



In the space of 10 days, Liverpool won the English League Cup and moved into the quarterfinals of the English FA Cup and UEFA Cup, keeping its bid alive for an unprecedented cup treble.

Liverpool chases first cup treble

BY PAUL KENNEDY



Liverpool is the most decorated club in English soccer history. The Reds have won 36 titles since their founding in 1892.

Six times they've won two titles in the same season. Twice they've won three titles: 1977 (English League, European Cup, European Super Cup) and 1984 (English League, English League Cup and European Cup).

Now they have a shot at a hat trick of cup titles.

Here's a look at Liverpool's 2000-01 cup season:

UEFA CUP. Seventeen years after beating Roma in the European Cup final, Liverpool returned to Rome for the first leg of its fourth-round UEFA Cup series with Roma.

Michael Owen scored twice to give Liverpool a 2-0 win.

The Champions League dominates the European scene these days, but Owen's performance was big news in England.

"Emperor Owen" (*The Daily Mail*) and "Owen leaves Roma in ruins" (*The Times*) were two of the headlines with a Roman theme.

The return leg at Anfield was "Paisley Day" to honor the late Bob Paisley, who led Liverpool to 14 titles in a nine-year span (1974-83).

Liverpool coach Gerard Houllier was not too happy with the idea.

"Of course, I am happy to give credit to Bob Paisley, who was a wonderful manager for this club," he explained. "But I don't like any kind of celebrations before an important game. I hate that because it is never a good sign."

Sure enough, the Reds fell, 1-0, but still went through to the quarterfinals, where they will face Portuguese club Porto.

There was more controversy after the game.

As soon as the final whistle blew, the tune "Arrivederci Roma" was played over the Anfield public address system.

Liverpool management was forced to issue an apology.

"We will now sit down with the individual concerned and discuss the matter further," said Liverpool spokesman Ian Cotton.

ENGLISH FA CUP. Between the two Roma matches, Liverpool beat Manchester City, 4-2, to reach the quarterfinals of the English FA Cup.

The star was Finn Jari Litmanen, who scored the first goal on a penalty in the seventh minute and set up Emile Heskey for the second five minutes later.

Litmanen was one of the Ajax stars during its great run in the mid-1990s, but he struggled after moving to Spanish club Barcelona.

He arrived from Barca on a free transfer in January and had an immediate impact, helping Liverpool crush Crystal Palace, 5-0, in the second leg of their English League Cup semifinal series.

Owen credited Litmanen's arrival for his return to form.

"Jari is a great help to me," said Owen. "I'm always willing to learn from players, even if they are in direct competition to me for a place in the team."

Liverpool's win sets up a date with neighboring Tranmere Rovers, which recovered from a 3-0 deficit with 30 minutes left to beat Southampton, 4-3.

Tranmere, managed by former Liverpool star John Aldridge, is last in the First Division but has beaten five Premier League teams in cup play over the last two seasons.

ENGLISH LEAGUE CUP. Liverpool was the heavy favorite to beat Birmingham City in the English League Cup final in Cardiff, but the Reds blew a 1-0 lead, conceding the tying penalty three minutes into stoppage time, and needed penalty kicks to prevail.

Liverpool's goal was scored by Robbie Fowler, who lobbed Birmingham City goal Ian Bennett from outside the area.

Before Owen came along at France '98, Fowler was touted as Liverpool's next England star, but his career has been plagued by injuries and discipline problems.

A knee injury kept him out of France '98.

In 1999, Fowler was suspended six games for two separate incidents — he taunted Chelsea defender Paul Le Saux and pretended to snort cocaine along the goal line after scoring against archrival Everton — and suffered a broken nose in an altercation at a Liverpool hotel.

Heskey's arrival last season prompted speculation that Fowler, a product of the Liverpool youth system, would leave Merseyside for Chelsea or Arsenal, but Houllier now rotates Fowler, Owen and Heskey up front.

Litmanen and Czech Vladimir Smicer can play up front or in midfield.

Fowler, a holdover from Liverpool's team that won the 1995 English League Cup, is excited about the Reds' future.

"When we won this trophy in 1995," he says, "we did not build on the success, and that was the last trophy we won until today. But this is a new squad, and I think we have the ability to win more."

The English bookmakers like Liverpool's immediate future.

Bookmaking agency William Hill is giving 10-1 odds that Liverpool will win the treble, adding the FA Cup and UEFA Cup titles to its trophy case at Anfield.

(Paul Kennedy is the managing editor of Soccer America.)

Robbie Fowler (admiring the English League Cup trophy) says Liverpool has the ability to win more titles this season.

Liverpool Titles

English League (18): 1901, 1906, 1922-23, 1947, 1964, 1966, 1973, 1976-77, 1979-80, 1982-84, 1986, 1988, 1990.

English FA Cup (5): 1965, 1974, 1986, 1989, 1992. **English League Cup (6):** 1981-84, 1995, 2000. **European Cup (4):** 1977-78, 1981, 1984.

UEFA Cup (2): 1973, 1976. **European Super Cup (1):** 1977.



In 1984, Liverpool capped off its second treble, winning the European Cup.