

Date: 21 February 1987

Opposition: Aston Villa

Competition: League

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An unsung magician is Walsh

Aston Villa 2 Liverpool 2

Paul Walsh capped an outstanding performance by conjuring a 62nd-minute equalizer out of nothing to earn his championship-challenging team a valuable point against lowly Aston Villa.

Walsh is out of favour with England but in this mood he seems the ideal replacement should Lineker or Beardsley get injured or lose form.

A fascinating match, which first went Liverpool's way and then Villa's, swung back towards the Merseysiders at the finish, owing mainly to Walsh's contribution.

Liverpool needed an exceptional display from someone, for a sore back kept Johnston off the field in the second half and Rush had one of his less-productive afternoons.

Victory would have put Liverpool second but the lapses in concentration against Leicester City the previous week were repeated here; and in the 15 minutes before half-time, and a short while after it, defeat was a real possibility.

Liverpool were a goal to the good in 40 seconds to freeze as Hansen's instant forward pass found the unmarked Johnston, who did not look a gift-horse in the mouth.

After 29 minutes Grobbelaar parried Hunt's angled drive but the ball rebounded off Lawrenson's legs and over the line for an own-goal. Then came Villa's purple patch in which Elliott, their best player, put them 2-1 ahead just before the break.

The second half contained four bookings, plenty of good football, and a gem of a goal by Walsh. Released down the left flank by Lawrenson, Walsh carried the ball 30 yards to the edge of the penalty area and turned inside Williams before striking a magnificent rising shot past Spink.

ASTON VILLA: N Spink; G Williams, A Dorigo, M Keown, P Elliott, N Cooper, P Birch, W Aspinall, G Thompson, S Hunt, M Walters, (sub: A Daley).

LIVERPOOL: B Grobbelaar; G Gillespie, B Venison, M Lawrenson, R Whelan, A Hansen, P Walsh, C Johnson (Sub: J Aldridge), I Rush, J Molby, S McMahon

Referee: R Lewis.