

Date: 5 March 1988  
 Opposition: QPR  
 Competition: League

Times	Sunday Times	

5 March 1988

# THE TIMES

Liverpool cash in on plastic and pitch for Leeds account  
 Queen's Park Rangers ... 0 **Liverpool** ..... 1  
 Everton will win the ballistic dispute on Merseyside in a fortnight, break **Liverpool's** 28-match unbeaten League sequence and protect the record of Leeds United. So says Alan McDonald, the captain of Queen's Park Rangers, and he is prepared to put money on it.  
 'Anything can happen in those derby matches,' he argues, 'and if anybody is going to beat them, it will be Everton.' Then again, he thought that his own side would claim the honour on their hard and slippery floor on Saturday. The belief was not wildly inaccurate.  
 McDonald himself, with Kerslake's assistance could have puncture several of **Liverpool's** defensive statistics. As well as surpassing the feat of Leeds, they could also go on to concede the fewest goals and defeats in a season. All three were in danger once the centre half had converted himself into a centre forward.  
 One of his headers almost bored a hole in Grobbelaar's midriff. Another, of even greater power, threatened to dislocate the hands of **Liverpool's** goalkeeper and another rolled along a narrow patch between the goalline and the outstretched legs of three of his colleagues. 'Their goal must be charmed,' McDonald claimed. Add Falco's grotesque waywardness after he had been invited to run through on his own and no one can deny that **Liverpool** leaned heavily on fortune. Yet luck played no part in their winner, scored by the increasing prolific Barnes (he had been credited with six in the last seven games).  
 Johnston, released delightfully by Beardsley's precise flick, stepped inside Dawes and a static Maguire, the Rangers sweeper, Seaman, who was to block the only other shot that came his way (and that, from Beardsley, in the closing minute) could not hold his drive and Barnes tapped in the rebound.  
 Thereafter **Liverpool** were unusually cautious, Jim Smith, the Rangers manager, suggested that **Liverpool** were 'playing with the record, as well as the pitch, on their minds'. Although Kenny Dalglish, refuted the view, never before this season have they indulged so freely in back-passes, some indirectly covering 75 yards. Dalglish selected himself again as a substitute. He was 'getting worried' that, for the first time in 10 minutes, he might take an active role in a League game. He had already made one unlikely choice.  
 He told Watson, aged 19, only an hour before kick-off that he was about to make his debut. In Dalglish's opinion, he was 'magnificent' and surpassed all expectations'.  
 According to the prediction of McDonald, Watson may want above all to avoid appearing at Goodison Park the following weekend. Among the aerial dangers he would have to watch most closely would be his elder brother, Dave, the central defender of Everton and England.  
 ----- QUEEN'S PARK RANGERS: D Seaman; I Dawes, W Neill, P Parker, A McDonald, G Maguire, D Maddix (sub: M Fleming), M Falco, J Byrne (sub: D Coney), W Fereday, D Kerslake. -----  
 ----- **LIVERPOOL**: B Grobbelaar; G Ablett, A Watson, S Nicol, N Spackmann, A Hansen, P Beardsley, C Johnston, R Houghton, J Barnes, S McMahon. ----- Referee: J Martin.

# THE SUNDAY TIMES

Reds edge nearer the record  
 Queens Park Rangers ..... 0 **Liverpool** ..... 1  
 AS I WAS SAYING. Liverpool continue to win, continue their extraordinary unbeaten run, which has now reached 28 League matches, and, with two more positive results, will overtake the record set by Leeds. Yet they are winning these away matches in a meagre manner; even if they have the excuse that important men are missing.  
 Last week, they won 2-0 without much glory at Portsmouth. Yesterday, against a Queens Park Rangers themselves substantially depleted, they survived an early alarm, hit back with a goal almost at once, but spent much of the second half keeping out, with much difficulty, a Rangers team who suddenly got the bit between their teeth.  
 Indeed, only a magnificent save by Grobbelaar from the powerful head of McDonald prevented QPR equalising 17 minutes from time. Liverpool never did subdue the big Northern Ireland international at set pieces. That late header came from a right-wing corner by Kerslake, surprisingly confident, industrious and shrewd in a more central midfield role than normal.  
 He also sent over the earlier cross to which McDonald got his head, though less dramatically, Grobbelaar saving without much trouble. Then, 15 minutes from time, McDonald, on the right-hand post, again got his head to Kerslake's cross from a free-kick, Coney just failing to turn the ball in at the far post.  
 Liverpool were obliged to give Alex Watson his first chance at centre-half. He did reasonably well on a pitch he much have found difficult to encounter for the first time.  
 Up front, the absence of Aldridge caused Liverpool to move Barnes to the middle, bring Johnston on to the right, and use Houghton in central midfield. In the second half, they pushed Johnston up front, put Barnes on the left, Houghton on the right.  
 Rangers, for their part, lacked Bannister, Allen and Brock. They played Byrne in attack with Falco, and Maddix, a defender, was given a game in midfield. After half-time, Fereday was moved up to play on the left wing, and things buzzed.  
 In fact Falco, cleverly sent through by Kerslake, should have given Rangers the lead in the 31st minute. The Liverpool defence were caught square and were well beaten, but Falco wastefully put his shot wide of the post.  
 As underdogs, even on your own plastic pitch, you simply cannot afford to do things like that against Liverpool. Three minutes later, Liverpool were ahead. Beardsley, who made sporadic contributions of great quality to a largely undistinguished match, shrewdly sent Johnston chugging away down the right. Johnston got the better of Dawes, and shot. Seaman dived to the ball, couldn't hold it, and Barnes had only to stick out a leg to send it into the net.  
 Rangers, to their credit, were not demoralised, as Portsmouth had been a week earlier by Barnes's first goal. Realising that this was not the Liverpool who had been making a meal of most opposition, they drove forward with a will. Somewhat lopsided still, despite their positional changes, Liverpool looked uneasy.  
 This said, they might still, however unjustly, have made the score 2-0 in the very last minute. Barnes and Spackman purveyed the ball to Beardsley, who went away on one of those dazzling, irresistible runs. Past the sweeper Maguire he ran, but Seaman dived bravely at his feet to block the ball.  
 I am still not sure about Rangers' sweeper system, which keeps Maguire rigidly at the back. But perhaps that's because I saw Belodedici perform with such elegance in Bucharest last Wednesday.  
 ----- Weather: bright. Ground: plastic. -----  
 ----- Goal: Barnes (34min) 0-1. -----  
 ----- Queens Park Rangers ----- (1-4-3-2):  
 Seaman; Maguire; Neill, Parker, McDonald, Dawes; Fereday, Maddix (sub: Fleming 81min), Kerslake; Byrne (sub: Coney 67min), Falco. -----  
 ----- Liverpool ----- (4-4-2): Grobbelaar; Nicol,  
 Hansen, Watson, Ablett; Johnston, Spackman, McMahon, Houghton; Beardsley,  
 Barnes. ----- Referee: J Martin (Alton).