

# Zinedine Zidane facing troubled times at Real Madrid but will soon see a return to winning ways

Al Arabiya senior sports presenter Liliane Tannoury believes the French coach has the character and ability to ride out the current struggles



Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane during the Champions League defeat at home to Shakhtar Donetsk. AFP



Liliane Tannoury  
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A modest start to the season and inevitably at a club like Real Madrid, some mutterings about the future of manager Zinedine Zidane have started.

A surprising defeat at home to Cadiz in La Liga, a shock loss to Shakhtar Donetsk, and this week a draw at Borussia Monchengladbach, leaves Real vulnerable in the Champions League, an unthinkable scenario. Only the relief of victory in the clasico

has helped ease the pressure.

Zidane acknowledged that the start of the season has not been a good one, but he promised to turn the situation around, and he will do just that.

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I have admiration for Zidane. His personality, his immunity to criticism, is certainly a powerful virtue in a manager who uses his composure as a strategy to get out of difficult times.

Zidane is a coach who in less than five years has won the Champions League three times and La Liga twice. Last season, he oversaw a run of 10 consecutive victories to overhaul great rivals Barcelona and win the title by five points.

In times of trouble, he has always had the ability to unite his players and staff and protect them from the pressure of the media. That is exactly what he is doing now.

Zidane is different. He remains above the Pep Guardiola-Jose Mourinho duels, he has never adorned himself with nicknames like Special One, he doesn't choose the showmanship of Jurgen Klopp's energetic and rock and roll style, nor the posturing of Diego Simeone.

Discreet and serene, Zidane is a much less showy character for headlines and soundbites.

Managing pressure, the anxiety of bad times and the euphoria of good times, is one of the great values of the Real manager, and the criticism has been very unfair.

He is accused by critics of changing the starting 11 too frequently. He has used 19 players so far, but those detractors are the very same people who praised him in the past for the same strategy that ensured a united and physically fresh squad, and brought success in the league and the Champions League.

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## Real draw in Germany



Real coach Zinedine Zidane after the draw. AP



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From a tactical point of view, Zidane is not obsessed with a style of play like Guardiola, Klopp, Mourinho and even Marcelo Bielsa.

Zidane adapts his game model according to the players he has available, and adapts it to them. Not the other way around. He believes that this way the players will produce more because they will be comfortable.

Guardiola and Klopp's teams are a clear reflection of their ideas. With Zidane that doesn't happen. There is no set ideal and he allows his players enough freedom to express themselves.

He silently managed the upheavals with Gareth Bale and James Rodriguez. According to him, the players were not committed to the club so they would never be comfortable playing as a team.

He remained silent during the Covid-19 pandemic, which led to losses of around €200 million (\$234m) for the club. Together with the remodelling of the Santiago Bernabeu, that prevented Real from being a force in the last transfer window. Even so, there was no criticism or pessimism from the coach.

Real defender Dani Carvajal said recently in an interview with *Esquire* magazine: "Zidane gives us a lot of tranquillity. It never changes and, whether things go well or badly, it maintains its composure. something that gives us a lot of peace of mind."

Zidane will solve the problems and overcome criticism. With peace of mind.

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