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 Opposition: Nottingham Forest
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Liverpool set new standards in memorable show

Liverpool 5 Nottingham Forest . 0

Last night at Anfield was unforgettable. Liverpool, with their most emphatic victory of the season, lifted themselves mathematically to within two points of collecting their tenth English crown in 15 years. But statistics are irrelevant. It was, instead, an occasion that provoked myriad superlatives.

The Kop expected a party. Over the weekend the team had won a place in the FA Cup Final and four of its individuals had been recognized by their fellow professionals.

One way and another there were a few reasons to celebrate, and Liverpool are nowadays not in the habit of disappointing their customers. Yet no one could realistically have expected that the evening would embrace such sweeping beauty and five goals, all of them memorable, especially after a typically subdued opening.

Liverpool were merely stoking their embers. Once they blazed, the sight was as breathtaking, as colourful, as enchanting and as riveting as watching the most lavish firework display. The dazzling explosion was to entertain an audience of almost 40,000 from the seventeenth to the closing minute.

Nottingham Forest may be young, and they were hampered by a recurrence of Walker's ankle injury, but Liverpool were not simply ruthlessly punishing a weakened and inexperienced opposition. They were also relishing the joy of a simple, instinctive game.

Had it not been for Sutton, some of whose reactions were astonishing, Forest would have been humiliated. Having beaten Liverpool at their own City Ground 10 days ago and dared to attack Liverpool in the FA Cup semi-final at Hillsborough on Saturday, they did not merit such a cruel fate. Yet Liverpool so outclassed their potentially closest challenges that Maurice Roworth, the Forest chairman, was prompted to say that 'no one could have competed against them.' He cannot be accused of exaggeration.

He added: 'They are the best team in Europe, which is why they are not in Europe. They are too good.' Liverpool's opening goal, which cut through the middle of the Forest defence, was irresistible.

Hansen, starting the move with a customary neat interception, invited Houghton to accelerate into the area. There he exchanged delightfully with Barnes and rolled in the return. Aldridge nonchalantly chipped in the second before a ferocious drive from Beardsley was tipped onto the bar by Sutton.

Gillespie, with an emphatic volley on the hour, claimed the third and Beardsley, with the most subtle assistance from Barnes, the players' player of the year, added the fourth 10 minutes from the end.

Aldridge kept the party going with his 24th goal of the season to complete a performance that was hailed by the Liverpool captain, Hansen, as 'the best since I've been here'.

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

-- B Grobbelaar; G Gillespie, G Ablett, S Nicol, N Spackman, A Hansen, P Beardsley, J Aldridge, R Houghton, J Barnes, S McMahon. -----

NOTTINGHAM FOREST: ----- S Sutton; S Chettle, S

Pearce, D Walker (sub: D Waffall), C Foster, T Wilson, G Crosby, N Webb, N

Clough, L Glover, B Rice. ----- Referee: R Millford.