

DAYS TO LIVERPOOL v MAN UNITED

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Klopp's Liverpool are great and maybe they can become INVINCIBLES, but it will be so incredibly difficult to match Wenger's unique achievement

ARSENAL'S INVINCIBLES' PSYCHOLOGIST ELLIOTT ON UNBEATEN KOP

MATA



EXCLUSIVE
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THE mastermind behind Arsenal's 'Invincibles' season believes it may never be repeated.

Liverpool go into their clash with Manchester United on Sunday as the only unbeaten team in the Premier League.

But whether they are able to maintain their record through the season will depend partly on the attitude of manager Jurgen Klopp (with Virgil van Dijk, above) and the message he sends out. That is the view of David Elliott, the club's sports psychologist when Arsenal won the title unbeaten in 2004 (celebrating with the trophy, above right), who says players must always have "stretch goals" to push themselves further.

And he believes Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola's insistence that it was impossible to avoid defeat at some point in the league season, and only wants his players to be champions, is one reason they lost at Chelsea last weekend.

Elliott, who joined Arsenal in 2001 and later also worked on a personal level with Arsene Wenger, revealed that setting targets is the key to building continued success.

He told Mirror Sport: "What happened in 2004 was the greatest achievement because the Premier

League is a marathon and the ultimate test. It's all about having a vision. Klopp has a great team and maybe they can do it. But it's so difficult, which is proved by the fact only one team has managed it.

"City are a great team, but even the most competitive players must have a challenge to make sure they aspire to greatness. If they have won the title once, what inspires them the next season? That's the key. Stretch goals are something to aim for.

"When Manchester City lost on



Saturday, I sent Arsene a message. He came back with a nice message telling me he was pleased I still believed."

Elliott (with Wenger, above) had previously worked at Liverpool under Gerard Houllier and then moved to Arsenal. He remembers the start of his relationship with the players.

"They were a competitive group," said Elliott. "I remember talking to Ray Parlour, who wanted to go racing like some of the United lads. I went to Arsene and not all of the players were into horses, so we went ten-pin bowling instead. That set up a

competitive edge. Martin Keown liked it because it broke up training and David Seaman won it because he was good at rolling the ball, of course!

"We talked about targets at the end of the 2001/02 season when we were on course to win the league. We had 12 games to go, we wanted a target of how many points we could get and the players set a target of 30.

"But I said, 'Hang on, you're giving away six points before you've even started!' That really got them going and they won all 12 games.

"The following season, I said to Arsene we must make the target going unbeaten. He thought I was mad.

"I went to a business seminar in which they suggested it was best to make targets public through the press, which is why Arsene talked about it.

"They didn't manage it that first season, some of the players didn't like it and felt it put too much pressure on, so I left the club in 2003. But Arsene persuaded me back and we did it the following season."

Elliott is now open to offers to get back into football and believes the mental side of the game is all important if Liverpool are to achieve the impossible.

He added: "These guys are so competitive, they are brilliant at what they do, but they need targets each year to push them through the next level."



KOP MILES IN FRONT SAYS MAC

BY DAVID ANDERSON
LIVERPOOL are miles ahead of bitter rivals Manchester United, claims Reds great Steve McMahon.

McMahon, part of Liverpool's last title-winning side in 1990, said he did not expect the gulf between the sides to be so big heading into Sunday's showdown at Anfield.

The former England midfielder (above) says he is surprised by Liverpool's progress this season under Jurgen Klopp, who has taken them top of the Premier League table approaching the halfway point.

McMahon also did not expect United to be so inconsistent under Jose Mourinho - they are 16 points behind the Reds and in danger of missing out on a top-four place.

"We are way past United at this stage," he said. "United have fallen so below their standards and we have gone above where I think we should be in this short period of time.

"There is miles of difference between Liverpool and Manchester United."

McMahon feels Liverpool have an excellent chance to record their first Premier League win over United since March 2014.

"We should take the game to them, while being patient," he said.

"The atmosphere and the game will be different, but we are favourites."

