through every step of Liverpool's record-breaking campaign.

From pre-season optimism and the use of spacesuit technology in recovering from their European Super Cup victory in August, we took Liverpool fans all over the world to provide the best coverage of their club.

Oliver Kay went to Bambali, in Senegal, to watch Sadio Mane play against Manchester City with the winger's family. He captured their pride as Mane scored. He witnessed the joy that a red blob on a tiny screen can generate from thousands of miles away.

In December, with Liverpool pulling away atop the league, James Pearce went to Qatar to see the Reds become champions of the world but this was a time for focus, not festivities.

"Partying?" asked Joe Gomez. "No, I think a recovery rub will be my celebration."

January saw six wins from seven as Liverpool pulled away domestically. February and March saw only a minor wobble until the pandemic hit and everything went on ice.

When it comes to writing about sports, and particularly football, you always want as much time as possible.

While this wait for football to resume was agony for Liverpool's supporters, for us at *The Athletic* it was an opportunity to re-focus and tell the most complete story possible of a historic title win.

And that is what we did.

As the final whistle blew on the game that sealed Liverpool's first-ever Premier League title, we unveiled a schedule encompassing a definitive long read every day for 10 days, taking in every aspect of the Reds' process, approach and success as well as in-depth podcasts breaking down the moments that mattered.

James Pearce and Simon Hughes went deep on Klopp, the fist-pumping genius who transformed the club. We spoke to Tom Werner, the club's chairman, we dissected the tactics, we asked how Liverpool could ensure this wasn't a one-off win. Daniel Taylor and Adam Crafton wrote in-depth about Michael Edwards, the club's secret weapon and Matt Slater did the same with the business decisions that funded a new, global red empire.

And we could do that because we had that precious time.

Our commitment to quality football writing and our business model means that we are uniquely positioned to afford our writers time and space to talk to the right people, to produce the best journalism and most wonderful writing possible.

The result was a season's worth of Liverpool coverage that we are immensely proud of.

The result is this book; a month-by-month journey through a momentous, unprecedented, remarkable season.

Ed Malyon
Managing Director (UK)
The Athletic

AUGUST

LIVERPOOL CHAIRMAN TOM WERNER ON GLORY IN MADRID AND KLOPP'S FUTURE

JAMES PEARCE

AUG 4, 2019

Tom Werner strides down the corridor towards me. “Welcome to Boston. Is it warm enough for you?”

It's 37 degrees outside and the capital of Massachusetts is experiencing its hottest day since 1991.

The handshake from the chairman of Liverpool Football Club is equally warm and the door is opened to his plush Fenway Park office on Jersey Street. It has recently had a makeover. Now taking pride of place in the centre of the wall is a large framed photograph from a cherished night in Madrid.

There is the captain Jordan Henderson, surrounded by his jubilant Liverpool team-mates, lifting the Champions League trophy towards the heavens on the podium. Ticker tape is raining down around them.

Images from the four World Series triumphs Boston Red Sox have enjoyed during Fenway Sports Group's (FSG) reign as owners are positioned around it. “It wasn't a problem making room for that picture. Something else had to leave,” Werner smiles.

The 69-year-old American television producer and businessman shared the unbridled joy of Liverpool's sixth European crown with co-owners John W. Henry and Mike Gordon.

Their nine-year tenure at Anfield had been a tale of eye-catching progress – both on and off the field – but agonising near misses when it came to clinching

silverware. The only trophy they had won in that time was the 2012 League Cup.

Three weeks before the Champions League final there was the heartache of missing out on the Premier League title to Manchester City by a solitary point but in the Estadio Metropolitano, Jurgen Klopp's side finally took the next step as a 2-0 victory over Tottenham delivered the biggest prize in club football.

"It was exhilarating," Werner says. "The whole experience leading up to the final was so remarkable. The match against Barcelona at Anfield (the semi-final second leg when Liverpool overturned a 3-0 deficit) was sensational and I've watched it again a few times since.

"As a person who loves sport, that was probably one of the most thrilling matches ever. Even then it was like, 'OK, well now you have to go and finish the job'. We were all in Kyiv for the final a year earlier and were sorely disappointed. We played quite well for the first 20, 25 minutes before Mo Salah was injured.

"As special as last season was for Liverpool, it was bittersweet towards the end. As successful as we were, we didn't finish the job in the Premier League. To have the opportunity to win the Champions League was so special. We came into this experience wanting to win trophies for the team and for our fans. It was really gratifying to witness that in Madrid. It was an extraordinary evening."

The post-match celebrations continued right through the night inside the club's private party in Madrid's luxurious Eurostars Hotel. Werner bowed out and headed for bed at 4am. Mid-morning the owners flew back to Merseyside with the team to embark on a parade that attracted well over half a million people on to the streets of the city. It opened Werner's eyes to exactly what it meant to write a glorious new chapter in the club's proud European history.

"What it was like is pretty hard to articulate," Werner says. "A picture is worth a thousand words. On my iPhone I've got seven or eight videos from that parade. The relationship between our supporters and the players was so palpable, so special. If you hadn't been there, you'd have described it as remarkable. But it was something much greater than that."

How did it compare to winning the World Series?

“Well, we’ve now been fortunate enough to win the World Series four times after what was a long drought for the Red Sox,” Werner says. “This Champions League win was very special. It’s like your children and being asked to compare one against another; you can’t.”

Talking of droughts, it will be 30 years next May since Liverpool last won English football’s top flight. The Premier League is the trophy that Kopites crave more than any other going into the 2019-20 campaign. The stage looks set for another intriguing battle with Manchester City.

“I think our fans are like our players, manager and us as owners, they want to win everything,” Werner says. “Of course the league title is a big, big ambition but I think last season taught us the key is to focus on just winning the next game and being greedy to keep winning and see where that gets us.

“There’s so much to compete for this season thanks to our success in Madrid. The Super Cup, the Club World Cup competition, domestic cups, the Champions League again and yes, the Premier League. We go into every one of them knowing we are good enough to be in the conversation to win them. I think that’s pretty cool.

“The Liverpool team on that pitch over the past year was such a united team. Listen, we have to compliment Man City. They played flawless football in the Premier League for the final four months of last season. They didn’t drop a point after January.

“I’m not taking anything away from our season, but City are a magnificent football team and it’s going to be a big challenge for us again. I think last season was very good for the sport. It’s important for the Premier League that the competition is there. We don’t want a league like Serie A, where Juventus win it every year without any competition.”

Gracing the Champions League felt a long way off when FSG (then known as New England Sports Ventures) completed their £300 million takeover of Liverpool back in October 2010. The club was in a mess. The debt-ridden and divisive reign of former American owners Tom Hicks and George Gillett had taken its toll.

Two days after winning a High Court battle to buy the club and signing the paperwork at the London offices of law firm Slaughter & May, the scale of the task facing FSG was underlined when Werner and Henry took their seats at

Goodison Park for the Merseyside derby. Roy Hodgson's side slumped to a miserable 2-0 defeat, which left Liverpool 19th in the Premier League table – only goal difference kept them off the bottom. It was an unpleasant experience for the owners in more ways than one.

“There was a lot of chanting in the Everton stands that day,” Werner recalls. “Everton won that match so it wasn't a particularly auspicious opening. After Everton scored one of their goals, one of their supporters spat at John and me. It was a somewhat rude welcome to English football. We've moved forward a lot since that moment. Gradually, the enormity of the task unfolded and revealed itself.”

Within three months Hodgson had been sacked and one of the Kop's icons Kenny Dalglish returned for a second spell in charge to spearhead the resurgence. It's telling that the framed photo of Werner and Henry with the 2012 League Cup at Wembley is tucked away on the shelf behind his chair in his Boston office.

FSG wanted more. They wanted Champions League football and Dalglish was replaced by Brendan Rodgers in a bid to make that happen. The Northern Irishman led Liverpool to the brink of Premier League title glory in 2014 before the wheels came off. It was the appointment of a world-class operator in Klopp in October 2015 that proved to be the real trigger. They have been on an upward curve from the moment he walked through the door.

“Our intention was obviously to progress each year. We've had some stumbles,” Werner says. “There were some challenging moments. There's no question that it hasn't been a continually upward journey but our heart was always in the right place. Our credo was to under-promise and over-deliver.”

One “stumble” arrived in February 2016 when some 10,000 angry fans walked out of Anfield during a game against Sunderland in protest at planned ticket price increases. Stung by the accusations of greed, FSG quickly shelved the changes and a price freeze has been in place ever since.

“We came into that whole discussion about raising ticket prices with the assumption that as long as we froze the vast majority of ticket prices that we could create a tier of seating that was new, not displacing anyone, and at a slightly higher price point,” Werner says. “But we worked our way through that. That was one example of a good learning experience.”

FSG found the perfect solution to the stadium issue they inherited by transforming Anfield with the impressive new £110 million Main Stand, which lifted the capacity to 54,000. “I’m especially proud of the accomplishment we made in figuring out the Main Stand challenge,” Werner says. “There were some dark days early on. We not only had to come up with a scheme that made sense but Liverpool City Council had to convince home owners on Pulford Street to sell so we in turn could buy the land from the council.

“Without 100 per cent participation, we couldn’t have moved forward. We had to slog through that. We were very focused on making sure that the result was as good as it’s turned out. The whole point of it was to improve fan experience. I think we’ve done a good job on that. For the fourth year in a row, we were awarded an honour from the Premier League for providing the best fan experience in the league.

“Just as at Fenway Park, we believe we can somewhat affect the outcome by hopefully hiring a great coach and a great group of people around him. But we can certainly ensure that win or lose, when you come to Anfield that it’s a special experience and I’m proud of what we’ve done.”

With tickets so hard to come by, fans are keen for FSG to push on and redevelop the Anfield Road End. That would lift capacity past 60,000 but the owners are still considering their options.

“We continue to assess the feasibility of expanding Anfield Road and although the existing planning permission expires in September this year, if we decide to move forward with a different design, we would apply for a new planning permit,” Werner says.

In total some £200 million has been invested in the club’s infrastructure. A new £50 million training complex in Kirkby is taking shape and Klopp’s squad will relocate there next summer when they leave their historic Melwood home.

“As we looked around the other training facilities in the Premier League, we didn’t feel like we were near the top,” Werner says. “With the input of the coaching staff, Jurgen, Michael Edwards (sporting director), Alex Inglethorpe (academy director) and Pep Lijnders (assistant manager), these people have all participated in helping to shape what we believe will be a first-class facility at Kirkby.”

Financially, Liverpool are now a very different beast. Total annual revenues have leapt from £184 million in 2011 to £455 million for the year up to the end of May 2018. Champions League glory will inflate those figures still further. Hefty losses have been turned into healthy profits. *Forbes* magazine now values the club at £1.73 billion.

“We are exceptionally proud of the growth of the club commercially,” Werner says. “We have narrowed the gap with Manchester United. We were talking about this theory of the virtuous circle – the stronger we are commercially, the stronger we can be on the pitch, the stronger we are on the pitch, the stronger we are commercially.

“We’ve had double-digit growth under the leadership of Billy Hogan (managing director and chief commercial officer). It’s very important to us, as, among other things, that has enabled us to invest in our squad and invest in Kirkby.”

There has also been a concerted effort to strengthen the club’s bond with the local community. Werner is a trustee of the LFC Foundation, which was established as an independent charity back in 2010 to help those in need.

One in three children in Liverpool live below the poverty line. Life expectancy is lower than the national average and unemployment is higher.

The foundation focuses its work on helping children and families in areas of deprivation. Some 28,630 youngsters took part in the club’s array of programmes in 2018-19 – an 86 per cent increase on the previous season. An annual legends match at Anfield raises about £1 million, which is used to help fund the foundation.

A collective sense of unity has propelled Liverpool forward. At the heart of it all is Klopp. His passion, drive, knowledge and tactical acumen inspires those around him. Securing his services has arguably been FSG’s finest achievement.

“What comes through from Jurgen is what a kind, humble, intelligent, confident and good humoured leader he is,” Werner says. “He’s obviously the right person for Liverpool. We were convinced of that the first time John, Mike and I met him in New York.

“The match between the aspirations of our fan base, the history of the club and Jurgen, they match up in a way that is really perfect. I’m sure he could have taken a job at any other top club but I think this has been a great match.

“I think he would be a brilliant psychologist if he wasn’t such a great manager. He brings out the best in players. The moment I’ll remember more than any other from the final in Madrid is when the players embraced Jurgen and then threw him up in the air on the pitch. We can talk about what a remarkable coach he is but the love that you felt in that moment between Jurgen and his players was so great. There’s so much respect for him and what he’s done for them. There was great love in that moment.”

Shrewd recruitment has been key to Liverpool’s rise. They have bought wisely and sold even better. When you consider the quality of the star-studded squad they have now compared to the one Klopp inherited, it’s remarkable that his net spend over four years is only about £105 million. The £142 million sale of Philippe Coutinho to Barcelona in January 2018 effectively paid for the world class duo of defender Virgil van Dijk and goalkeeper Alisson. The fees shelled out for Mohamed Salah (£43 million) and Sadio Mane (£30 million) now look like small change considering how their value has rocketed.

After the addition of £170 million worth of talent into Klopp’s squad last summer, this transfer window has been decidedly quiet for Liverpool. There has been no big show of force from the European champions. At a time when the lure of Anfield is arguably greater than it has been at any point since the 1980s, Klopp has largely decided to stick with what he’s got.

Quizzed about the lack of new arrivals, Werner says: “Jurgen has articulated the situation really well by pointing not only to the strength we already have but the strength we have to come back. Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain is back, Rhian Brewster is available properly for the first time I’d say, Naby Keita a year on, I could go on...

“It’s also a very high-quality team and squad, which makes signing players who are better than we currently have more challenging. What I would say is that we always remain ambitious and we remain committed to keeping this amazing squad together and at a level where it can be competitive for all the big trophies.”

Klopp has made Anfield a final destination for elite talent rather than a stepping stone, with Salah, Mane and Roberto Firmino all signing new long-term deals. But what about the manager’s future? Klopp’s contract runs until

2022. FSG would have happily rewarded him with a lucrative extension this summer but the manager has made it clear he's happy to wait.

"I'd rather not talk too much about private conversations that we've had but suffice to say that we all think he's just exceptional. Jurgen knows what we think of him," Werner says.

Liverpool remains a long-term project for FSG. The mission is to ensure that winning the Champions League marks the start of a golden era. "Our channel put out a video the day after we won the Champions League final, which showed the celebrations of our fans all around the world," he says. "You watch that and you realise that we are custodians of something that is so meaningful. It makes it all worthwhile. We know the relationship between our supporters and the club is extraordinary, it's unique.

"We certainly understand that there will be good days and bad days ahead. As owners, one has to have a bit of a thick skin to be involved in this. We're in it for the long haul. I'm excited about the path that we're on. We go into the season confident we'll be performing at a very high level again this year.

"There is going to be a target on our backs now against all the other teams that we play. We are back as one of the truly great clubs in the world and everyone will bring their best energy to try to beat Liverpool.

"But our players are still very hungry to be successful. By and large, they are quite young. I'm looking forward to seeing what we can achieve again this season."

There's still space on that wall for more iconic achievements. If Liverpool kick on as Werner expects, the hall of fame in his Boston office will require another rejig next May.

NO BIG SIGNINGS BUT ELECTRIC LIVERPOOL SHOULD CONTINUE TO FLOURISH UNDER KLOPP

JAMES PEARCE

AUG 4, 2019

The message from Jurgen Klopp has been clear. After a summer of wild celebrations for everyone connected with Liverpool Football Club, the time has come to look forward rather than back. The memories of June's Champions League final triumph over Tottenham will last a lifetime, but Klopp doesn't want that night in Madrid to go down in the history books as the pinnacle of his Anfield reign. Momentum has to be maintained.

"Let's be greedy" was Klopp's message to his players when they reassembled at Melwood for pre-season. And there's plenty to whet their appetite considering what's at stake over the next nine months.

Liverpool's status as European champions means Klopp must juggle the added demands of a Super Cup showdown with Chelsea in Istanbul on August 14 and December's FIFA Club World Cup in Qatar.

Emulating the dazzling achievements of 2018-19 won't be easy. Liverpool's 97 points in the Premier League was the highest tally in their 127-year history. They suffered only one league defeat all season, but it still wasn't enough to finish ahead of Manchester City.

The reality is that Klopp's men have the misfortune of competing against the most formidable winning machine English football has ever seen. City have collected 198 points over their back-to-back title campaigns.

Liverpool's latest pursuit of the Holy Grail has added significance as next May marks the 30th anniversary of their last top-flight crown. When the club previously fell agonisingly short in Premier League title races, in 2002, 2009 and 2014, on each occasion they regressed and soon slipped back into the chasing pack. It's hard to see history repeating itself. Not under this manager. Not with the array of talent at Klopp's disposal.

The same two-horse race looks a certainty. It's a rivalry which has been growing in intensity but the big question is: Have Liverpool really got enough in their armoury to depose Pep Guardiola's side?

There has been no booming statement of intent in the transfer market this summer. They certainly haven't sought to leapfrog City by getting the cheque book out. There have been just two signings. Firstly, young Dutch defender Sepp van den Berg, who has joined from PEC Zwolle for an initial fee of £1.3 million. Secondly, 16-year-old Fulham winger Harvey Elliott. Klopp insists that Liverpool's continued development as a team this season will come from within. He's adamant that he's got what he needs for the challenges ahead.

"We have solutions for all the situations," was the German's assessment.

Klopp's approach has divided opinion. Some regard it as a glaring missed opportunity at a time when Liverpool's pulling power is so strong after being crowned kings of Europe. Others have been quick to point out that the manager has earned their unwavering trust considering the transformation he has overseen at Anfield over the past four years.

His reign has already shown the value of waiting to land who he really wants rather than chasing after inferior options. Virgil van Dijk's £75 million move from Southampton was the perfect example. Klopp has never been one for stockpiling players and he likes operating with a tight-knit group where everyone feels they have a genuine chance of forcing their way in.

Ultimately, it comes down to depth and some concerns are understandable considering the schedule Liverpool are facing and the sheer calibre of City.

Klopp's dazzling front three are the envy of clubs worldwide. Mohamed Salah, Sadio Mane and Roberto Firmino will once again be tasked with tormenting defenders across the continent. They scored 91 goals between them in 2017-18 and a further 69 last term as Mane and Salah shared the Golden Boot with Arsenal's Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang.



[Andy Robertson screams at team-mate Mohamed Salah during the shock 3-0 loss to Watford in February 2020, which ended Liverpool's Premier League record 44-game unbeaten run. The result did not derail their title ambitions. Getty Images](#)



Social distancing regulations prevented fans attending matches after the Premier League restarted in June, but 15 fans were allowed into Anfield to make it feel more like home for the players and Liverpool crushed Crystal Palace 4-0 on June 24. “The best behind-closed-doors, counter-pressing football ever,” was Jurgen Klopp’s verdict. *Getty Images*



Liverpool's 2019-20 Premier League title was as much a triumph for the city as the football club. The social and political history of the city – and its famous docklands – has been inextricably linked to the football club, exemplified by the celebrations after their Champions League win in 2019. *Getty Images*



[Jordan Henderson ends Liverpool's 30-year wait by lifting the Premier League trophy after their 5-3 win over Chelsea in July. *Getty Images*](#)