

Mohamed Salah: Exceptional football player at all levels

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Mohamed Salah is increasingly influential at Liverpool and the team revolves around the Egyptian striker. This influence is not surprising as he had an excellent 2020/21 season. Salah concluded the campaign as the Reds' top scorer with 31 goals in 51 games across all competitions. That puts Salah in the Premier League's 31st all-time top scorer, three goals from 100 for the club and seven from becoming Africa's top scorer in Premier League history, surpassing Didier Drogba.

In the Egypt national team, Salah also has impressive numbers in recent times — he scored 20 goals and provided 20 assists in 10 matches for Egypt.

These are personal performances that should place him as one of the candidates to receive the 'Best FIFA Men's Player' award (Ballon D'or) in 2021, but it will be very difficult because to receive such an award, FIFA observes three categories; individual performance, team performance and country national team success.

Unfortunately Liverpool did not have a successful season and the African nations are seen as less important than the European teams so the chances of Mohamed Salah are unfortunately small.

Mohamed Salah is 29 years old and still has time to win the Ballon D'or which I sincerely hope and would very much like for several reasons. The first is for its history. After starting to play at the age of 7, something his parents did not appreciate as they wanted him to devote himself to Islamic studies. At the age of 14, Salah moved to Al Mokawloon, the storied Egyptian sports club based in Nasr City, Cairo.

Just getting to training at the club was an adventure: there were classes from 7am to 9am, he started taking buses that lasted five hours until he got to the session, worked and got home again around 10pm. At the time he was full-back, but he moved to the front after a 4-0 rout by his team in which he did not score. At the end of the game, the coach found him crying and asked him the reason. Salah explained that he had not scored a goal and in the next match it was striker. Since then till today, he has remained a striker.

From here the story is well known. Due to the tragedy of Port Said, the First League of Egypt was suspended, the country had no games and the Under-23 team held a friendly in Basel against the local team, which had been following the striker for some time. There, two goals in 45 minutes were enough to definitively convince the Swiss team's leaders. Salah stood out for Basel in 2012/13, signed for Chelsea two seasons later, ended up being loaned to Fiorentina and Roma and signed for Liverpool. A career with a lot of effort. No doubt.

The other reasons why I would very much like him to one day win the Ballon D'or is because of his professionalism and his humanitarian and self-help sense. Salah is, by common consent, a consummate professional who approaches every aspect of his work with an unwavering focus and desire for self-improvement. Worker and top professional. Without fail, he does extra work at the gym every day and his commitment to additional work beyond team sessions, such as nutrition, recovery, mobility and strength, is total. He invests a lot of time in preparation. His car is always in the parking lot at Kirkby Academy (Liverpool training centre).

Lastly, I have a lot of respect for Mohamed Salah for his humanitarian side. It has also been learned that Salah has purchased ambulances and support schools, hospitals and football fields in Nagrig, where he was born. Last year Salah donated more than 50 million Egyptian pounds to the National Cancer Institute and his Mohamed Salah Charity Foundation supports and provides food for the region's most disadvantaged children.

Salah has the nickname 'the happiness maker' for a reason. While his actions on the pitch inspire, those off the field matter just as much.

Let us hope Liverpool have an excellent 2021/22 season so that we can see Salah running for the 2022 Ballon D'or. It is necessary that the team has a good performance, because as far as personal performances are concerned, I have no doubts that Mohamed Salah will again play a fantastic season.

For Liverpool fans, Mohamed Salah is synonymous with goal. For Egypt, he is considered a King. For the Arab world, he is a great idol and considered as helping reduce Islamophobia in the West.

Liliane Tannoury is a prominent sports senior TV producer and presenter at Al Arabiya TV in Dubai. She has covered most of the sports tournaments and events around the world. Liliane has conducted numerous exclusive sports interviews all over the world for Al Arabiya, including Cristiano Ronaldo, Jose Mourinho, Zlatan Ibrahimović, Gareth Bale, Antoine Griezmann, João Felix and many others. She also often invited, as a guest, to Sports Tonight Show at Dubai Eye Radio station and chronicler in the THENATIONAL newspaper from UAE among others.
