

Date: 1 March 1989

Opposition: Charlton Athletic

Competition: League

Times

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THE TIMES

Beardsley shows his skills in lacklustre encounter

Liverpool 2 Charlton Athletic 0

Liverpool kept alive their increasingly faint hopes of retaining the Football League championship last night, a colourless performance proving to be just enough to defeat Charlton Athletic.

A victory which begged more questions than it answered moves Liverpool up to sixth place in the first division, 16 points adrift of Arsenal, although the champions have three games in hand. But on last night's evidence it would be safe to assume that the championship will leave Merseyside in May.

After Beardsley had given Liverpool an early lead, Aldridge ensured victory with a penalty a minute from the end.

Liverpool, playing in front of their own supporters for the first time in almost six weeks, were below strength, but despite lacking Rush, who is injured, and Whelan, who is suspended, the balance between defence and attack was maintained.

The return of Gillespie for only his second senior appearance in five months strengthened the defence, and with Beardsley, for once, utilizing his dribbling skills to the full, Liverpool swiftly established control.

Barnes nearly scored directly from a corner after 12 minutes when his kick belatedly caught the wind, but Boulder, the Charlton goalkeeper, was equal to the task.

Three minutes later, the fragile resistance of a Charlton side with designs on survival rather than adventure was shattered by the sort of goal Beardsley seems to reserve only for special occasions.

After collecting a pass from Houghton, he went round Bolder and then Reid before sliding his shot into an unprotected net.

While Charlton's attacking ambitions were limited as much by their own game plan as by the pressure exerted by their opponents, they did move forward nimbly on the counter break but rarely troubled the home defence.

Several of the Charlton players thought that they had drawn level two minutes after the interval when Nicol, in attempting to intercept a cross, headed over his own goalkeeper. Grobbelaar flung himself backwards to grasp the ball on the line, and was relieved to see the referee wave play on after a glance at his linesman.

Charlton created their first chance of the night on the hour, but Lee drove tamely into the chest of Grobbelaar when a pass to unmarked colleagues at the far post would possibly have proved more profitable.

LIVERPOOL: B Grobbelaar; G Ablett, D Burrows, S Nicol, G Gillespie, J Molby (sub: M Marsh), P Beardsley, J Aldridge, R Houghton, J Barnes, S McMahon.

CHARLTON ATHLETIC: B Bolder; J Humphrey, M Reid, A Peake, P Shirtliff, T Caton, R Lee, C Leaburn, S Mackenzie (sub: D Campbell), P Williams, P Mortimer.

Referee: P Tyldesley.