

Liverpool blow place in top four to round off rollercoaster week

LIVERPOOL: Liverpool suffered another setback in a tumultuous week as Joe Willock's 94th minute equalizer earned Newcastle a 1-1 draw at Anfield that prevented Jurgen Klopp's men from moving into the Premier League top four.

Mohamed Salah had opened the scoring after just three minutes, but Liverpool wasted a host of chances to extend their lead and paid in stoppage time.

The Reds even had already had a reprieve when Callum Wilson's equaliser was ruled out after a VAR review for handball, but still could not hold on as Willock's deflected strike secured a vital point in the Magpies' bid for survival.

Two more dropped points is a blow to Liverpool's chances of a place in next season's Champions League after their owners' plans for ensuring they have top level European football every season without having to earn it on the field collapsed this week.

Liverpool were one of 12 clubs to initially sign up to proposals for a European Super League (ESL) last weekend, only to quickly withdraw within 48 hours after a backlash from their own players and fans.

A protest outside Anfield yesterday was more muted than the ones seen ahead of Chelsea and Arsenal's home matches in recent days, but a number of flags and banners were attached to the gates around the ground calling out the "greed" of the club's American owners Fenway Sports Group. In his program notes, Liverpool captain Jordan Henderson, who spoke out against the ESL on behalf of the squad on Tuesday, called for calm.

"Being critical of my own employers isn't something I do easily," said Henderson. "It is good that Liverpool withdrew and the concept has collapsed. That's good for football. It's also good that our owners, via John Henry, have apologized unreservedly. "People can disagree with me saying this,

but my opinion is that our owners have been good for Liverpool. If you have a problem with me saying that, fair enough and I respect that. But my opinion is built on my own first-hand experiences."

Henry's FSG helped deliver Liverpool's first Premier League title for 30 years last season. But many of the problems Klopp's men have encountered in defending their title were in evidence again as they as failed to see off Newcastle long before a nervy finale.

The hosts could not have made a better start as a brilliant touch and finish from Salah opened the scoring after just three minutes. The Egyptian's 29th goal of the season set up a wide-open game with plenty of chances at both ends.

Salah should have had a second but fired too close to Martin Dubravka when clean through on goal. Sadio Mane also failed to round the Slovakian goalkeeper with a glorious chance. Dubravka made a string of fine saves after the break to deny Roberto Firmino and Sadio Mane at his near post and a long-range effort from James Milner.

The tension in the Liverpool players was clear late in the game and Newcastle capitalised after manager Steve Bruce sent on Wilson and Willock. Wilson bundled the ball home after Alisson had saved his initial effort, but the ball had rebounded off the Brazilian goalkeeper onto the former Bournemouth striker's hand before he stabbed it into an unguarded net.

Seconds later, Liverpool failed to deal with another long ball into their box and the ball fell for on-loan Arsenal midfielder Willock, whose strike deflected in off Fabinho to leave Alisson helpless. Liverpool move up to sixth but are a point behind fourth-placed Chelsea and West Ham, who face off later on Saturday at the London Stadium. Newcastle edge ever closer to survival. They are nine points clear of the bottom three. — AFP



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool's Scottish defender Andrew Robertson shoots but fails to score during the English Premier League football match between Liverpool and Newcastle United at Anfield yesterday. — AFP



Kuwait Times
Established 1961

The First Daily in the Arabian Gulf

REGISTER TODAY
for the **COVID-19 vaccine**

Free for all residents of Kuwait. To register visit:

www.moh.gov.kw

STEP 1: Click on COVID-19 VACCINE REGISTRATION **STEP 2:** FILL OUT BASIC INFORMATION **STEP 3:** SUBMIT FORM

The COVID-19 vaccine is safe, effective and approved by Kuwait's Ministry of Health