

HH The Amir Sword Festival: AJS Sarhan wins Al Zubara Trophy Equinoxe lands Al Rayyan Breeders Cup

FAWAD HUSSAIN
THE PENINSULA

Wathnan Racing's Equinoxe under jockey Ronan Thomas produced a lightning pace in the final furlong to win the Al Rayyan Breeders Cup on the action-packed second day of the HH The Amir Sword Festival.

It was a close 2000m contest for 4YO+ Local Thoroughbreds at Al Rayyan Racecourse yesterday before Alban de Mieulle-trained Equinoxe picked up pace to beat Black Pearl – ridden by Maxime Guyon – by two and quarter lengths. Tomas Lukasek piloted Harb to third place in biggest contest of the 10-race day.

Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club (QREC) Chairman Issa bin Mohammed Al Mohannadi honoured winners of the lucrative \$400,000 race as Equinoxe's recorded fourth straight title and 14th overall victory in 20 career starts.

While Guyon failed to claim title in final race of the day, the jockey had already sealed four victories yesterday what was dubbed the QREC's 33rd Race Meeting – Al Zubara Trophy & Al Rayyan Breeders Cup Day.

In 2000m 4YO+ Local Purebred Arabians race for Al Zubara Trophy carrying \$200,000 in prize money – yesterday's second major race – Guyon completed his fourth victory as he teamed up Al Jeryan Stud's homebred AJS Sarhan to record a thrilling half-length win. It was also the third triumph of the day for trainer Gassim Ghazali.

In other major race yesterday – the \$200,000 the Purebred Arabian Sprint Cup – Guyon guided Sharida bin Nasser bin Sharida Al Kaabi's Shgarde, who edged AJS



QREC Chairman Issa bin Mohammed Al Mohannadi with connection of Equinoxe after their Al Rayyan Breeders Cup triumph yesterday. DOWN: QREC Vice Chairman Hamad bin Abdulrahman Al Attiyah presents trophy to representative of AJS Sarhan's connection.

Berline after an exciting 1200m run to complete a double for trainer Mohamed Khaled Elahmed.

Each of the first seven races on the marathon day offered \$100,000 in prize money with contestants producing nail-biting action to take top honours.

Guyon was astride Nasser Saeed Al Eida's Mystical Music when he kicked off the day, registering a three quarters of a length victory to clinch the Thoroughbred Open Sprint Cup. The win was also first of the day for trainer Gassim.

Noora Racing Limited's Roma, trained by Elahmed, claimed second win of the day for Guyon after the four-year-old emerged winner in 1750m Local Purebred Arabians Al Na'ama Cup for 4YO+ fillies and mares by one and three quarter lengths.

Also yesterday, H E Sheikh Reem bint

Mohammed bin Khalifa Al Thani's AA Feel The Burn reigned supreme in the 1750m Purebred Arabian Open Cup for 4YO+ claiming a head victory in the tough race. Lukas Delozier rode the Rudy Nerbonne-trained colt.

Delozier had also teamed up with H E Sheikh Yasmeen bint Mohammed bin Khalifa Al Thani's Divine Princess for a quarter of a length victory in the 1750m Purebred Arabians Seada Cup for 4YO+ fillies and mares for trainer Rudy Nerbonne.

Meanwhile, the 1750m Local Thoroughbred Desert Rose for 4YO+ fillies and mares saw Al Jeryan Stud's homebred Latamah under Szczepan Mazur earning a three-quarter length victory for trainer MHK Al Attiyah.

Later, Gassim-trained Make A Wish – owned by Injaaz Stud – sealed win in the Thoroughbred Oryx Cup for



3YO+ fillies and mares under jockey Jim Crowley while Abdullah Saeed Abdullah Al Mesnad's Hadlan, ridden by David Egan, dazzled yet again landing the Gulf Cup.

Today, the final day of the

Festival will feature a total of seven races with world's best horse set to compete in the prestigious HH The Amir Sword (Gr1 PA) and the HH The Amir Trophy (Gr1 QA) races.

HH THE AMIR SWORD FESTIVAL
33rd Race Meeting Al Zubara Trophy & Al Rayyan Breeders Cup Day
(Horse, Trainer, Jockey)
Al Rayyan Breeders Cup - Local Thoroughbreds (Far Bend) Equinoxe, Alban Elie De Mieulle, Ronan Thomas
Al Zubara Trophy - Local Purebred Arabians (Far Bend) AJS Sarhan, Gassim Ghazali, Maxime Guyon
Purebred Arabian Sprint Cup (Pa Listed) (Far Bend) Shgarde, Mohamed Khaled Elahmed, Maxime Guyon
Gulf Cup - For Purebred Arabians Bred In The GCC (Far Bend) Hadlan, Wasim Al Sahn, David Egan
Filly And Mare Thoroughbred Oryx Cup (Class 2) (Far Bend) Make A Wish, Gassim Ghazali, Jim Crowley
Filly And Mare Purebred Arabians Seada Cup (Far Bend) Divine Princess, Rudy Andre Nerbonne, Lukas Delozier
Filly And Mare Local Purebred Arabians Al Na'ama Cup (Far Bend) Roma, Mohamed Khaled Elahmed, Maxime Guyon
Local Thoroughbred Filly And Mare Desert Rose (Far Bend) Latamah, MHK Al Attiyah, Szczepan Mazur
Purebred Arabian 4yo Open Cup (Far Bend) AA Feel The Burn, Rudy Andre Nerbonne, Lukas Delozier
Thoroughbred Open Sprint Cup (Class 2) (Far Bend) Mystical Music, Gassim Ghazali, Maxime Guyon

Action at Al Rayyan Racecourse during the second day of the HH The Amir Sword Festival yesterday. PICTURES: JUHAIM/QREC



Al Qadi shines in Big Tour with fine show

THE PENINSULA – DOHA

Ghanim Nasser Al Qadi warmed-up for today's HH The Amir Sword in style after winning yesterday's Big Tour class on day two of the prestigious showjumping and dressage championship yesterday.

At the Qatar Equestrian Federation's outdoor arena, Al Qadi and his 15-year-old stallion Morocco were comfortable winners in the 145cm class as the pair zipped through the course in 66.82 seconds.

Their winning time was more than six seconds faster than the runner-up combination of Mohamed Khalifa Albaker and his veteran mare Verona.

Albaker also finished third yesterday, with his another horse Lissabon 56.

The pair, in fact, was the second fastest in the field with a time of 69.15 seconds, but a penalty meant they had to settle for final podium spot.

Today, the riders will be eyeing for their dream title – The Amir Sword. The Big Tour,



Ghanim Nasser Al Qadi and Morocco in action during yesterday's Big Tour event. RIGHT: The Big Tour podium winners Ghanim Nasser Al Qadi and Mohamed Khalifa Albaker with Longines Hathab Tour Organising Committee Vice-Chairman Omar Al Mannai and an official.



which will commence at 1:35pm, will consist of two rounds and carries a prize

money of QR90,000, besides a car for the winning rider.

Yesterday, the Medium Tour

won by Rashid Towaim Al Marri, with Hamad Ali Al Attiyah and Khalid Sanad Al

Nuaimi finishing second and third respectively. Mohamed Nasser Al Qadi emerged triumphant in the Small Tour. Sultan Salem Badi Al Naemi was second, while Maryam Ahmad Al Boinin was third.

Meanwhile, Chairman of the Supreme Organising Committee and Secretary General of the Qatar Equestrian Federation (QEF) Sheikh Ahmed bin Noah Al Thani said HH The Amir Sword is most important event organised by the sport's governing body. Sheikh Ahmed said QEF every year aims to host the championship in a distinctive way, while also focusing on modernization, development and expansion.

He said the prestigious event has unearthed new exciting riders in the past and QEF through this event wants to raise the level of Qatari riders. Sheikh Ahmed wished that the tournament would serve as an incentive to perseverance and excellence for the Qatari riders, and that it would be an inspiration for future generations of riders.

RESULTS
Big Tour Table A, One round against the clock, Art. 238.2.1 135/145 cm Prize Money QR70,000
Horse, Rider, Faults, Time, Prize Money
1. Morocco; Ghanim Nasser Al Qadi; 0; 66.82 secs; QR17,500
2. Verona; Mohamed Khalifa Albaker; 0; 73.00 secs; QR14,000
3. Lissabon 56; Mohamed Khalifa Albaker; 4; 69.15; QR10,500
Medium Tour
1. Rashid Towaim Al Marri
2. Hamad Ali Al Attiyah
3. Khalid Sanad Al Nuaimi
Small Tour
1. Mohamed Nasser Al Qadi
2. Sultan Salem Badi Al Naemi
3. Maryam Ahmad Al Boinin

HOME FAVOURITE OUTPACES OSTBERG

Al Attiyah grabs lead at Qatar International Rally

THE PENINSULA - LUSAIL

Nasser Saleh Al Attiyah saw off a fierce first day challenge from Norwegian rival Mads Ostberg to lead the Qatar International Rally after seven special stages. The Qatari won four of the day's speed tests in his Autotek Volkswagen Polo GTI and overcame a lunchtime deficit of 4.2 seconds to take a 8.1-second advantage into the night halt in Lusail. The 16-time event winner and his Andorra-based co-driver Mathieu Baumel stayed clear of trouble and tyre issues and will need to defend their advantage from first place on the road today.

The Qatari said: "We keep the same plan and tried to make no mistake and push in the afternoon. We did a good job. We need to keep this pace tomorrow. I am happy. To race the top drivers in Europe, you need to have a good pace. This is a new race for Andreas and Emil, but Mads has been here before. Tomorrow, it will be longer and a little bit more rough."

Ostberg teamed up with Sweden's Patrik Barth and was able to call upon the experience he gained last year. He won stages three and four but punctured in the first speed test after the regroup and was somewhat disappointed to be so far behind after the second loop.

Ostberg said: "The plan this year was not to lead after day one but I would like to be closer. I didn't purposely give him eight seconds. But we had a puncture on the first stage (SS5) after service and we, maybe, dropped 10 seconds. It was not ideal. On the last, he was very fast. I tried to regain a bit of time but I



couldn't. We are happy with the day. I have to say that it is according to plan but three or four seconds more would be perfect. It's a long day tomorrow and I don't think those few seconds will be as important at the end of the day. I wanted to be behind Nasser to see his lines and see where he is going. I didn't want to end up in the same situation as last year where I was opening the line and he can follow me!"

The Norwegian pairing of Andreas Mikkelsen and Torstein Eriksen soon realised that high-speed desert rallying was not going to be a walk in the park, although a third stage puncture and a lack of confidence with the tyres hindered the 2021 FIA WRC2 champion. He ended the day in third.



Mikkelsen added: "We did better driving than the first loop. I was a bit too careful in the

and Lorcan Moore, overcame a morning misfire to regain fifth place during the afternoon. They head into the final day just 6.5 seconds ahead of Khalid Al Suwaidi and Niall Burns, with both crews looking far more confident after the afternoon's loop of stages.

Veteran Nasser Khalifa Al Atya held seventh with Italy's Giovanni Bernacchini in his new Ford Fiesta R5.

The eighth-placed multiple MERC2 champion Meshari Al Thefiri and his Qatari co-driver Nasser Al Kuwari dominated the MERC2 category again and returned to Lusail with a commanding 4min 04.5sec lead over fellow Kuwaiti Yousef Al Dhafeeri and his Lebanese co-driver Carlos Hanna. Qatar's Abdullah Al Rabban and Emirati co-driver Hassan Ali Obaid rounded off the top 10 and held third in MERC2.

Mechanical issues sidelined Jordan's Sheikh Bader Al Fawaz and Lebanon's Shadi Sheban on the fifth stage.

Today, the final day sees crews tackle a further two loops of three stages, starting with a pass through the 15.28km of Waab Al Mashrab from 08.48hrs. Al Waab (14.91km) follows at 09.16hrs and the morning loop is completed by the 24.45km of Umm Birka – the longest stage of the event – from 09.51hrs.

After a return to Lusail for a

2023 QATAR INTERNATIONAL RALLY POSITIONS AFTER SS7	
1. Nasser Saleh Al Attiyah (QAT)/ Mathieu Baumel (AND) Volkswagen Polo GTI: 51min 53.2sec	
2. Mads Ostberg (NOR)/Patrik Barth (SWE) Skoda Fabia Rally2 Evo: 52min 01.3sec	
3. Andreas Mikkelsen (NOR)/Torstein Eriksen (NOR) Skoda Fabia Rally2 Evo: 52min 54.8sec	
4. Emil Lindholm (FIN)/Reeta Hämäläinen (FIN) Skoda Fabia Rally2 Evo: 53min 14.8sec	
5. Abdulaziz Al Kuwari (QAT)/Lorcan Moore (IRL) Skoda Fabia Rally2 Evo: 55min 06.7sec	
6. Khalid Al Suwaidi (QAT)/Niall Burns (IRL) Skoda Fabia Rally2 Evo: 55min 13.2sec	
7. Nasser Khalifa Al Atya (QAT)/ Giovanni Bernacchini (ITA) Ford Fiesta R5: 59min 02.1sec	
8. Meshari Al Thefiri (KWT)/Nasser Al Kuwari (QAT) Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X: 1hr 00min 11.9sec	
9. Yousef Al Dhafeeri (KWT)/Carlos Hanna (LEB) Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X: 1hr 04min 16.4sec	
10. Abdullah Al Rabban (QAT)/Hassan Ali Obaid (ARE) Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X: 1hr 04min 26.6sec	
11. Jad Al Aawar (LEB)/Wicken Kanledjian (LEB) Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X: 1hr 04min 38.3sec	
12. Shaker Jweihan (JOR)/Nancy Al Majali (JOR) Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X: 1hr 05min 21.2sec	
13. Rashid Al Muhannadi (QAT)/Fares Allouh (QAT) Subaru Impreza STI: 1hr 07min 10.4sec	
14. Khalid Al Muhannadi (QAT)/Waleed Al Fuaim (SAU) Polaris Pro XP (T4): 1hr 08min 46.0sec	
15. Ahmad Khaled (LEB)/Samer Sfeir (LEB) Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX: 1hr 13min 51.5sec	
16. Ihab Al Shorafa (JOR)/Yousef Juma (JOR) Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X: 1hr 19min 02.1sec	
National	
1. Sami Fleifel (JOR)/Ahmed Al Khatab (JOR) Mitsubishi Lancer Evo VIII: 1hr 12min 57.7sec	

regroup and service, the three stages are repeated at 12.43hrs, 13.11hrs and 13.46hrs, respectively, before the post-event press conference (18.30hrs) and podium finish (19.00hrs) take centre stage on Al Maha Island.

LEADERBOARD				
POS	NAME	PAR	R1	R2
1	Suradit Yongcharoenchai	-5	68	71
2	Ben Leong	-3	71	(-2)
3	Travis Smyth	-2	70	72
	Andy Ogletree	-2	71	71
5	Minkyu Kim	-1	75	68
	Chapchai Nirat	-1	75	68
	Dodge Kemmer	-1	72	(-1)
8	John Lyras	Par	71	73
	Hennie Du Plessis	Par	72	72
	Charl Schwartzel	Par	70	74
	Miguel Tabuena	Par	71	(+1)
12	Alex Ching	+1	73	72
	Chan Shih-chang	+1	75	70
	Alvaro Ortiz	+1	72	73
	Micah Lauren Shin	+1	75	70
	Richard T. Lee	+1	69	76
	Hidetoshi Taniguchi	+1	73	72
	Sangmoon Bae	+1	69	76
	Karandeep Kochhar	+1	72	73
	Phachara Khongwatmai	+1	69	76
	Kieran Vincent	+1	74	71
22	Ben Jones	+2	75	71
	Miguel Carballo	+2	73	73
	Ben Campbell	+2	73	73
	Jinichiro Kozuma	+2	74	72
	Gunn Charoenkul	+2	71	75
	Kyongjun Moon	+2	77	69
28	Settee Prakongvech	+3	74	73
	Yonggu Shin	+3	74	73
	Thaworn Wiratchant	+3	71	76
	Tomoharu Otsuki	+3	73	74
	Kaito Onishi	+3	75	72
	Todd Sinnott	+3	71	76
	Matt Killen	+3	77	70
	Gaganjeet Bhullar	+3	72	75
	Kevin Yuan	+3	75	72
	Steve Lewton	+3	73	74
	Sadom Kaewkanjana	+3	74	73
	Seungtaek Lee	+3	72	75
	Ye Wocheng	+3	74	(+1)

INTERNATIONAL SERIES QATAR

Suradit extends lead on windy day

THE PENINSULA - DOHA

Thailand's Suradit Yongcharoenchai yesterday braved the windswept Doha Golf Club impressively to extend his lead at the \$2.5m International Series Qatar. After Thursday's four-under-par 68 which gave him the first-round lead he followed that up this morning with a solid 71 to lead on five under, by three shots from Australian Travis Smyth.

Smyth carded a 72 with half the field still on the course at Doha Golf Club, in the Asian Tour's third event of the season, and second of 10 International Series tournaments.

"I was very happy with the 68 yesterday and today I feel even more happy with one under par in this wind. Today was more windy," said Suradit, who has tasted victory once before on the Asian Tour at the 2019 Mercuries Taiwan Masters.

"Today into the wind I hit three clubs more, and maybe had to aim 30 yards right [on cross wind shots], it was very windy."

The 24 year old made three birdies and two bogeys and is looking to bounce back from a poor 2022 season when finished 81st on the Asian Tour Order of Merit, when a 10th place finish in the Mercuries event was the highlight of his year.

"My caddie and I feel in these conditions the par is about 75. I have been driving the ball well, and when I miss they haven't been bad misses. I have very good distance control with my irons considering the strong wind, and have also been putting well," he added.

Smyth has also won once before on the Tour, in last year's Yeangder TPC in Chinese Taipei following a string of good results, and was delighted to reach the clubhouse under par.



He said: "It's like the best feeling ever, finishing Friday midday, just sitting back relaxing, watching the carnage unfold. Yeah, brutal

10, for birdie, in stark contrast to his opening eagle on 10, also a par five, when he holed a pitch shot from 50 metres.

"I mean, it's so strange, I've never seen anywhere like it where it's windy all the way through the night, all the way through the morning. It's like it's the exact same basically the last two days," he added.

"The forecast is meant to be the same over the next two days. But yeah, got off to an amazing start, the eagle was a great feeling."

"Mentally just thinking about the start, it's really tough, just grind through the first six or seven holes and maybe one or two over par would be ok. And then with that start it was an amazing feeling."

Korean Minkyu Kim, winner of last year's Kolon Korea Open, fired a fine 68, the only sub 70 round of the day so far, to be the next best placed on one under.



Poland's Iga Swiatek in action against Russia's Veronika Kudermetova yesterday. PIC: Salim Matramkot/The Peninsula



USA's Jessica Pegula returns the ball to Greece's Maria Sakkari during the semi-final yesterday. AFP

Dominant Swiatek sets up Pegula final

CHINTHANA WASALA
THE PENINSULA

Iga Swiatek once again proved why she is the reigning World No.1, this time with a dominant 6-0, 6-1 rout of Veronika Kudermetova to seal her second Qatar TotalEnergies Open final in a row.

Yesterday at the Khalifa International Tennis & Squash Complex, the Pole made light work of the World No.11 Kudermetova to cruise into today's title-clash with American World No.4 Jessica Pegula, who took sweet revenge of her Greek counterpart Maria Sakkari in the first semi-final on the day with a 6-2, 4-6, 6-1 win.

"I feel great. I was pretty worried how I'm going to cope with the conditions today. So I'm glad that I could really play the smart way. And I'm pretty happy that I was so solid," a jubilant Swiatek said after having total control against her opponent under chili and breezy conditions at the centre court last night.

Swiatek coped with the conditions well and hit 14 winners to five unforced errors, breaking Kudermetova's serve five times during her 56-minute victory. She also prevailed in exceptional serving as well, earning 85% of her points on her first serve.

Swiatek, who enjoyed an amazing 135-day, 37-match unbeaten streak following her title win last year in



Secretary General of Qatar Tennis, Squash and Badminton Federation (QTSBF) Tariq Zainal, Qatar TotalEnergies Open doubles winners Jessica Pegula and Coco Gauff, runners-up Lyudmyla Kichenok and Jelena Ostapenko and other officials pose for a group photo after the presentation ceremony. PIC: QTSBF

Doha, is bidding to become the first player to defend a title on the WTA Tour in 2023.

Speaking about today's title clash against Pegula whom she met at the United Cup semis Down Under last

month, Swiatek said it is difficult to predict the outcome.

"Well, you know, She's a great player, a really solid one. And yeah, we'll see. Honestly, I don't know what's going to happen. I'm not going to

predict anything and over-analyze. I'm just going to go and play my best tennis," Swiatek, who has the upper hand against Pegula – with a 4-2 record, said.

Swiatek enjoyed a day-off on the previous day, being handed a walkover by Belinda Bencic who withdrew citing "fatigue" after notching a hard-fought victory over Victoria Azarenka in the quarter-finals – days after she won the Abu Dhabi singles title.

Swiatek also noted that she had a glimpse of what Qatar has to offer during her day-off.

"I didn't actually go far from my hotel, but every day I'm going for a walk in the park right next to the hotel. It's really nice. And I can see that Qatar is great and for sure they did a great job preparing everything for the World Cup. And I can still see that because still there's a lot of space. And yeah I really like it here."

Earlier, Pegula, seeded second behind Swiatek in Doha, battled through windy conditions and a fellow Top 10 opponent to reach the final.

She beat No.5 seed Maria Sakkari 6-2, 4-6, 6-1 in 1 hour and 59 minutes. The result puts the American into her first final of 2023, her sixth overall.

Prior to yesterday's match, Pegula

WOMEN'S SINGLES SEMIFINALS

Jessica Pegula (2), United States, def. Maria Sakkari (5), Greece, 6-2, 4-6, 6-1.
Iga Swiatek (1), Poland, def. Veronika Kudermetova (8), Russia, 6-0, 6-1.

WOMEN'S DOUBLES FINAL

Jessica Pegula and Coco Gauff (1), United States, def. Lyudmyla Kichenok, Ukraine, and Jelena Ostapenko (2), Latvia, 6-4, 2-6, 10-7.

was trailing with a 2-4 career record against Sakkari, who last year defeated the American in two sets in the third round before reaching the semis in Doha.

"Thank you, guys, everyone, for bracing these conditions. Thank you for coming out. It really means a lot. It's already tough enough to play, but with you guys here, it makes it a lot more fun," Pegula, who later teamed up with compatriot Coco Gauff to win the doubles title with a thrilling 6-4, 2-6, 10-7 win over Ukrainian-Latvian pair Lyudmyla Kichenok and Jelena Ostapenko, said.

Murray, Zverev and Rublev land in Doha



Britain's Andy Murray, Germany's Alexander Zverev and Russia's Andrey Rublev arrive in Doha yesterday to take part in the Qatar ExxonMobil Open that will begin at Khalifa International Tennis & Squash Complex on Monday. The draw for the ATP tournament will be held today.

Klopp wants Liverpool to boost top 4 bid in Newcastle game

AFP — LONDON

Jurgen Klopp (pictured) has challenged Liverpool to wintoday's "massive" clash at Newcastle as the Reds look to climb back into the race to finish in the Premier League's top four.

Klopp's side are languishing in ninth place and sit nine points adrift of fourth-placed Newcastle.

Liverpool ended a four-game winless run in the Premier League by beating Everton 2-0 in Monday's Merseyside derby.

But Klopp knows a victory against Newcastle is essential if Liverpool are to have any chance of qualifying for the Champions League via a top four finish.

"It's a massive game. If we want to reach something this season, we have to chase everybody and especially the teams

After the World Cup we won two games but we were not overly happy with the way we played, so you cannot really build on it. This time it was different. It looked like us.

Jurgen Klopp

ahead of us in the table," Klopp told reporters yesterday.

"Newcastle is a tough place to go, was always for us, hopefully we can build on the performance from Monday because that was obviously the main difference to other games we won.

"After the World Cup we won two games but we were not overly happy with the way we

played, so you cannot really build on it. This time it was different. It looked like us.

"People said after the game that Everton didn't do this or that as much as they did against Arsenal. I really think it was because we did particularly well. That's a point to prove again tomorrow."

Liverpool have a game in hand on Newcastle and a win at St James' Park would revive their top four hopes.

Klopp's men can take heart from their 2-1 victory over the Magpies in August, although Newcastle have gone unbeaten in 17 top-flight games since then.

Newcastle boss Eddie Howe took exception to recent critical comments from Klopp about the spending

power of the Saudi-backed Magpies.

But the German, whose side face Spanish giants Real Madrid in the first leg of a last 16 Champions League tie

next week, was more complimentary about Howe on Friday.

"Eddie's doing an exceptional job, absolutely exceptional. The financial possibilities they have or will have in the future, it's exceptional, but so far it's not because of that, not at all," Klopp said.

"Eddie came there in a difficult situation. It was building on the team they had, improving players who were there. It speaks volumes about the manager, how much he turned it around and made them a proper threat for everybody."

Liverpool centre-back Virgil Van Dijk, fit after a hamstring injury, could make his first appearance



TODAY'S FIXTURES

- Aston Villa vs Arsenal
- Brentford vs Crystal Palace
- Brighton & Hove Albion vs Fulham
- Chelsea vs Southampton
- Everton vs Leeds United
- Nottingham Forest vs Manchester City
- Wolverhampton Wanderers vs AFC Bournemouth
- Newcastle United vs Liverpool

since the start of January after being on the bench against Everton.

"Yesterday he looked absolutely ready. I think today he will look the same and then we make a decision," Klopp said.