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Times		

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# THE TIMES

The old hand puts his foot down on the raw youth

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Liverpool's incalculable debt to Ian Rush mounted at the City Ground yesterday as yet another crucial goal rolled off the Welsh international's seemingly endless production line.

Forest, by virtue of an earlier strike of rare quality, seemed safe, with only three minutes remaining, to leap-frog over their Merseyside opponents into third place. Liverpool, for all their organization and commitment, had lacked the necessary chemistry to make this an explosive performance. Then a swerving centre by Lawrenson on the right was nodded back by Welsh and the kind of situation upon which Rush thrives was suddenly there.

Forest thus kick off 1987 fretting over a series of results during the holiday period which slowed down their early-season impetus. For 35 minutes they led by a goal from Starbuck, an 18-year-old local find, his second in as many appearances.

Brian Clough, the manager, introduced Starbuck, whom he likens to Bambi because of his frail limbs, at Newcastle, where he scored in a 3-2 defeat.

On his second League appearance the lad spent most of the game looking slightly lost, but was confident enough when his one chance arrived. It would, indeed, have been a travesty had that particular move failed to produce the goal it deserved.

Beginning with polished defensive work between Fairclough and Pearce, the ball was transferred from one end of the field to the other via eight passes and six players. Carr, as usual, was involved in the action, producing the cross for Starbuck to convert.

The goal that the game so urgently needed did more than give Forest a 53rd-minute lead. It transformed a match which had lacked inspiration and flair.

The toast, indeed, was 'absent friends' since the players with pedigree to change things were Metgod, on the Forest substitutes' bench, and Dalglish, who is not selecting himself just now. One suspected that Liverpool had more to offer and indeed they had, slipping up a couple of gears to secure their late equalizer.

Although the game mainly featured two highly capable sides cancelling each other out, there were individual performances to savour. Walker and Fairclough, in the heart of Forest's defence, restricted Rush to only two scoring chances.

One features of a restless and sporting 90 minutes was the way in which efficient defences restricted the shooting almost entirely to long-range speculation. Only as Liverpool worked up attacking steam to avoid Forest stealing their League position did the goalmouth action mount.

Then it was the turn of Segers to enter the fray with two decisive saves from Walsh, one a superb one-handed push around the post. Just when it seemed that Clough's gamble on raw youth would succeed, Rush intervened with his 23rd goal of the season.

NOTTINGHAM FOREST: H Seagers; G Fleming, S Pearce, D Walker, C Fairclough, I Bowyer, F Carr, N Webb, N Clough, P Starbuck, G Mills.

LIVERPOOL: B Grobbelaar; G Gillespie, J Beglin, M Lawrenson, R Venison, I Rush, J Molby, S McMahon.

Referee: C Downey.