

Liverpool FC v FC Girondins de Bordeaux

MATCH PREVIEW

Anfield, Liverpool

Tuesday, 31 October 2006 - 20:45CET

Group C - Matchday 4



Liverpool FC welcome FC Girondins de Bordeaux to Anfield knowing victory has the potential to see them qualify for the knockout stage of the UEFA Champions League - but manager Rafael Benítez is refusing to take anything for granted.

Bordeaux threat

Benítez has concerns about Liverpool's French visitors on Tuesday, saying: "We have watched them a lot. They are more comfortable away from home and, for me, that is the problem. They play sometimes with [Johan] Micoud as a second striker, and play 4-5-1 or 4-4-1-1, and away it is easier to play like this. We might go forward and leave spaces behind and they could play counterattack with pace from [Julien] Faubert on the right side and [Rio Antonio] Mavuba on the left."

Century of change

While Benítez is preoccupied by how his opponents might shape up, the Liverpool boss has again been kept busy answering questions about his rotation policy. The Spaniard concedes he will almost certainly be naming a different lineup for the 100th match in succession when he chooses his side against Bordeaux. Midfielders Steven Gerrard and Mohamed Sissoko picked up minor knocks in Saturday's 3-1 victory against Aston Villa FC, though both are expected to be fit for selection.

Qualification hopes

The Villa result helped Liverpool back to winning ways after a mixed start to the season and their spirits could be further lifted by securing qualification from Group C on Matchday 4. If PSV Eindhoven beat Galatasaray SK, a win or draw for Liverpool would be enough to take them through, but Benítez stressed: "It is a game where you might think - and I know our players don't - it will be easy because they are bottom of the group, but you have to be careful because they have good players with quality."

Bordeaux bubbling

Back-to-back successes in the French League Cup against AJ Auxerre [1-0] and in Ligue 1 against CS Sedan-Ardenne [3-1] have boosted Bordeaux, who are yet to score in the UEFA Champions League this term, registering one draw and two defeats. Coach Ricardo Gomes said: "We do not have any extra pressure. We have played well in the last two matches and that gives us more confidence. After a couple of good performances we have good psychological form."

Šmicer out

Vladimír Šmicer's recurring thigh injury will keep him out against his former club, though he has travelled with the squad along with defender Marc Planus, who is also out of contention. Joseph Enakarihire is sidelined by ankle trouble, so Ricardo should choose between youngsters Henrique and Gérald Cid as a defensive partner for David Jemmali. Franck Jurietti and Stéphane Dalmat are other absentees but, despite the problems, Ricardo feels his team are capable of upsetting the home side. "Liverpool did not play particularly well against us 15 days ago and if we use our strong points, we can gain something," he said.

Probable teams

Liverpool: Pepe Reina; Steve Finnan, Daniel Agger, Jamie Carragher, John Arne Riise; Steven Gerrard, Xabi Alonso, Mohamed Sissoko, Mark González; Peter Crouch, Dirk Kuyt.

Bordeaux: Ulrich Ramé; Julien Faubert, David Jemmali, Henrique, Florian Marange; Alejandro César Alonso, Rio Antonio Mavuba, Geraldo Mauricio Wendel; Johan Micoud; Lilian Laslandes, Jean-Claude Darcheville.



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Sissoko awaits 'hungry' Bordeaux

Liverpool FC midfielder Mohamed Sissoko is wary of the survival instincts of FC Girondins de Bordeaux as the French team head to Anfield for what is practically a must-win game in UEFA Champions League Group C.

Sissoko sub

Sissoko came on as a substitute against Bordeaux when these sides met in France a fortnight ago and he spoke of his satisfaction with the 1-0 success there as well as hoping for a similar result on Tuesday - which would see Liverpool through to the knockout stages, provided PSV Eindhoven avoid defeat against Galatasaray SK. "Bordeaux are a good team and I think they will come here hungry, but we need the three points for qualification," Sissoko said. "It was a very difficult game in Bordeaux and we had to play well to win. I think 1-0 was a good result."

Final motivation

The French-born Mali midfielder did not join Liverpool until after their famous comeback victory in the 2005 UEFA Champions League final against AC Milan, although he says he is just as motivated as those heroes of Istanbul to produce a repeat performance and go all the way to Athens next May. "The Champions League is important for everybody," he said. "We need to beat Bordeaux and then look to the future."

Recovery

Liverpool gave an excellent team display to end Aston Villa FC's unbeaten start to the season on Saturday, the 3-1 triumph helping the club move on from a series of disappointing Premiership results - not least the 2-0 loss at Manchester United FC. "I think after the defeat in Manchester, it was a good win for the team," the 21-year-old said. "Everybody played well, so after the game we could be happy and that is important. At the beginning [of the season] we played well without winning. Now everyone knows what they want and that's important. We will work hard to improve and we will see."