

Date: 16 March 1988
 Opposition: Derby County
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Times		

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THE TIMES

Liverpool share Leeds record

Derby County 1 Liverpool 1

Liverpool, fashioned by the enigmatic Kenny Dalglish in the wake of the Haysel stadium tragedy in 1985, last night equalled Leeds United's 14-year-old record of 29 unbeaten games to start a season with a performance which proved conclusively that they have courage to go with their class.

The Football League champions-elect now move forward to a more daunting stage on Sunday when, before a live television audience, they will attempt to break the record at Everton, the only side to have tarnished their invincible tag this season.

But the mark held by Don Revie's side nearly remained intact as Derby bolstered their chances of retaining first division status with an equalizer by Forsyth, the full back, in the 85th minute. forsyth drove his shot home after exchanging passes with substitute Micklewhite - only the second penetration of Liverpool's defence in 16 matches.

Before this jolt to Liverpool's superiority, the fact that the rest of the first division were rather unfairly relying on Derby to succeed where they had all failed, seemed to work against the home side, for whom the sense of occasion generated by a large crowd must have been totally alien.

Liverpool, who so often draw inspiration from the taunts of jealous onlookers, revelled in the atmosphere of chasing history, treating, as they have done all season, foreign soil as if it were the pastures of Anfield. Despite a surface made treacherous by three days of incessant rain, Liverpool were displayed their superb powers of economy.

Derby played with commendable spirit, however, and while endeavour is rarely an adequate substitute for class, they did threaten on a couple of occasions, even though their thrusts were treated with ease by Liverpool's defence.

Whenever County did attempt to embarrass the League leaders their hard work was usually undone by one of their own number, particularly McMinn, who displayed a singular lack of ball control.

Liverpool could have put the result beyond doubt within the first seven minutes, but for once players who have found the target with such monotonous regularity in recent weeks discovered that their sights needed correction.

Beardsley squandered the opening half's most inviting chance after just 90 seconds when he miscued his shot after Shilton, the Derby goalkeeper, was stranded by an appalling back-pass from McMinn.

Liverpool's mounting pressure and accompanying patience was rewarded with a goal 10 minutes into the second half when the home side's inability to clear the ball incurred punishment. Barnes was the instigator, working his way to the goalline before sending in a low, hard cross. Shilton touched the ball, but he could not prevent Johnston driving in from an acute angle after a Nicol shot was cleared off the line by Callaghan.

It was no more than Liverpool deserved, although they were soon to pay a heavy price as McMahan, the England international, limped off with an injured right ankle. Molby, his replacement, then made only his second senior appearance of the season.

----- DERBY COUNTY: -----

----- P Shilton; P Blades, M Forsyth, G Williams, M Wright, R Hindmarsh, T McMinn (sub: G Micklewhite), M Lewis (sub: A Garner), P Gee, J Gregory, N Callaghan. -----

----- LIVERPOOL: -----

----- B Grobbelaar; G Gillespie, G Ablett, S Nicol, N Spackman, A Hansen, P Beardsley, C Johnston, R Houghton, J Barnes, S McMahan (sub: J Molby). -----

----- Referee: A Ward