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## THE TIMES

Patience proves to be Liverpool's only saving grace

Liverpool ..... 1 West Ham United ..... 0

The patient approach which has kept Liverpool at the pinnacle of English football for over a decade is again posed to become their most valuable ally in the hunt for this season's League championship.

Twice now in the space of three days, Liverpool have salvaged vital points from the dying embers of their matches, first at Forest on New Year's Day when Rush scored a late equalizer and now against a West Ham side who, arguably, deserved more for their determined defending.

Steven McMahon, scorer of the 84th minute goal which keeps Liverpool ominously shadowing Arsenal and Everton, accurately summed up the Anfield philosophy when he remarked later: 'We've got faith in ourselves and if we keep plugging away, who knows what can happen.'

Who knows indeed, for the holiday period has reaped eight points from a possible 15 for manager Kenny Dalglish - surprisingly more profitable than last season when they took the title. And if that is any barometer, the polished silverware that rests in their bulging trophy room seems destined to stay.

That it took Liverpool 84 minutes to finally penetrate West Ham's defiant resistance is glowing testimony to the efforts of Martin and Hilton who manfully kept the tide of red shirts at bay until McMahon seized on a Rush header to drive in the winner.

Before that, United had managed to successfully, albeit desperately at times, to plug a defence which had leaked an alarming 12 goals in their previous five games. Having picked up just seven points in eight matches and lost their last four away visits, John Lyle is entitled to be happier with the prospects even if McAvennie is struggling to regain the sharpness which made him a defender's nightmare last season.

Certainly their commitment and concentration cannot be faulted for they remained composed in the face of pressure which became almost beyond endurance midway through the second half.

The catalyst for the spell came after 59 minutes when Molby's fierce free kick was pushed onto the post by Parkes. As if suddenly awakened the Kop responded with the type of vociferous support which led Dalglish to comment: 'It was them who inspired us, usually it's the team who left the crowd but this time they got behind us. I don't think they realize the effect they have on the players when they get behind them like that.'

Victory could have been sealed then had Walsh not deliberated long enough for Parkes to save his 67th minute shot after he had been put clean through by Rush. But West Ham left Anfield in better heart than when they arrived with Martin saying: 'It was a good defensive performance by the team and although it was a disappointment to lose a late goal, we frustrated them and now we can build on this.'

LIVERPOOL: B Grobbelaar; G Gillespie, J Beglin, M Lawrenson, R Whelan, A Hansen, P Walsh, C Johnston, I Rush, J Molby, S McMahon.

WEST HAM: P Parkes; S Walford, G Parris, P Hilton, A Martin, A Devonshire, N Orr (sub, P Ince), F McAvennie, A Dickens, T Cottee, G Pike.

Referee: M Peck.



## THE SUNDAY TIMES

Humour back on the Kop

Liverpool ..... 1 West Ham ..... 0

RUSH is on the way out but Molby, thank heavens for all Liverpudlians, is here to stay as the architect.

Yesterday it was a born and bred Merseysider, Steve McMahon, who, with six minutes remaining, spared the blushes of a Liverpool team which had squandered until then the most extraordinary number of chances.

The goal at least was a classic. Lawrenson overlapped down the right, Rush rose higher than all around him and headed the ball back to McMahon, who, with a master's eye from the edge of the penalty area, struck a right-foot shot unstopably inside the post.

The first taste of a Liverpool afternoon is always the vibrancy, the meaning which football injects into an often bleak community. They were lining up in their thousands around turn-stiles which have ticked over at the 10% more than last season and the reason is obvious: the level of malevolence around Anfield is clearly being driven out by the police surveillance and the humour of the Kop is returning.

Yet their players required 15 minutes to adjust. Slowly Liverpool's superior passing did carve out the chances, but luck was running the other way. After 39 shot from the edge of the area, defeated Parkes but struck the crossbar.

And on half-time, Rush suddenly sneaked behind the defence, fed the ball back and the inevitable Johnston drove it into the stomach of Parkes.

The second half became a frenzy - Liverpool pouring men forward but meeting a West Ham who were simply out to survive.

Molby put McMahon clear with a golfer's chip, but Johnston was unable to force over the resulting centre. Then Molby himself curled a free-kick around the defensive wall only for Parkes to deflect it on to the post.

In the 60th minute West Ham did a remarkable thing, they attacked. Their substitute Inch found himself in possession less than 10 yards out, his shot trickled past Grobbelaar but Beglin managed to catch it.

Normal service was then resumed, Liverpool being carried towards on a great tide of passion and finally managing to capitalise on their possession.

Weather: crisp, Ground: frosty. Goal: McMahon (84min). Liverpool (4-4-2): Grobbelaar; Lawrenson, Gillespie, Hansen, Beglin; Johnston. McMahon, Molby, Whelan; Walsh, Rush.

West Ham United (4-4-2): Parkes; Parris, Hilton, Martin, Walford; Orr, Dickens (sub: Ince 57min). Pike, Devonshire; Cottee, McAvennie.

Referee: M G Peck