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 Opposition: Stoke City
 Competition: FA Cup

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THE TIMES

Shaw comes within a leg glance of stopping the show

Stoke City 0 **Liverpool** 0

This was almost the perfect Cup tie: Stoke City tie; Stoke City, from the lower reaches of the second division, slugging it out in the mud with the best team in England and a full house of almost 32,000 responding passionately. What it needed, though, was that moment when one player - preferably from the underdogs - takes matters into his own hands and achieves glory.

Six minutes from the end of a towering match at the Victoria Ground on Saturday this is exactly what should have happened. The player in question was Graham Shaw, Stoke's 20-year-old substitute, who had been on the field for 10 minutes. Shaw was unmarked and standing about 10 yards into the **Liverpool** half of the field when Dixon, the Stoke right back, hoisted a long ball forward. Momentarily, Shaw hesitated, thinking he might be offside. But the linesman did not raise his flag.

Hooper, taking the injured Grobbelaar's place in the **Liverpool** goal, sensed the danger long before Shaw sensed his opportunity. He came charging out of the penalty area, a move that would have cost him dear had Shaw possessed just enough presence of mind to take the ball round the goalkeeper before shooting. By the time Shaw had gathered the ball, Hooper was almost on him, at which point he unleashed his shot. Hooper's gamble was rewarded, for the ball ricocheted of his legs to safety and Shaw was left to agonize over what might have been.

The Stoke youngster cut as dignified a figure as was possible when he spoke afterwards, saying his team-mates had been very sympathetic and told him to try to forget what had happened. 'But I shan't sleep tonight,' he added. 'I thought I might have been offside but I looked across to the linesman and he had his flag down. I knew exactly what I was doing. I just thought 'it's a chance to shoot, so shoot!'

Mick Mills, the Stoke manager, could hardly blame poor Shaw. It was a day to feel proud of his men, who had looked as if they might be swept aside by **Liverpool** in the opening 10 minutes but recovered to give them as hard a game as they can have had in their all-conquering season.

Stainrod was a forceful presence up front and Parkin and Morgan had chances to put Stoke ahead but were foiled by the admirable Hooper. And if Barnes, Houghton and Beardsley put together the more threatening attacks for **Liverpool** - at times their speed and skill on the cloying surface were quite remarkable - they were also required to do a huge amount of tackling back. In the end it all went to **Liverpool's** plan. Shaw's moment of glory will have to wait until another day.

----- STOKE CITY: ----- S
 Barrett; L Dixon, C Carr, B Talbot, S Bould, G Berry, A Ford, A Henry, N Morgan, S Stainrod (sub: G Shaw), S Parkin. ----- **LIVERPOOL:** ---
 ----- M Hooper; G Gillespie, M Lawrenson, S Nicol, R Whelan, A Hansen, P Beardsley, J Aldridge, R Houghton, J Barnes, S McMahon. -----
 ----- Referee: T Mills.



THE SUNDAY TIMES

Stand-in Hooper saves Liverpool

Stoke City 0 **Liverpool** 0

LIVERPOOL may be still unbeaten in the League, but they have already gone out of the League Cup, and yesterday, on a sodden pitch, they were perilously close to going out of the FA Cup as well.

Only a few minutes were left when the admirable Hooper frustrated Shaw as Stoke, surprisingly, did not tire, and had the better of the second half. But they owed much to their own goalkeeper, Barrett.

It was the kind of game a player like Stainrod relishes, an opportunity to prove that his large but largely unfulfilled talent is good enough to match against a mighty team like Liverpool.

Under the pelting rain, with Barrett, the brave Stoke goalkeeper, performing the occasional minor miracle, Stainrod at times showed bright glimpses of his talent. His has only just arrived at Stoke from the obscurity of Aston Villa's reserves, so he is short of match practice, yet twice in the first half he might have given Stoke a heartening goal.

After 11 minutes, when Parkin, a midfielder on the right flank, set off on a long, determined run, Stainrod played the ball straight back to him, enabling him to let fly a shot which Hooper, standing in for Grobbelaar (who had gashed a leg in training) reached with one hand, but couldn't hold.

Five minutes later, when a free-kick was flicked on, Stainrod shot hard and true, the ball being blocked by a defender as Hooper plunged hopefully.

As one might have expected, given the nature of the tie and the heavy, slippery nature of the ground, it was a bruising affair. Liverpool produced moments of great accomplishment. As early as the fifth minute, Barrett was dashing out of goal to dive at the thundering feet of Nicol. Later, he made a magnificent save from Aldridge, well set up by Lawrenson, and he also turned over a powerful, long right-foot shot by Whelan.

If the Cup is a great leveller, then so is the mud. The combination of the two, and the tremendous physical efforts made by Stoke to stay in the game, prevented Liverpool from ever establishing real domination, for all their technical superiority.

Indeed, there were a couple of occasions early in the second half when they might have conceded a goal: first, when Henry broke through, on the left; then, after Dixon's free-kick, when Hooper had to make an impressive save to a low shot by Morgan.

Stainrod went off 15 minutes from the end, to a tremendously appreciative round of applause. Ford continued selflessly to run back on the left flank to help Carr contain the tireless Houghton, who not long ago was his colleague down at Craven Cottage. In the Stoke midfield, Talbot contributed his huge experience of Cup-ties.

There were just three minutes left when Dixon cleverly put Shaw, the blond substitute, clean through with only Hooper in his way.

Luckily for Liverpool, the goalkeeper had read the situation superbly. He was off his line and area like lightning, to block the ball just as Shaw released his shot.

----- Weather: heavy rain: Ground: heavy. -----

----- Stoke City ----- (4-4-2); Barrett;
 Dixon, Bould, Berry, Carr; Ford, Talbot, Henry, Parkin; Morgan, Stainrod (sub:
 Shaw, 75min). ----- Liverpool -----
 ----- (4-4-2): Hooper; Lawrenson, Gillespie, Hansen, Nicol; Whelan, McMahon,
 Houghton, Barnes; Beardsley, Aldridge. ----- Referee:
 T Mills (Barnsley).