

Date: 13 May 2018

Opposition: Brighton & Hove Albion

Competition: League

Times

Mirror

BBC

Guardian

Mail

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Independent

Telegraph

13 May 2018

THE TIMES

Now it's time to bring on Real, says Klopp

Liverpool 4 Salah 26, Lovren 40, Solanke 53, Robertson 85 Brighton & Hove Albion 0 Referee K Friend Attendance 50,752

Jürgen Klopp has said one of the truisms about life at Liverpool is that there is seldom any time to revel in the moment. Yet in the immediate aftermath of Dominic Solanke battering a shot into the Brighton & Hove Albion net, even the Liverpool manager found a small window of opportunity to bask in what his side were about to achieve. "After we went 3-0 up it was the first time this season which I could really enjoy things," Klopp said. "Somebody told me then that it was 3-0 to Newcastle [versus Chelsea], so I thought, 'OK, that's done.' Even I knew we would be in the Champions League. Then I had a seat and watched the last few minutes. "It is a fantastic, fantastic achievement from the boys. Last year everybody said we went to the Champions League because we didn't have Champions League or European football.

"We had to prove that it was possible to play in the Champions League and qualify for the Champions League, and that for us was the next step. The relief is a much bigger feeling than the happiness." The enormity of what looms on the horizon for Liverpool — a Champions League final showdown with Real Madrid on Saturday May 26 in Ukraine, soon snapped Klopp back to reality but the huge grin adorning his face betrayed a manager who is now relishing that match.

Liverpool's stride had slowed to a crawl in recent weeks due to injury and a punishing schedule, and it was no coincidence that with seven days to prepare for this game they were back to something like their most beguiling, intense and effervescent best. Certainly the prospect of what they could produce in Kiev, given they have two weeks to prepare, whets the appetite a little more with preparations intensifying at a training camp in Marbella this week.

That it was Mohamed Salah who conjured the breakthrough, and lanced what tension had initially gripped the afternoon, felt apt.

His 32nd goal of a remarkable league campaign came after Trent Alexander-Arnold burst through centrally and played a pass to Solanke whose layoff Salah stroked home with all the composure he has come to embody.

The 25-year-old has now scored more goals in a 38-game Premier League season than anyone else with Cristiano Ronaldo, Alan Shearer and Luis Suárez, all three having previously registered 31, falling by the wayside. Expunging the Portuguese from the record books is one thing, eclipsing him in the NSC Olimpiyskiy Stadium will be another. There are times when Liverpool appear an unstoppable force and, though Brighton's insistence on trying to play out of trouble had the reverse effect and encouraged the hosts to lay siege upon Mat Ryan's goal, they were clearly in the mood. After Salah's opener, Solanke put Sadio Mané through and he shot wastefully straight at the Brighton goalkeeper, ignoring the unmarked Roberto Firmino to his left. Soon after Mané was clear again and, this time, elected to tee up the supporting Salah only to underhit the pass. Ryan saved the Egyptian's first attempt before his follow-up effort was acrobatically cleared off the line by Shane Duffy. However, there was never any sense Liverpool would rue such profligacy. Breathing space came in the 40th minute when Andrew Robertson curled over a cross from the left and Dejan Lovren arrived unchecked to power a firm header into the net. Brighton, who had the misfortune of facing champions Manchester City at the Etihad Stadium four days earlier, could not cope although Chris Hughton, their manager, understandably spared his players a scolding given their sizeable efforts in maintaining top-flight status.

Liverpool's third arrived soon after the break via a flowing move that swept the length of the pitch. Lovren found Firmino who transferred the ball to Salah and he, after leaving Lewis Dunk grounded, offloaded a pass to Solanke.

The striker's finish fizzed beyond Ryan in a blur, cannoning off the underside of the crossbar to bring his first goal for the club and give Klopp his respite.

Robertson opened his account for the club, lashing home from close range after Dunk succeeded only in diverting Danny Ings's cross into his path with five minutes remaining. The rout was the 14th occasion this season Liverpool have scored four or more goals in a game, the second-highest tally in their history with the feat managed 16 times in 1895-96. Salah had departed to a standing ovation before the final goal. He returned for the now-traditional lap of honour with Makka, his daughter, to collect the golden boot for being the Premier League's leading scorer. He was upstaged by the youngster who received a cheer from the Anfield crowd every time she kicked one of the balls that were at the side of the pitch. But, in any case, it is a giant silver trophy that Salah will seek to hoist aloft later this month. "You can imagine what it's like if every single day somebody says how brilliant you are, and not only say you are brilliant but they give you an Oscar, an award for this, an award for that," Klopp said of the double player of the year. "I thought he was going to get an award for getting out the car without having an accident. It's really difficult to stay focused and he is focused.

"I'm happy for him that he gets the golden boot. But it's very important that he has two weeks to prepare for our biggest game so far, that's for sure.

"It's a massive one. Now I'm really looking forward to it. Until now it's been, 'Come on, let's not talk about it, really we have this game and this game first.' But now, we will be ready. That's really cool.

"This gives us a big boost. Imagine if we had been in the final and the only chance to get into the Champions League was to win the Champions League final. That's maybe not the best option to choose. But it's exciting now."

RATINGS

Liverpool (4-2-3-1): L Karius 7 — T Alexander-Arnold 8, D Lovren 8, V van Dijk 7, A Robertson 8 — J Henderson 8, G Wijnaldum 7 — M Salah 9 (sub: B Woodburn 83min), R Firmino 8 (sub: D Ings 83), S Mané 7 (sub: A Lallana 74) — D Solanke 8. Substitutes not used S Mignolet, N Clyne, R Klavan, A Moreno.

Brighton & Hove Albion (4-4-1-1): M Ryan 7 — E Schelotto 5, S Duffy 5 (sub: C Goldson 71), L Dunk 5, G Bong 5 — S March 5, D Pröpper 5, D Stephens 5, A Knockaert 5 — B Kayal 5 (sub: P Gross 57, 5) — J Locadia 5 (sub: G Murray 57, 6). Substitutes not used T Krul, Bruno, L Ulloa, M Suttner.

the guardian

Liverpool clinch fourth after Mohamed Salah kickstarts romp against Brighton

Liverpool left it typically late to seal Champions League qualification but their farewell to an uplifting Premier League season and warm-up for Real Madrid were otherwise faultless. Mohamed Salah began an emphatic defeat of Brighton with a record 32nd goal of the league campaign and another Kop favourite, Andy Robertson, closed it with his first for the club. Anfield absorbed the exhibition in between.

"The perfect finale to a very exciting, intense season," said Jürgen Klopp. "We showed again the kind of football that we couldn't in the last few games because the boys are human, not machines."

Salah's contribution this season suggests otherwise. The Egypt international ended the afternoon with the Golden Boot, presented by Kenny Dalglish while his young daughter, Makka, enjoyed a kick-about, and as the most prolific goalscorer in a 38-game Premier League season, eclipsing Luis Suárez, Cristiano Ronaldo and Alan Shearer in the process.

Salah has not been the only Liverpool player to deliver consistently when it mattered. Klopp's team qualified for the Champions League for a second season running with an unbeaten home record. This sunny Sunday-afternoon stroll against Chris Hughton's side was also the 14th occasion that Liverpool scored four or more goals in a game. Only once, in 1895-96, has that record been bettered.

Klopp said of his leading goalscorer: "It's fantastic what he has done. The last few weeks especially were difficult with every single day someone saying how brilliant you are and giving you an Oscar for this, an award for that, even getting out of the car without having an accident. This gives us a big boost. Imagine if the only chance to get into the Champions League was to win the Champions League final. That's maybe not the best option to choose, but it's exciting now."

The referee was well-placed when Shane Duffy handled a cross and felled Salah but waved away both appeals. When Sadio Mané then shot straight at Ryan having been played clean through by the impressive Solanke it could have been a cue for apprehension among the home fans. But they appear immune to that these days. There is a belief in their team's potency that the unerring accuracy of Salah has helped cement and the first time he found space inside a crowded Brighton area another record fell at his feet.

Salah broke the Premier League scoring record when Trent Alexander-Arnold drove through the Brighton midfield and found Solanke on the edge of the area. The striker turned the ball on to Salah, who needed one touch to create space for a low left-foot finish. It was his 44th goal in total this season. A hat-trick against Real Madrid on 26 May will be required to equal Ian Rush's all-time Liverpool record.

Dejan Lovren delivered the comfort of a two-goal lead with a towering header from Robertson's inviting cross after Brighton cleared a corner but left the centre-half unmarked for the return ball. The cushion should have arrived earlier but Mané, having found himself through on goal once more, attempted to gift-wrap a second for Salah and enabled Ryan to intercept before Duffy blocked his second attempt on the goalline. Klopp went apoplectic in his technical area at Liverpool's indulgence. It never seemed likely to cost them.

Georginio Wijnaldum and Roberto Firmino wasted excellent chances before the break — several in the Brazilian's case — but the scoreline offered a more accurate reflection of Liverpool's dominance when Solanke struck his first league goal for the club. It was an excellent finish too, created by Salah, who took Firmino's pass and evaded two challenges before releasing Solanke inside the area. The Chelsea graduate gave Ryan no chance with a powerful drive that flew in via the underside of the bar.

To cap a perfect afternoon for Klopp's team the final goal of the home season fell to the popular Robertson, perfectly placed to open his Liverpool account after Danny Ings' cross deflected into his path. Adding to the manager's satisfaction was the complete absence of fatigue in his players, something that had slowed their approach to the finishing line, having had a week to prepare for Brighton. A fortnight before Kiev looks ideal.

"A few people have asked me whether it's too long but no, it's perfect," said Klopp. "It's like a little pre-season for us. The boys need a little bit of rest. We will give them two days now and then we will go to a camp. We will not train high intensity, we will do a little tactical stuff, a little fitness work, keep them in shape and then we have five days to prepare for the last game. We are all happy about that."

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The Mail

Mohamed Salah clinches Premier League's Golden Boot as Reds seal top-four finish and Champions League qualification

He made it look simple. Then again, he always makes them look simple. A shift of the hips, a dart into space then a shot drilled, unerringly, into the bottom corner. Mohamed Salah has scored these kind of goals all season, making the difficult seem routine, but the one that arrived in the 26th minute of Liverpool's final day clash with Brighton was anything but ordinary. This one – number 32 in the Premier League – made history. For Jurgen Klopp, it was a strike to define the game and set Liverpool on their way to Champions League qualification once again. But for Salah, this swish of his left foot propelled him beyond the modern giants – Alan Shearer, Cristiano Ronaldo, Luis Suarez – and into territory of his own. What a remarkable year this has been for the Kop's Egyptian King. There were no expectations when he arrived back in England last July but he has turned himself into a phenomenon; 32 goals in a top-flight campaign? The only Liverpool to beat that figure is Gordon Hodgson – in 1931. No wonder the applause rang around Anfield like thunder when Klopp decided he had done enough in the 83rd minute. By that point, as he left the pitch waving to all corners, he had secured the Golden Boot and Liverpool had secured their ultimate objective. 'It's fantastic what he has done,' said Klopp. 'The last few weeks especially were difficult. You can imagine what it's like if every single day somebody says how brilliant you are. They not only say you are brilliant but they give you an Oscar, an award for this, an award for that. 'I thought he was going to get an award for getting out the car. It's really difficult to stay focused and he IS focused. But he has played this season outstandingly. He is young enough and has enough potential to improve. That's really good news for all of us and him as well.' It would be unrealistic to think he can repeat such totals but what is beyond doubt is Salah's ability in front of goal – and Liverpool's ability to score many goals; Real Madrid will watch the DVDs of this game and be mindful that their opponents enjoyed the perfect warm-up for the showdown in Kiev. Conquering Europe would be an unexpected, glorious bonus but the main target was to get back in the competition next season; there was real pressure on Klopp, whose team have stuttered in recent weeks, to deliver and his irritable demeanour confirmed as much. He barked at the match officials when they got decisions wrong – never more so than in the 18th minute when Kevin Friend waved away a penalty claim after Shane Duffy had upended Salah – and screeched at his players when they failed to follow his orders. In reality, though, Liverpool's place in the top four – which they have held since December 13 – was never in danger. The game was up for Chelsea when Dwight Gayle scored in the 23rd minute of their match at Newcastle and 180 seconds later, Klopp's men were over the hill and far away. The move started when Trent Alexander-Arnold, who is playing himself into Gareth Southgate's World Cup thoughts with each passing minute, galloped forward and fed Dominic Solanke, who quickly fed Salah. Once he wriggled away from Duffy, the inevitable happened. Shot. Goal. And in a flash, the tension was gone. Liverpool began to open up and could have had four before half-time. As it was, they only added Dejan Lovren's thumping header, the defender rising highest to bullet Andrew Robertson's cross past Mat Ryan. Goal number three, which arrived 11 minutes after the restart, was arguably the best of them all, as a flashing counterattack that involved Roberto Firmino and Salah ended with Solanke hammering a right-footed drive in off the bar. 'The game started difficult for him,' said Klopp. 'He slipped, lost the ball, things like that; missed a big chance. But then he was involved in nearly all the dangerous situations. I'm happy for him; he had a big smile on his face after the game. Well deserved.' Similar sentiments were applied to Robertson, who completed the drubbing in the 86th minute with a left-footed drive that nearly carried Brighton's Lewis Dunk into the net, too, making this Liverpool's 14th four-goal haul of the campaign. Only the 1895-96 team, with 16, can better that tally. With such armoury, Liverpool should fear nothing when they go to Kiev in 12 days. Real Madrid are rightly favourites and their reputation is mighty but Klopp's mantra is goals, his players – especially Salah – live for goals and they won't be found wanting in a shootout. 'We were up against a team that started with a forward line like that, so we knew we'd be in for a difficult afternoon,' said Brighton manager Chris Hughton. 'That's the level they're at. They're a team that we're all hoping can win the Champions League.' Maintaining this kind of level – a training camp in Marbella will be crucial to them keeping their peak – and Liverpool might just do so. 'I'm really looking forward to it,' said Klopp. 'Until now, it's been "Come on! Let's not talk about it, we have this game first!" But now? We will be ready. That's really cool.'

MATCH FACTS, RATINGS, TABLE AND MATCH ZONE

LIVERPOOL (4-2-3-1):

Karius 6; Alexander-Arnold 7.5, Van Dijk 7, Lovren 7, Robertson 7; Henderson 7.5, Wijnaldum 7; Salah 8 (Woodburn 84mins), Firmino 7.5 (Ings 83mins), Mane 6.5 (Lallana 71mins 6); Solanke 7 Subs not used: Mignolet (GK), Clyne, Klavan, Moreno Goals: Salah 26, Lovren 40, Solanke 53, Robertson 85 Manager: Jurgen Klopp

BRIGHTON (4-1-4-1):

Ryan 7.5; Schelotto 5, Dunk 6, Duffy 5 (Goldson 71mins 6), Bong 5.5; Propper 6; Knockaert 5, Stephens 6, Kayal 5 (Gross 57mins 6), March 6; Locadia 5 (Murray 57mins 5) Subs not used: Krul (GK), Bruno, Ulloa, Suttner Manager: Chris Hughton 6

Referee: K Friend 5 Attendance: 50,752 Star man: Mohamed Salah

The Daily Telegraph

Euphoric Klopp hails Liverpool's top-four finish

Liverpool 4 Salah 26, Lovren 40, Solanke 53, Robertson 85 Brighton and Hove Albion 0 Att: 50,752 Jurgen Klopp has not been so euphoric after any other Liverpool win this season - not on any of those consuming European nights; not after destroying Porto; not after defeating Manchester City; not even after overcoming Roma to reach the Champions League final.

The moment of victory over Brighton and Hove Albion to secure participation in next year's Champions League finally enabled him to celebrate the chance of winning it on May 26. All the emotions buried at the Etihad Stadium and Stadio Olimpico were finally exposed, the German coach unburdening himself as his prime ambition was realised. It felt like he was back in Rome, in front of those away fans, fist-pumping and arm waving without fretting that such experiences might be denied his club next year. The endurance test of the Premier League was over, Klopp said his players would take on Real Madrid with less pressure and more freedom once they get to Kiev via a 'mini pre-season' at a Spanish training camp. "After we went 3-0 up, it was the first minute in the season I could enjoy it," said Klopp. "Somebody told me it is 3-0 at Newcastle United. I knew it is done. I knew we were in the Champions League. It is a fantastic achievement by the boys. Last year everyone said we went to the Champions League because we didn't have European football. "This, for us, is the next step. It is a perfect finale to an intense season. We showed the football we could, which has not shown in past few games because the boys are human, not machines. I am so happy and proud of the boys." This was the outcome most had taken for granted, Liverpool easing past unmotivated opposition to reaffirm Champions League status.

Not so Klopp. Before now, it has been nine years since Liverpool qualified for the competition in successive campaigns. The prolonged exile in the post-Rafael Benitez era was a symbol of how the lustre at Anfield was fading.

Returning, cementing the position and - potentially - winning it, again shows the polish is back. Consider the scars that needed healing since this last happened in 2009 - five managers, a club takeover as well as team and stadium rebuilds.

Liverpool have enjoyed success during trying periods in their recent history, but it is more than 30 years since every aspect of the club was ready to make the most of it on and off the pitch. In many respects, the season ended as it had proceeded since August for Liverpool. Mohamed Salah scored, Roberto Firmino hassled opposition defenders into submission and the chant acclaiming Scottish leftback Andy Robertson matched all others. This has been an Anfield campaign where global superstars and cult heroes have emerged, hailed with equilibrium by The Kop. Any Real Madrid scouts present and scribbling notes would have registered nothing new about the style, zeal and ambition of this Liverpool side, but they will have identified what difference a seven-day rest does to them.

The bloodhounds were let loose on Brighton. The Spanish observers' most positive assessment ahead of the Champions League final would be that the final is on neutral territory. Liverpool would fancy anyone here.

Only once previously in the past 30 years have the club gone a full season without a home league defeat. When Salah struck the first after 26 minutes to puncture limited Brighton resistance, there was no possibility of a stumble on the last lap.

"They're a team that we're all hoping can win the Champions League in a few weeks' time," said Brighton manager, Chris Hughton.

"At this moment, if you look at the two most difficult away games you'd say they are Manchester City and Liverpool." For Salah, a season of personal triumph may yet end in the ultimate team award. Every recent strike has been a landmark. His 32nd in the Premier League ensured he has scored more than anyone in a 38-game campaign. If he can claim a hat-trick against Real Madrid, he will match Ian Rush's club record of 47 in a single season. That is unlikely, obviously, but when Liverpool attack like this they inject terror. Klopp has been circumspect in his recent praise for Salah, relieved the accolades did not prove distracting.

"Everyone gives you an Oscar, an award for this and award for that, for getting out of the car without an accident," he said. "It is really difficult to stay focused, but he was focused. He is really difficult to defend, but he is young enough to improve." Top status was effectively preserved once Salah pounced on Dominic Solanke's clever flick to beat Matthew Ryan after 26 minutes and Liverpool subsequently mounted one of their attacking blitzes, one of those irresistible spells which could have yielded another four before half-time.

They had to settle for one before the break, Dejan Lovren connecting with Robertson's left-wing cross. Solanke and Robertson would score their first Liverpool goals in the second half, by which time the contest had become a training session. As the players re-emerged 10 minutes after their 4-0 victory for a lap of appreciation worthy of the name - led by the imperious Salah and his collection of Player of the Year awards - it truly was a reminder of how things used to be at this place. The final home game would rarely be a farewell in those dominant years, but a send-off ahead of the history-chasing to come.

"Now I am really looking forward to it," said Klopp. "Now, we will be ready."

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THE INDEPENDENT

Mohamed Salah breaks 38-game goal record as Liverpool blow away Brighton to seal Champions League spot

Mohamed Salah jeered by Anfield by his own supporters. There was, in fact, a touching moment after Liverpool had confirmed their victory, when Salah returned to the pitch accompanied by his three-year-old daughter, Makka, who started kicking a ball around while her dad received awards from Kenny Dalglish and conducted TV interviews.

The stadium hailed every touch and when Salah intervened, they booed. It made Salah laugh and prompted him to beat his chest in appreciation. You do not sense he wants to be anywhere but here, the place where he is realising individual fantasies. Liverpool's other players would soon join him on the traditional end of season lap of honour, yet their season is far from complete. In two weekends time, of course, we will see whether theirs and Salah's collective dreams can be realised in Kiev.

Salah's working day had involved kneeling down and blessing the turf by kissing it. Behind him, the eyes of the Kop were on one player, the one in a blood red shirt and the number eleven on his back. Salah had scored again – his 44th of an astonishing season. Liverpool were in need of an opening goal and the Egyptian had delivered it.

With Salah, it is sometimes difficult to know where to start when describing what has happened. Liverpool's win means they are guaranteed to play Champions League football again, so for Jürgen Klopp – that's the most important thing. Yet look at Salah: he broke a [Premier League](#) record, becoming the first player to score 32 goals in a 38-game campaign, surpassing the previous record set by Alan Shearer and also achieved by Luis Suárez and Cristiano Ronaldo.

It is possible that Salah might even spend Sunday evening contemplating why he did not get closer to the golden number of 47 – the number set by Ian Rush in 1984 when his efforts in a year which concluded with European Cup glory in Rome, saw him score more times in a single season than any other player in Liverpool's history.

Rush's four at Coventry City in the third to last game helped him reach that figure. Afforded freedoms by a Brighton team that performed like they'd secured their safety ten days ago, Salah could have had a similar amount here. When he was substituted with five minutes remaining, his disappointment was clear, burying his head in his hands. To be critical of Salah, though – to be critical of Liverpool, indeed – would be harsh. Salah was a constant menace. Liverpool were not ruthless but they were energetic, convincing, utterly dominant and they did win 4-0.

This was the 14th time Liverpool had scored four or more in the season across all competitions; the second highest since its foundation, eclipsed only by the 16 times in 1895/96 – back when lots of goals was as natural a feature in football matches as breathing or sex in life.

Klopp was delighted. "Perfect," he said. "We could have scored more because we missed the better chances but I'm happy that we didn't because Brighton wouldn't have deserved that."

Klopp was being generous. The first half had been a mash of beautiful attacking chaos, only Brighton did not have it in them to join in. Liverpool should have had three penalties, two of them as obvious as you will see. Yet referee Kevin Friend did not see and twice, Shane Duffy escaped for a handball and then chopping down Salah – so did Lewis Dunk, who shoved Dominic Solanke. With a burning sense of injustice, Liverpool finally took the lead even though by the 30-minute mark, their lead could have been by as many as three open play goals anyway – and this reflected their control.

Liverpool were playing well but an advantage was established mainly because it needed someone to surge forward and attack Brighton's defence from deep.

Trent Alexander-Arnold did that and in feeding Solanke – the surprise choice to replace an injured James Milner – a gap opened up for Salah. With a swipe of the left boot, Liverpool were ahead.

It was a delight to watch from there. Liverpool's play involved all styles: short passes and flicks; long passes and close controls: defenders joining the attack and attackers tracking back, helping the defence. There was crosses, corners, volleyed shots and headers. It became 2-0 when Robertson from his position far on the left reached Dejan Lovren at the back post. Thump.

The crazy thing about Salah is, he leaves you with an impression that more is possible. His unselfishness led to Solanke's first Liverpool goal. Salah could have carried on running but in releasing the forward, it allowed the 21-year-old to unleash a fierce shot past Matthew Ryan. Liverpool's fourth arrived late and again it was a first for the club, this time from left back Andrew Robertson.

For Liverpool, the attention now swings towards that trip to Ukraine and the prospect Real Madrid. Should Salah find a hat-trick there and catch Rush, surely Liverpool will be champions of Europe again and a Ballon d'Or award will follow. "The last few weeks have been really difficult for him because everyone has been telling him how brilliant he is, it has been like winning an Oscar every day," Klopp joked. "If he can carry on in Kiev, well..."

DAILY Mirror

THE KING IS RED ..LONG LIVE THE KING

IF ever there was a picture to put into perspective the incredible achievements of Mo Salah, it came at the end of this wonderful game.

Before Liverpool's relieved and proud players could take their well-deserved lap of honour to mark qualifying for the Champions League for the second year in succession, there was a special presentation on the pitch.

Very special. Out came the King himself, Kenny Dalglish, to hand over three glittering trophies. The PFA and FWA Footballer of the Year awards, and a shining, glinting Golden Boot (below).

It was as if it was a passing of the crown to the Egyptian King.

An overblown metaphor, inferring greatness where it is not yet deserved? Well, perhaps. It is just one season after all. But what a season. What a show.

Put into perspective what Salah has achieved. In scoring his 32nd Premier League goal of the season, he broke the league record for a 38-game campaign - moving past the previous joint-holders Alan Shearer (below), Cristiano Ronaldo and Luis Suarez.

Think about it. He has surpassed those three, and the likes of Thierry Henry, Ruud van Nistelrooy, Robin van Persie, Didier Drogba, Wayne Rooney, Ian Wright, Fernando Torres. He has gone past Robbie Fowler, too. Those are all-time greats. Salah may well be called that one day but, for now, he can be satisfied he has beaten them all.

Only two players - Shearer and Andy Cole - have ever scored more in the Premier League than him, and that was in a 42-game season.

In fact, no Liverpool striker post-war has scored more top-flight goals in a season than Salah, who now holds the record alongside another true great, Ian Rush. Sometimes, you just need to stop and think about these things for a second. Salah is a goalscorer, there is no doubt. The coolness he showed in the tangled mess of a Brighton penalty area as the ball fell to him on 26 minutes was the calculating, aware mind of a clinical finisher.

As the ball slammed into the net following a clever pass from Dominic Solanke, the Kop celebrated yes, but breathed a huge sigh of relief, too. Relief, because Salah was back, looking hungry and dangerous again after three fallow games. Just in the time for the final.

He could have had more, he could have broken the all-time Premier League record as the Reds tried to tee him up - with one comical moment when Sadio Mane passed in front of an open goal and Mo's shot was saved - but no matter. They confirmed victory when Dejan Lovren smashed a header into the net from Andy Robertson's fine cross, and then Solanke got his first goal - so well deserved - after Salah turned provider. Again. Finally, Robertson, the fans' favourite, added a fourth.

Liverpool were rampant here and could easily have had seven or eight, their sharpness almost brilliant timing after their weary trudge to this point in recent weeks. The prize for winning was huge, a place in the top four and the Champions League next term.

Back-to-back qualification was important, and shows the strides they have made. "Last year we got to the top four and people said it was because we didn't have any European games," said Reds boss Jürgen Klopp with a wry smile.

"Now we have done it while going to the Champions League Final. It is huge."

Salah may have got all the plaudits, but it is because of this team's style, the manager's courage in always playing on the front foot that delivers the chances to him.

He has to take them of course, so don't detract from his achievement.

It is a truly historic feat, but there is more history to be written still this season.

RATINGS

LIVERPOOLKARIUS 8 Really solid and dealt with limited threats comfortably
ALEXANDER-ARNOLD 8 Brilliant distribution, like Terry Mac with his energy
LOVREN 8 Brilliant goal, and now forming strong partnership in middle VAN DIJK 8
What more to say about one of the world's best defenders? Class ROBERTSON 8
Quite possibly the find of the Prem season. Grown so much HENDERSON 8 Led by example in the middle and kept driving on his team WJNALDUM 8 Lovely on the ball, and looks comfortable now in deeper role SALAH 8 Deserves award for his incredible Prem goals record. Wow!

FIRMINO 8 Outstanding in his link play, missed a couple but who cares MANE 8 So lively when it mattered in first half, pace & movement awesome SOLANKE 8 First goal for Liverpool and no one deserved it more SUBS: Lallana (Mane 74) 6
Woodburn (Salah 84) Ings (Firmino 84) BRIGHTON RYAN 6 A couple of big saves but could do little about Reds onslaught SCHELOTTO 5 Got taken apart on the right by Mane. Glad to get it over DUNK 5 Tough day at the office for entire Brightondefence, struggled DUFFY 6 Had to admire his Gaelic football skills, and battled on bravely BONG 5 What a job trying to mark Salah, but stuck at impossible task KNOCKAERT 5 Couldn't do much to get Brighton out of own half STEPHENS 5 Difficult task to try and stop the red tide washing forward PROPPER 5 Not a proper job unfortunately, but always a difficult ask here MARCH 5 Showed some pace and strength but saw little of the ball KAYAL 5 Didn't see any of the ball, and could do nothing to change things LOCADIA 5 Hard to recall a touch that he had, but not his fault here SUBS: Murray (Locadia 57) 5 Gross (Kayal 57) 5 Goldson (Duffy 71) 5

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	Independent	Telegraph		



Mohamed Salah and unlikely heroes prepare for biggest night of their lives with perfect Anfield send-off

This was the perfect send-off for Kiev. Liverpool will approach their date with destiny in the Ukrainian capital with thunderous applause ringing in their ears after a triumphant afternoon at Anfield. Champions League qualification was wrapped up in style as Brighton were ruthlessly put to the sword. There was no final day drama here, just serene progress. Now the mission is to write one more glorious chapter in this thrilling campaign by finding a way past Real Madrid and sealing the club's sixth European crown. Pride was the overriding emotion as Jurgen Klopp led his players on the traditional lap of appreciation.

Whatever happens in Kiev, 2017/18 will go down as a campaign to cherish. It was the year when Klopp took Liverpool to the next level playing a breathtaking brand of attacking football. Their tally of 134 goals in all competitions has only been bettered once in the club's 126-year history. How fitting that Mohamed Salah, accompanied by his young daughter Makka, was presented with his glut of individual accolades by Kenny Dalglish on the field after the final whistle. Here were the Kings of the Kop past and present. Having already landed the PFA Player of the Year and the FWA Footballer of the Year double, Salah secured the Premier League Golden Boot on another record-breaking afternoon.

His 32nd league goal set a new best over a 38-game season as he eclipsed the achievements of Cristiano Ronaldo, Alan Shearer and Luis Suarez. Salah truly is in a class of his own. Dalglish's debut season at Liverpool ended with him getting the winner in the European Cup final 40 years ago and the hope is that Salah will follow in his footsteps. The Egyptian winger, who boasts 44 goals in all competitions, has delivered nine months of awe-inspiring brilliance since his arrival from Roma, but this has been far from a one-man band. Klopp has assembled the most potent front three in European football and created a system which has enabled them to flourish. With Roberto Firmino netting 27 and Sadio Mane on 19, they have contributed a staggering 90 goals between them. At the other end of the field the level of improvement has been almost as impressive. Liverpool's total of 17 Premier League clean sheets is their highest since Rafa Benitez's reign. The label that the Reds are great going forward but shoddy defensively is a lazy one.

The £75million signing of Virgil van Dijk in January proved to be a shrewd investment. How Dejan Lovren has benefited from the composed presence of the Dutchman alongside him. Liverpool conceded just 10 league goals at Anfield – their lowest tally since 2006/07. After Salah opened the floodgates against Brighton, unlikely heroes emerged. Lovren headed home the second before Dominic Solanke and Andy Robertson opened their accounts for Liverpool. The feelgood factor just kept growing and growing. Through his coaching acumen, shrewd recruitment, expert man-management and strong bond with supporters, Klopp has rebuilt the fortress. Liverpool went through a full league season unbeaten at home for only the second time in the last 30 years. There have been so many other success stories from the amazing impact of new left-back Andy Robertson to the meteoric rise of teenager Trent Alexander-Arnold. The leadership shown by Jordan Henderson and the example the captain sets also shouldn't be overlooked. He's 90 minutes away from joining an elite club which includes Emlyn Hughes, Phil Thompson, Graeme Souness and Steven Gerrard. Of course his team's heroics in Europe stand out like a beacon but Klopp's achievement in leading Liverpool to back-to-back top-four finishes in the Premier League for the first time since 2009 represents success in itself. Put into context, the Reds had only landed a Champions League spot once in the previous seven years. Klopp has put them back where they belong. It's all the more remarkable when you consider the obstacles Liverpool have had to overcome from Philippe Coutinho jumping ship to injuries denying Klopp the services of Nathaniel Clyne, Adam Lallana, Joel Matip, Emre Can, Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain and Joe Gomez.

Despite all that, Liverpool collected 75 points – just one fewer than 12 months earlier when they didn't have European football on the agenda.

Naby Keita will arrive from RB Leipzig but there's no doubt that three or four more top-class additions will be required this summer if the Reds are going to kick on again. Greater strength in depth is required to mount a serious title challenge.

The value of a full week to prepare was evident as Liverpool flew out of the traps early on. Brighton, whose top-flight status was already secure, couldn't live with the intensity and tempo they were hit with. James Milner's absence due to injury had forced Klopp into switching to a 4-2-3-1 formation and it worked a treat.

Firmino flourished in the No 10 role behind Solanke as the Brazilian dropped off into space and linked play intelligently. Solanke should have punished a woeful backpass from Shane Duffy early on but his touch let him down and Mat Ryan was able to gather. The young striker, who was making his sixth start for the Reds, settled and went on to repay Klopp's faith with his best performance for the club. Former Everton defender Duffy continued to lead a charmed life. First, he got away with blatantly handling Alexander-Arnold's cross. The howls of anger from the Kop were even louder when blundering referee Kevin Friend also allowed Duffy to get away with upending Salah. Two nailed on spot-kicks, neither given. It's a crazy statistic that Tottenham were awarded more Premier League penalties at Anfield this season than Liverpool. To their credit, Klopp's men didn't allow that sense of injustice to affect them.

Mane wasted a golden chance before the breakthrough finally arrived on 26 minutes. After latching on to Alexander-Arnold's pass, Solanke flicked it into the path of Salah and the winger did the rest, drilling a left-footer into the bottom corner before accepting the adulation of the adoring Kop.

Brighton had no answer to the speed and quality of Liverpool's interplay as they were repeatedly carved apart. Henderson and Gini Wijnaldum bossed the middle of the park and gave the Reds the platform to keep dominating.

Mane, Salah, Wijnaldum and Firmino all went close before five minutes before the break Liverpool finally had breathing space. A corner was only half cleared and Robertson delivered a beauty from the left. Lovren soared highest to power home his second goal of the season. Remarkably, it was the Croatian's first Premier League goal at Anfield since he scored the winner for Southampton in September 2013. Eight minutes into the second half it was 3-0. Salah's mazy run bamboozled Brighton and his pass was emphatically hammered into the top corner by Solanke.

Lallana produced a lively cameo after making his comeback off the bench with Danny Ings and Ben Woodburn also given a run out. With five minutes to go the rout was complete. Ings' cross wasn't dealt with and Robertson provided an emphatic finish for his first Liverpool goal. It was richly deserved.

By then the party was in full swing. The class of 2017/18 can hold their heads high. Now they have a fortnight to prepare for the biggest night of their lives.

MATCH FACTS

Liverpool: Karius, Alexander-Arnold, Lovren, Van Dijk, Robertson, Henderson, Wijnaldum, Mane (Lallana 73), Salah (Woodburn 83), Firmino (Ings 83), Solanke.

Subs used: Mignolet, Clyne, Klavan, Moreno.

Brighton: Ryan, Schelotto, Dunk, Duffy (Goldson 71), Bong, Propper, Stephens, Kayal (Gross 57), Knockaert, March, Locadia (Murray 57).

Not used: Krul, Suttner, Saltor, Ulloa.

Referee: Kevin Friend Attendance: 50,752 Goals: Salah 26, Lovren 40, Solanke 53, Robertson 85. Bookings: none

Man of the match: Mohamed Salah. Oozed class.

Date: 13 May 2018 Opposition: Brighton & Hove Albion Competition: League	Times	Mirror	BBC	13 May 2018
	Guardian	Mail	Echo	
	Independent	Telegraph		



Mohamed Salah set a new Premier League scoring record as Liverpool sealed a place in next season's Champions League with an empathic victory over Brighton, and manager Jurgen Klopp believes the forward can "still improve so much". It was an impressive Liverpool performance on a perfect sunny afternoon at Anfield and Klopp's side lingered long after the final whistle, soaking up the celebratory atmosphere with the Champions League final against Real Madrid to come on 26 May.

"Two weeks' break is perfect for us," said Klopp. "We will be ready for the final. This group of players really deserve it. They keep moving to the next level." Salah was the centre of attention as he was feted on his side's home pitch after the match. There was the Golden Boot for Premier League's top scorer to be presented, the club's player of the year trophy too. The forward was clearly moved, and he shared the moment with his wife and young daughter. It was his record goal that set the Reds on course to blowing Brighton away. The opener, a low finish from Dominic Solanke's pass, was his 32nd goal of the campaign - the most by a player in a 38-game Premier League season. Dejan Lovren doubled the lead by powerfully heading in Andrew Robertson's cross and after the break it was more of the same - Liverpool continued to dominate.

Solanke smashed in his first goal for the club off the underside of the bar, having met Salah's lay-off at the end of a strong run, while full-back Andrew Robertson also got his first Liverpool goal, sweeping in from close range with five minutes to play.

Liverpool would have slipped out of the top four had they lost and Chelsea beaten Newcastle, but they made sure the Blues' result - a 3-0 defeat at St James' Park - was irrelevant.

Victory meant the Reds matched their fourth-place finish of last season - they would have moved up to third had Tottenham not edged a thrilling 5-4 win at home to Leicester - while Brighton ended their first top-flight campaign since 1983 in the safety of 15th.

Salah the record breaker
What a remarkable season it has been for Egypt forward Salah, who signed from Roma for £34m last summer.

Some doubted his ability to perform in England following his disappointing spell at Chelsea, but the goal that broke the Premier League record was his 44th in 51 games for Liverpool in all competitions this season.

Alan Shearer scored 31 Premier League goals for Blackburn in 1995-96, Cristiano Ronaldo did the same for Manchester United in 2007-08, and Luis Suarez netted 31 for Liverpool in 2013-14.

Shearer, for Blackburn in 1994-95, and Andy Cole, for Newcastle United in 1993-94, jointly hold the Premier League scoring record for a 42-match season - with 34 goals.

Perhaps that total is what Salah was thinking of when he was taken off just before Liverpool's fourth, visibly disappointed. He left with Brighton at their most vulnerable, weary and exhausted from an afternoon living on their nerves against Liverpool's attack.

Earlier on Sunday, Salah added the [Premier League's Player of the Season award](#) to the two other major individual prizes he was won this year - the PFA Player of the Year and Football Writers' Association Footballer of the Year awards. But with the Champions League final against Real - winners of the past two tournaments - to come, the biggest piece of silverware is still to be settled.

Brighton beaten - but they will be back

Chris Hughton's Brighton team can feel proud of what they have achieved this season. Many will have tipped them for relegation, but they have proved themselves more than capable of competing at English football's elite level.

There was the impressive 3-0 victory at West Ham in October, March's 2-1 home win over Arsenal at the end of a five-match unbeaten run, and a place in the FA Cup quarter-finals, where they lost to Manchester United.

Revenge over United came in the shape of a 1-0 win that confirmed their Premier League status on 4 May, and survival was always the only aim for Brighton this season - Hughton said it "meant everything".

But perhaps there will be a slight regret over their end-of-season form. The 4 March victory over Arsenal put the Seagulls 10th in the table, after which they fell sharply over a run of seven matches without a win.

A 10th-place finish would have earned them £21.4m in prize money - the take for finishing 15th will instead be £11.6m. Regardless, the most important thing has been achieved - they will be back next season.

Man of the match - Mohamed Salah
'I had no clue about the record!'

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp told BBC Sport: "The boys had pressure on them - massive pressure for the last few weeks. It is fantastic to qualify for the Champions League. It's a massive achievement.

"We did it in an impressive manner. We tried to win the game from the first second. A point was enough but I have no real idea how to go for a point.

"We could have scored many more but I'm glad we didn't. Brighton did not deserve that after a really good season.

"James Milner (who was left out of the squad) will be fine, just today was a bit early for him.

"I had no clue about (Salah's) record. I took him off and then I heard that Tottenham had scored five - Harry Kane could have got them all! He has been brilliant and he can improve so much. He will score in the future, 100%."

Brighton boss Chris Hughton told BBC Sport: "It was a very hard afternoon for us. We knew when we came here we would have to play at a very high level and stay in the game but they caused us so many problems.

"The only disappointment was that we didn't keep possession well enough today. The season as a whole, we have been in nearly every game and we have had good performances against the big clubs.

"We find it hard playing the top six away from home but our season shows more good than bad."

Another unbeaten season at home - the stats

Liverpool have gone unbeaten at home in a top-flight season for the seventh time, more than any other side

They have finished in the top four in consecutive Premier League seasons for the first time since a run of four campaigns between 2005-06 and 2008-09

Salah has scored against 17 different opponents in the league this season; a Premier League record

He has scored in 34 different club games in all competitions this season, at least four more than any other player in Europe's big five leagues (Paris St-Germain's Edinson Cavani, 30)

Date: 13 May 2018 Opposition: Brighton & Hove Albion Competition: League	Times	Mirror	BBC	13 May 2018
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Match ends, Liverpool 4, Brighton and Hove Albion 0.
90'+3' Second Half ends, Liverpool 4, Brighton and Hove Albion 0.
89' Foul by Danny Ings (Liverpool).
89' Lewis Dunk (Brighton and Hove Albion wins a free kick in the defensive half.
85' Goal! Liverpool 4, Brighton and Hove Albion 0. Andrew Robertson (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box to the bottom left corner.
84' Substitution, Liverpool. Ben Woodburn replaces Mohamed Salah.
84' Substitution, Liverpool. Danny Ings replaces Roberto Firmino.
83' Adam Lallana (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
83' Foul by Dale Stephens (Brighton and Hove Albion).
76' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Connor Goldson.
74' Foul by Adam Lallana (Liverpool).
74' Dale Stephens (Brighton and Hove Albion wins a free kick in the defensive half.
74' Substitution, Liverpool. Adam Lallana replaces Sadio Mané.
71' Substitution, Brighton and Hove Albion. Connor Goldson replaces Shane Duffy because of an injury.
71' Delay over. They are ready to continue.
70' Delay in match Shane Duffy (Brighton and Hove Albion because of an injury.
69' Offside, Brighton and Hove Albion. Dale Stephens tries a through ball, but Solly March is caught offside.
65' Sadio Mané (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
65' Foul by Dale Stephens (Brighton and Hove Albion).
60' Delay over. They are ready to continue.
59' Delay in match Shane Duffy (Brighton and Hove Albion because of an injury.
58' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Mat Ryan.
58' Attempt saved. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the top centre of the goal. Assisted by Mohamed Salah.
57' Substitution, Brighton and Hove Albion. Pascal Groß replaces Beram Kayal.
57' Substitution, Brighton and Hove Albion. Glenn Murray replaces Jürgen Locadia.
57' Corner, Brighton and Hove Albion. Conceded by Jordan Henderson.
53' Goal! Liverpool 3, Brighton and Hove Albion 0. Dominic Solanke (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box to the top right corner. Assisted by Mohamed Salah following a fast break.
53' Attempt blocked. Solly March (Brighton and Hove Albion left footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Beram Kayal.
50' Attempt saved. Virgil van Dijk (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Dominic Solanke.
50' Attempt blocked. Georginio Wijnaldum (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked.
49' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Mat Ryan.
49' Attempt saved. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom left corner. Assisted by Virgil van Dijk.
47' Hand ball by Solly March (Brighton and Hove Albion).
Second Half begins Liverpool 2, Brighton and Hove Albion 0.
45'+2' First Half ends, Liverpool 2, Brighton and Hove Albion 0.
43' Virgil van Dijk (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
43' Foul by Jürgen Locadia (Brighton and Hove Albion).
42' Attempt blocked. Sadio Mané (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Roberto Firmino.
41' Foul by Sadio Mané (Liverpool).
41' Anthony Knockaert (Brighton and Hove Albion wins a free kick in the defensive half.
40' Goal! Liverpool 2, Brighton and Hove Albion 0. Dejan Lovren (Liverpool header from the centre of the box to the bottom right corner. Assisted by Andrew Robertson with a cross following a corner.
39' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Lewis Dunk.
39' Attempt blocked. Dominic Solanke (Liverpool right footed shot from the left side of the six yard box is blocked. Assisted by Sadio Mané.
36' Attempt saved. Solly March (Brighton and Hove Albion right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Beram Kayal.
36' Attempt missed. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is too high. Assisted by Dominic Solanke.
35' Attempt saved. Georginio Wijnaldum (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the bottom left corner. Assisted by Sadio Mané.
33' Attempt blocked. Sadio Mané (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Dejan Lovren with a headed pass.
32' Corner, Brighton and Hove Albion. Conceded by Dominic Solanke.
32' Corner, Brighton and Hove Albion. Conceded by Virgil van Dijk.
30' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Lewis Dunk.
30' Attempt blocked. Mohamed Salah (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked.
30' Attempt saved. Mohamed Salah (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Sadio Mané.
29' Attempt missed. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is too high. Assisted by Sadio Mané.
27' Attempt blocked. Mohamed Salah (Liverpool left footed shot from the right side of the box is blocked.
26' Goal! Liverpool 1, Brighton and Hove Albion 0. Mohamed Salah (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box to the bottom right corner.
25' Hand ball by Ezequiel Schelotto (Brighton and Hove Albion).
22' Attempt missed. Trent Alexander-Arnold (Liverpool left footed shot from the right side of the box is high and wide to the left. Assisted by Sadio Mané.
20' Attempt missed. Virgil van Dijk (Liverpool header from the centre of the box is close, but misses to the right. Assisted by Georginio Wijnaldum with a cross.
19' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Solly March.

19' Attempt saved. Sadio Mané (Liverpool right footed shot from the right side of the six yard box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Dominic Solanke with a through ball.
18' Offside, Liverpool. Georginio Wijnaldum tries a through ball, but Trent Alexander-Arnold is caught offside.
11' Dejan Lovren (Liverpool wins a free kick on the right wing.
11' Foul by Beram Kayal (Brighton and Hove Albion).
7' Attempt missed. Jordan Henderson (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box misses to the left. Assisted by Trent Alexander-Arnold.
6' Attempt blocked. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Mohamed Salah.
1' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Shane Duffy.
First Half begins.
Lineups are announced and players are warming up.