

Date: 4 November 1987

Opposition: Wimbledon

Competition: League

Times

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THE TIMES

Liverpool go top after record unbeaten run

Wimbledon 1 Liverpool 1

Liverpool, described by Bobby Gould, the Wimbledon manager, as the best club side in the world over the past 25 years, duly completed a club record run of 12 games unbeaten to return to the top of the table.

A masterly substitution by Kenny Dalglish kept his sides unbeaten run intact. He showed the depth of talent on the substitutes bench by replacing Craig Johnston, who is in England's squad for next week's European championship game in Yugoslavia, with Pounds 800,000 Ray Houghton. The newcomer scored within seconds of his arrival and might have scored three.

Gould's 'rag-tag and bobtail outfit' - his words - were first on target at Plough Lane against unbeaten Liverpool. Sanchez picked up a headed clearance and tested Grobbelaar with a well struck ground shot.

Barely had the applause died down and Barnes set off on one of the searching runs that had him labelled as the most exciting player in the league. Past Fairweather. Past Goodyear. Past Gayle. Unfortunately his right foot shot did not match the approach and Beasant made a comfortable save. Another cross from Barnes as Liverpool clicked into top gear had Aldridge, who had not scored in three games, stretching and sending the ball wide.

Not that it was all one way traffic. Wimbledon, with Fashanu testing Grobbelaar with an overhead kick and Sanchez sending two more long range shots just off target, were in lively frame of mind.

Wimbledon, as their manager had predicted, were 'blitzing' their illustrious opponents, and making an exciting match of the process. Nicol even played the ball back to Grobbelaar from just inside his own half to relieve the pressure. Nicol then lost the ball to Fairweather after 32 minutes and the winger ran on to test Grobbelaar with a rising shot, but it was more of a chance than he made on it.

The sight of Houghton limbering up on the line inspired Johnston to run through and test Beasant with a low shot by a post. Obviously not good enough for Kenny Dalglish. Johnston, called up for England only a day before, was promptly replaced by the Pounds 800,000 import from Oxford on the hour. It proved a splendid move. Two minutes after he came on, with his first touch of the ball, Houghton beat three defenders and scored his first goal for Liverpool. Dalglish did a celebratory jig on the touch-line.

Wimbledon, obviously hoping for a similar reaction, sent on the long-serving Cork for Gannon; as he came on, Houghton hit the post after an exchange of passes with Aldridge. Houghton hit the outside of a post with a shot then, after dispossessing Beasant, saw his shot from the line hit his own colleague, Aldridge. Just when it seemed that Liverpool were cruising to victory, Ryan's shot was deflected in by Fairweather after 78 minutes.

WIMBLEDON: D Beasant; V Ryan, K Bedford, C Goodyear, B Gayle, A Thorn, C Fairweather, T Gibson (sub: I Hazel) J Fashanu, L Sanchez, J Gannon (sub: A Cork).

LIVERPOOL: B Grobbelaar; G Gillespie, M Lawrenson, S Nichol, R Whelan, A Hansen, P Beardsley, G Aldridge, C Johnston (sub: R Houghton), J Barnes, S McMahon.

Referee: L Shapter.