

Benfica 1-3 Liverpool: Luis Diaz scores on Portugal return as Reds win Champions League quarter-final first leg

Report as Ibrahima Konate scores his first Liverpool goal; Sadio Mane scores after wonderful counter-attack; Darwin Nunez replies for Benfica as Liverpool toil in second half; Luis Diaz scores late third; Second leg takes place at Anfield next Wednesday.



Luis Diaz came back to haunt Benfica, scoring a vital third goal for Liverpool as they beat Benfica 3-1 in their Champions League quarter-final first leg in Lisbon.

Diaz has shone for Liverpool since moving from Benfica's fierce rivals Porto in January, and he restored the Reds' two-goal lead in the 88th minute.

The Colombian strode confidently past Benfica goalkeeper Odysseas Vlachodimos before slotting into the far corner, giving Liverpool some much-needed breathing space heading into next Wednesday's second leg at Anfield.

The first leg was the epitome of a game of two halves. Liverpool dominated the first half, with Ibrahima Konate heading home his first goal for the club, doing so from a whipped Andy Robertson's corner.

Sadio Mane then tapped home after a dazzling counter-attack, which summed up a strong first half. Trent Alexander-Arnold - starting for the first time since injury - picked up a loose Adel Taarabt pass before playing an inch-perfect pass over the top.

The sublime ball found the head of Diaz, who spotted the run of Mane down the right of the area. He squared his header and it was an easy tap-in for the Senegal international.

While Benfica ended the first half with one shot on target and looked to be facing a swift exit from the Champions League, the second half could not have been more contrasting.

Much had been made of Nunez heading into the game, with Premier League links drawing the eye, and he showed his poacher's instinct four minutes after the break. A woefully attempted clearance from Konate in the middle of the box saw the Benfica striker presented with a golden chance, which he dispatched past Alisson.

Nunez could have been awarded a penalty in the 67th minute too as he and Rafa Silva tested a stunned Liverpool defence. The striker was body checked by Virgil van Dijk inside the area before going down, but a VAR review did not award Benfica the penalty.

Liverpool soon began to regain a foothold in the match and looked to quieten the passionate crowd as well as a revived Benfica side. Their recovery paid off when Diaz slotted home late on to put the visitors in a commanding position ahead of the second leg, with his strike met with a sigh of relief and a smile from Jurgen Klopp.

With Manchester City edging their own Champions League leg tie against Atletico Madrid 1-0, it sees both Liverpool and City with midweek victories under their belts heading into Sunday's Premier League title showdown at the Etihad Stadium, live on *Sky Sports*.

Looking ahead to the *Super Sunday* game, Jurgen Klopp told his post-match press conference: "If we win against City - it's already difficult enough - I don't think anybody would think 'that's it - decided' [the Premier League title race] because the quality of the opponent. We play against the best team in the world, that's how it is and we will give it a try anyway.

"Everybody knows the importance of the next game. But after this game, there will be other games. If you can't be first, you want to be second. If you are behind, you want to get closer and if you are close, you want to overtake. That is the situation and we will give it a proper try."