Liverpool boss reflects on a challenging 2021 and looks ahead to a crucial trip to Chelsea

In an interview with Sky Sports, Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp says he will not look back fondly on 2021 but retains some positive memories as he also sends a birthday message to Sir Alex Ferguson.

There's laughter around the media room and from the other end of the Zoom call as Jurgen Klopp holds up his face mask by a broken ear strap, with his trademark grin on his face.

It's the final day of 2021 and the Liverpool manager is more than happy to move into next year and towards a time when Covid restrictions can finally be dropped.

The hectic festive fixture schedule has not allowed much time for reminiscing on the past 12 months but, for Klopp, that suits him fine.

"I know it's Sir Alex Ferguson's birthday today, so happy birthday Sir Alex, it's a big one. And my assistant Pete Krawietz turns 50 today, so another big football brain has an important birthday. So that's more in my mind when I think about celebrations.

The past 12 months have hardly been disastrous for Liverpool. Indeed, they saw one of the club's all-time iconic moments, when Alisson became the first goalkeeper to score for them, with his 95th-minute goal against West Brom helping to secure third place and Champions League qualification.

But by the high standards Liverpool have set in recent seasons, there have been frustrations at the start and end of the year, with injuries in early 2021 derailing the team before dropped points in the past two Premier League games - amid injuries, illnesses and postponements - made a title challenge in this campaign significantly tougher.

"Qualifying for the Champions League was for us an absolute highlight and the way we did it but the year started off with an awful injury crisis and you don't want to have that on top of all the corona things around," said Klopp. "It was a really tough time.

"We made it somehow happen and we needed the goal from our goalkeeper and that was a massive highlight, no doubt about it. A very good pre-season, we played an absolutely OK season so far, that's absolutely true but with all the things around it's just tricky.

"You arrive in the morning and you never know who you have available the next morning. It's not cool. That's why I said: the year was not a catastrophe but it's not one I'll remember for ages.

"The new normal is better than the other normal in Covid but there's still space for improvement towards the real normal, I can't wait for that."

As for resolutions, Klopp doesn't have many in particular. "I think I should make a diet again," he laughs. But really the focus is on the short term right now. And it has to be, with a trip to Chelsea on Sunday.

After recent results for both sides, it feels like a pivotal moment in the season.

It is perhaps a mark of how high Liverpool and Manchester City have raised the bar in title races these days that the 20th game of a campaign could be decisive.

Tyson Fury 'absolutely ecstatic' after winning two Ring Magazine awards following epic fight with Deontay Wilder

Tyson Fury is "absolutely ecstatic and overwhelmed" after receiving two awards from The Ring Magazine following his thrilling victory over Deontay Wilder.

Britain's heavyweight star claimed the 'Fight of the Year' and 'Round of the Year' awards from The Ring Magazine after he retained his WBC title and Ring Magazine belt with a dramatic stoppage of Wilder in October.

"I'm absolutely ecstatic and overwhelmed to be recognized by Ring Magazine yet again," said Fury when accepting the 'Fight of the Year' award.

"That's more awards to add to the collection and more plaques to put on the wall. I'm absolutely delighted, and I'd like to give a big shout out to Deontay Wilder because I needed a dance partner in order to win this award.

"It was a great fight but not so great for me and Deontay because fights like that knock years off your life, but it was an epic battle and a great trilogy. It was definitely all worth it.

"There was a lot of talk that it was one of the best heavyweight fights in recent years and it was a great thing to be a part of."

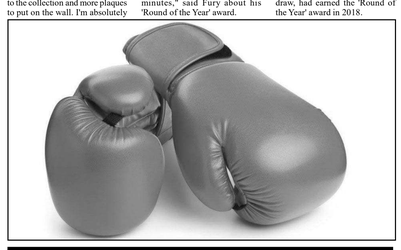
Fury had appeared to be on the brink of his first professional defeat when he was dropped twice amid a ferocious fightback by Wilder. "It was a tough old three minutes," said Fury about his 'Round of the Year' award.

"When you're sparring in the gym, you're not getting dropped like that, then bang, all of a sudden you're in a fight where there's three knockdowns in two rounds.

"It was crazy! That's the first time I've been dropped twice in one round. Everybody thought it was over but not me. I always knew I was going to get up and win the fight."

Fury has previously won 'Fighter of the Year' in 2015 and 2020 (co-winner alongside Teofimo Lopez in 2020) and is the only British fighter to win that award twice.

His first fight against Wilder, which ended in a split decision draw, had earned the 'Round of the Year' award in 2018.



New Year Honours: Jason Kenny knighted and Laura Kenny made a dame as Emma Raducanu receives MBE

Olympic cycling champions Jason and Laura Kenny have been awarded a knighthood and damehood respectively in the Queen's New Year Honours list, while Emma Raducanu added one more prize to her 2021 collection.

Jason, 33, won his seventh gold medal at Tokyo 2020 to make him the most successful British Olympian of all time, while his wife Laura, 29, became the first British woman to win a gold medal at three consecutive Olympics.

Teenage British tennis champion Emma Raducanu is made an MBE after she ended Britain's 44-year wait for a women's Grand Slam singles champion with a remarkable victory at the US Open in September. Raducanu said: "It makes me immensely proud and grateful to be listed to receive an MBE from Her Majesty the Queen. This year has been full of amazing surprises for me so to end 2021 with this appointment is very special." Britain's Olympic and Paralympic stars feature prominently on the honour's list, with Tom Daley made an OBE for services to diving, LGBTQ+ rights and charity after the 27-year-old won his first Olympic title at his fourth Games.

Matty Lee receives an MBE after teaming up with Daly to win the synchronised 10m platform.

Adam Peaty is awarded an OBE after becoming the first British swimmer to retain an Olympic title with gold in the 100m breaststroke in Japan.

Others made an OBE are Adam Peaty after becoming the first British swimmer to retain an Olympic title with gold in the 100m breaststroke and gymnast Max Whitlock, who retained his pommel horse title to land the third Olympic gold medal of his career.

Swimmers James Guy, Kathleen Dawson, Anna Hopkin and Freya Anderson - team-mates of Peaty during the 4x100m mixed medley relay - all receive the British Empire Medal.

Double gold medallist Tom Dean has also received an MBE along with his 4x200m men's freestyle relay team-mates Duncan Scott, Calum Jarvis and Matthew Richards.

British Swimming performance director Chris Spice is awarded an OBE after overseeing Team GB's best-ever performance in an Olympic swimming competition as they took home eight medals, while British Olympic Association chief executive Andy Anson receives an OBE.

Hannah Mills also becomes an OBE for services to sailing and the environment, with her 470 class sailing gold medal-winning team-mate in Tokyo, Eilidh McIntyre, given an MBE.

The 49er gold medal-winning pairing of Stuart Bithell and Dylan Fletcher-Scott have also been awarded MBEs.

Boxing champions Galal Yafai and Lauren Price are also made MBEs, as have the triathlon mixed relay gold medal-winning quartet of Jonny Brownlee, Jess Learmonth, Georgia Taylor-Brown and Alex Yee.

Taylor-Brown and Yee also won individual silvers in the women's and men's events respectively.

Track cycling star Matt Walls has been awarded an MBE following his omnium gold, while Beth Shriever and Charlotte Worthington receive the same honour after their gold medals in the BMX racing and freestyle respectively.

Men's cross-country mountain biking gold medallist Tom Pidcock is awarded an MBE, while British Cycling's performance director, Stephen Park, becomes a CBE.

Team GB modern pentathlon champions Joe Choong and Kate French also receive MBEs.

Eight-time Paralympic gold medallist Jody Cundy is awarded a CBE for services to cycling after he became the first British man to medal at seven consecutive games.

OBEs have been awarded to fellow Tokyo Paralympic champions Kadeena Cox, Hannah Cockroft, Aled Davies, Natasha Baker, Hannah Russell, Bethany Firth and Sophie Wells.

Swimmers Reece Dunn and Maisie Summers-Newton, cyclists Jaco van Gass and Ben Watson, triathlete Lauren Steadman and athletes Owen Miller and Thomas Young are among the other Paralympic gold medallists to be made MBEs.

In football, Steve Holland, the assistant manager of the England men's team, receives an MBE after helping the side reach the final of the Euros, their first major international showpiece since 1966.

Chelsea Women manager Emma Hayes has been awarded an OBE after helping the Blues retain their Women's Super League title in 2021 and reach the Champions League final.

Former footballer Gary Bennett's work for anti-racism education charity Show Racism the Red Card sees him receive an MBE, while former England football captain Bobby Moore's widow Stephanie has been awarded an OBE for services to bowel cancer research funding.

Elsewhere, six-time World Superbike champion Jonathan Rea from Northern Ireland becomes an OBE, while Jamie Jones-Buchanan has been recognised with an MBE for services to rugby league and to the community in Leeds.

Jason and Laura Kenny, who got married after returning from the Rio Olympics in 2016, now have 15 Olympic medals between them. Jason now has seven gold medals - one more than former team-mate Sir Chris Hoy - and nine medals in total, after adding Keirin gold and team sprint silver in Tokyo to surpass Sir Bradley Wiggins, who has eight in all.

Rory McIlroy to win The Masters? Jordan Spieth for The Open? Nick Dougherty's 2022 major predictions

Hideki Matsuyama will return to Augusta National as defending champion, a year on from becoming the first Asian winner of The Masters last April, while Rory McIlroy will have another chance to complete golf's career Grand Slam.

Phil Mickelson became the oldest major winner in history with his PGA Championship victory at Kiawah Island, while world No 1 Jon Rahm secured a maiden major title with his dramatic US Open success at Torrey Pines.

The Open celebrates its 150th anniversary next summer at St Andrews, with the Old Course hosting the event for the first time since 2015 and Collin Morikawa the reigning Champion Golfer of the Year after lifting the Claret Jug at Royal St George's.

Who will win the men's majors in 2022? We asked Sky Sports Golf presenter Nick Dougherty to offer his predictions…

I'm quite an emotional person so I will continue to believe that he will win at Augusta, and there's no reason why he won't. I honestly believe that he has found that sweet spot of wanting to find some improvement, but also has having the perspective of knowing he has his own way of doing it.

I feel like there's been a few years where he has been chasing trying to replicate some of the traits he likes in other players' games, such as the strengthening of the his clubface we see in many of the top players, all in the quest to rise above them all, but I think he is starting to find his own game again.

I like what he has been saying recently about his performances and I like the work he has done with Brad Faxon. I expect that he will win again early in the season and that would take him into The Masters in great form. He has had chances there, let's be honest. He has a good record at Augusta National, he just hasn't got the job done yet.

His career has been phenomenal so far, with the three PGA Tour wins, a European Tour win and that Hero World Challenge victory just before Christmas. We have seen what he is capable of, so the next step is obvious.

When you look at all the tools he has, I think it's inevitable that he's in the mix for more big tournaments in the years ahead. Winning bigger events on the PGA Tour and a major victory are both very much in his future.

He's edging towards Collin Morikawa with the quality of his long game and he's phenomenal off the tee. He has the game tee-to-green and is far better around the greens than he used to be, so that we can expect him to step up and challenge in the major arena.

The last five times Schauffele has played the US Open, he has finished fifth, sixth, third, fifth and seventh. He has won four times on the PGA Tour and has a very good CV in the majors without winning one yet, so this could be his calling. Spieth finished second at The Open in 2021 and played well when it was last held at St Andrews in 2015. Given the nature of his game, with his tidied-up iron play and his brilliant putting, I just feel like he is going to have a chance around that golf course. St Andrews, for me, is still one of the most misunderstood golf courses. When you look at the calibre of players to have won around the Old Course and the way they have plotted around there, you could easily see someone with the artistry that Spieth possesses lifting the Claret Jug again.

England head coach Chris Silverwood to miss fourth Test after family member tests positive for Covid-19

England head coach Chris Silverwood will miss the fourth Ashes Test after a family member tested positive for Covid-19.

Silverwood must isolate for 10 days, along with his family, in Melbourne after the positive case was returned following the latest round of PCR tests among the touring party.

The fourth Test starts in Sydney on January 5, with Australia having already retained the Ashes after taking a 3-0 lead in the five-match series.

England have recorded seven positive cases - three support staff and four family members - since a PCR testing regime was implemented on December 27, during the third Test match.

The three other England coaching staff members currently isolating and unable to make the trip to Sydney along with Silverwood are bowling coach Jon Lewis, spin bowling coach Jeetan Patel and fitness consultant Darren Veness.