

Date: 17 September 1988 Opposition: Tottenham Hotspur Competition: League	Times	Sunday Times		17 September 1988

THE TIMES

McGrath signing may prove shrewd move by Venables

Liverpool 1 Tottenham Hotspur 1

For 79 minutes on Saturday it was difficult to suppress bewilderment at the apparent urgency of Terry Venables to stiffen his side's rearguard with Paul McGrath from Manchester United. Tottenham Hotspur's resistance at Anfield had been organized with such resolution by three central defenders that it was hard to see how they could possibly be improved by the recruitment of a fourth, supposedly McGrath.

If three central defenders in one team is bordering on a crowd, then what chance four. In such an event, presumably Mabbutt would be moved into midfield or moved on to another club, even Liverpool. All of which, of course, was reckoning without the foresight of Venables, that in the circumstances, must surely be divine. For no sooner had the Spurs defence been pierced than Fairclough, in one mad, impulsive moment, was illustrating the need for defensive reinforcements. Since the centre half's punishment for attempting to knock Aldridge's block off with a right hook, will be a two-match suspension, McGrath may not be as surplus to requirements as some had first thought. But he can hardly do better than Mabbutt, Fenwick and Fairclough, who between them, restricted Liverpool to a single chance apart from Beardsley's goal. And when Rush, of all people, allowed Houghton's cross to skim off his brow, the earlier chant of "What a waste of money" from Spurs supporters sounded not quite as audacious as first it had. The great man has yet to score a first League goal on his return from Juventus. He must have ended the match only slightly less aggrieved than Aldridge, who, Venables alleged, should also have been sent off for elbowing, first Mabbutt and then Fairclough before Fairclough's dismissal.

The two Liverpool forwards looked only slightly more comfortable than their team's back four, whose fallibility to the penetrating through pass was exposed by the kind of balls from which Gascoigne and Walsh created early openings for Walsh and Waddle respectively.

Paradoxically, the reshuffle caused by Molby's departure with an ankle injury enabled Liverpool to settle down but it was not until Beardsley drove home Ablett's low cross that Tottenham faltered.

Gascoigne provided the instant equalizer with a free kick. But Fairclough was soon to ensure that Fenwick's downward nod past the groping Grobbelaar was merely the middle act from a furious final drama.

LIVERPOOL: B Grobbelaar; G Gillespie, G Ablett, S Nicol, R Whelan, J Molby (sub: S Staunton), P Beardsley, J Aldridge, I Rush, R Houghton, N Spackman.

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR: R Mimms; B Statham, M Thomas, T Fenwick, C

Fairclough, G Mabbutt, P Walsh (sub: C Hughton), P Gascoigne, C Waddle (sub: D Howells), V Samways, P Allen.

Referee: T Mills.



THE SUNDAY TIMES

Spurs revived

Liverpool 1 Tottenham Hotspur 1 EVERYBODY wants to play like Liverpool, but not many even come close to giving them a game. Spurs not only did that but at times outplayed them and, in the end, rewrote the usual Anfield script.

This demanded that after Liverpool had scored in the 79th minute, Spurs should fold their tents and go home. Instead, they equalised and, in the frenzied final minutes, held out with 10 men.

The missing man, Chris Fairclough, had been sent off in the 81st minute for swinging a punch at Aldridge. Although Terry Venables, the Spurs manager, felt that Aldridge had provoked it by using his elbows on Mabbutt and Fairclough, this did take away some of Tottenham's gloss.

With Fairclough, Mabbutt and Fenwick strung across the back, Spurs looked as if they were planning a convention of centre-halves. But the tactic worked beautifully. Thomas and Statham pushed up along the wings and the Liverpool back four were made to look very square. In the first minute a fine ball from Gascoigne sent Walsh behind Molby and Gillespie; he beat an advancing Grobbelaar, but a despairing tackle from Nicol prevented a certain goal.

Ten minutes later Thomas and Walsh got Waddle behind the back four, but he shot wretchedly into Grobbelaar's midriff. This provoked sarcasm from the Kop:

"Waddle for England," they sang, but there was not much else they could sing about. Indeed, they must have been worried by the way Spurs dealt with the Liverpool attacks and, every now and again, threatened to break their defence.

There was some reason for this. Molby, in the centre of the defence, was limping after 10 minutes and was substituted after 35. Liverpool were also without Barnes and Hansen. In the past they have shrugged off such injuries, but yesterday seemed unable to reproduce their awesome running and infallible command. On the odd occasions that they produced a flowing move, there was always an extra Tottenham centre-half to block the final path.

Beardsley got the Liverpool goal, but within two minutes Spurs were level, a Gascoigne free kick finding the head of Fenwick, unmarked, in the box. The result, as Venables says, will give Spurs the self-belief they want. The gap between them and Liverpool no longer seems quite so large.

Weather: cloudy. Ground: good.

Goals: Beardsley (79min) 1-0; Fenwick (81min) 1-1.

Liverpool (4-4-2): Grobbelaar; Nicol, Gillespie, Molby (sub: Staunton, 35min),

Ablett; Houghton, Beardsley, Whelan, Spackman; Rush, Aldridge.

Tottenham Hotspur (5-4-1): Mimms; Thomas, Mabbutt, Fenwick, Fairclough, Statham; Samways, Gascoigne, Allen, Waddle (sub: Howells, 80min); Walsh (sub: Hughton, 82min).

Referee: T Mills (Barnsley).