

Date: 23 September 1989

Opposition: Everton

Competition: League

Times	Sunday Times	

23 September
1989

THE TIMES

McMahon takes control

Everton 1 Liverpool 3

In a Merseyside derby of sustained high quality, Everton shone brilliantly for half an hour and Liverpool for more than twice as long. The equation might as well be applied to the season as a whole for no one can expect consistently to match the standards of Kenny Dalglish's side.

Everton attempted to do so with 10 men. Rarely can anyone have been visibly less fit than Whiteside, who had supposedly recovered from a pulled hamstring. More ponderous than usual, he was reduced to undisguised physical assaults. He was too slow to reach even that low depth.

In such a context, Whiteside's vulgarity was especially conspicuous but his presence was psychologically significant. Throughout his career at Manchester United, he had never finished on the losing side in a League fixture against Liverpool. Since he was belatedly substituted, he could claim that the sequence remains unbroken.

But while he was there, the game passed him by and McCall, his willing partner, was left to carry too heavy a workload in central midfield. Even before Liverpool equalised, Everton were losing control of an area in which McMahon was to become the dominant figure.

Bobby Robson had already indicated that he would be selected for England's decisive World Cup qualifying tie in Poland in a fortnight. Instead of being Bryan Robson's ally in Katowice, he will instead inevitably be the senior representative in midfield there. His outstanding contribution, therefore, was reassuring.

So were the performances of Barnes, although he rarely plays as well for England, and particularly of Beardsley. In spite of misplacing the odd pass, he was the most penetrative instrument on view and was principally responsible for all three of Liverpool's goals.

Snodin and Newell, the Evertonians who could be included in the England squad, were less convincing. Snodin would be appreciably more creative than Stevens, the preference at right back, but his claims as a defender were cut to pieces throughout the afternoon by the elusive Barnes.

The spindly Newell, released through a square back four by Nevin, did score his customary goal at Goodison Park (he has claimed one in each home game so far). Though occasionally prominent in the air, thereafter he resembled a frisky colt not worthy yet of promotion to England's senior party.

Newell and Sharp did illustrate that Liverpool, even though they are now reinforced by Hysen, are still vulnerable to the high ball. So did Watson, who nodded Sheedy's free kick against the bar on the half hour. But that was the last genuine imprint they left on the 141st derby.

Liverpool had more ways of making their mark. They started similarly through the aerial route Rush struck a post before Barnes equalized with a more accurate header and then came down to earth where they are so effective. After the interval, Everton could not contain them.

Beardsley, in dropping deeper, became even more productive and the benefactor, ominously for the rest of the first division, was Rush. Since Aldridge is no longer threatening his place in the side, he is beginning once more to lead the attack with the familiar swagger which made him so fearsome.

He is not yet as sharp as he was. Apart from hitting the woodwork, for instance, he had only Southall to beat on five other occasions. He beat him twice within a minute to set a new record of 23 Merseyside goals in a mere 24 appearances but his haul could have been greater.

Dalglish, a manager not given even to mild exaggeration, described the fiftieth victory in the neighbourly dispute as "one of our best derby displays". Indeed, and to think that Liverpool, the unbeaten leaders, have not seen the best this season of their main predator, Rush.

EVERTON: N Southall; I Snodin, N Pointon (sub: M McDonald), K Ratcliffe, D Watson, N Whiteside (sub: S Rehn), P Nevin, S McCall, G Sharp, M Newell, K Sheedy.

LIVERPOOL: B Grobbelaar; G Hysen, D Burrows, S Nicol, R Whelan, A Hansen, P Beardsley, B Venison, I Rush, J Barnes, S McMahon.

Referee: R Nixon.

THE SUNDAY TIMES

Rush and Liverpool hit the heights at Everton's expense

EVERTON 1 (4-4-2) Southall; Snodin, Ratcliffe, Watson, Pointon (sub: McDonald 10min); Nevin, Whiteside (sub: Rehn 80min), McCall, Sheedy; Sharp, Newell.

LIVERPOOL 3 (4-4-2): Grobbelaar; Venison, Hysen, Hansen, Burrows; Nicol, McMahon, Whelan, Barnes; Beardsley, Rush.

Goals: Newell (17min) 1-0; Barnes (32min) 1-1; Rush (62min) 1-2; Rush (64min) 1-3.

Weather: sunny. Ground: firm. Referee: R F Nixon (West Kirby).

THE STATUS QUO. Liverpool allowed their neighbours a goal start and then nudged them emphatically off the top of the First Division with a performance of excellence finished off by a brace of goals from Rush.

It was amazing, after the last three visits of Liverpool to Goodison had produced scorelines of 0-0, 0-1 and 0-0, that we should have so much virile goalmouth incident. Once the considerable venom and under-current of malice that spread from Whiteside and McMahon had subsided, we were treated to an Everton goal that would have transcended any League match. It began with Stuart McCall, the redhead who at last is beginning to dominate Everton's midfield, when in the 17th minute he brought into play his Scottish winger, Pat Nevin. Here was the moment of surprise, a moment of sheer footballing virtuosity that we pray for in a derby.

Nevin is so small and so slight you fear for him when the boot is clattering in. He seems to survive, but in this instance there was nothing like frailty about him. He hovered for a moment over the ball like a gadfly, and then he did what British footballers so often fail to do: he looked up, saw something special and delivered. With the outside of his right boot he chipped the ball over the head of Hansen and out of the reach of Hysen. They are two of the most experienced central defenders in the world, and yet neither of them read the situation as alertly as did Newell. Everton's striker sprinted into the gap, allowed the onrushing Grobbelaar to commit himself and, with some aplomb, toe-ended the ball along the ground for his sixth goal in seven games. And if Nevin's imagination was the real beauty of the moment, then think what it meant to Mike Newell. He represents in every sense of the word the fickleness that surrounds our players.

From the age of 13 he had been a Red, having signed schoolboy forms for Liverpool and spending five years in apprenticeship to the Toshack-Keegan duo. But Newell was "a failure". He was released, unwanted, at 18, and was on his way to Crewe, then to Wigan, to Luton, to Leicester. Meanwhile a fellow called Tony Cottee was being hailed as the Pounds 2 million hero at Goodison. Cottee was also, this time last year, being reassured of his England future by Bobby Robson.

How times change. Cottee is a reserve; Newell is his Pounds 1.1 million replacement. And Newell, 6ft, dark-haired and with enthusiasm in every pore, is going to take some shifting. Strange things happen with the speed and the ferocity with which our game is played. Norman Whiteside is proof enough of that. He was a World Cup player at 17, but then faced almost a lost career with the frequent Achilles tendon operations at Manchester United. He passed a fitness test on a hamstring yesterday, but shuffled around at no more than half-pace, only his body-checking on Barnes and his crude late kicks being of much help to McCall and company. And when you have McMahon scuffling for possession, Liverpool are bound to return fire with fire, and class with class. In the 26th minute Rush glided into a perfect position and his glancing header from Nicol's cross beat Southall but rebounded from the base of a post. Unlucky? So were Everton 30 seconds later, when Sheedy swung over a free kick and Watson rebounded the ball off the bar. Another goal was bound to come. It did so in the 32nd minute, when Everton, with all 11 players back, failed adequately to clear a free-kick. Beardsley jinked in from the right, chipped the ball up on the run, and Barnes, almost forcibly moving Rush from his path, headed the equaliser from eight yards. Everton are good, Liverpool simply awesome. All that remained for the proof of that came in the second half, when Liverpool, having lost here only once in 11 visits, completely mesmerised Everton.

Beardsley was the creator of two goals within two minutes. For the first he struck a crossfield ball of 30 yards which many a coach would say was "in behind the full-back". In fact it was aimed straight at Snodin, forcing the full-back to turn; by the time he had both feet on the ground Barnes was dribbling past him and crossing the ball hard and low for Ian Rush, inevitably, to poach the goal.

Next Beardsley cunningly held the ball and weighted his ground pass with such timing that Rush was able to expose the lack of pace of his Welsh colleague, Ratcliffe, and though Southall got his body in the way of the shot, it could do no more than take the sting off it as it looped into his net.

Rush's 23rd goal in 24 derby games, well past the record of Dixie Dean, was the ultimate answer to those who criticised his manager, Dalglish, for having sold Aldridge to Sociedad. Misjudgments are not in the air at Liverpool.

So many questions are again coming right under Dalglish's management. Why must so many journalists criticise his taciturn nature, his lack of after-match wit? The courageous decisions are done in the old-fashioned way, quietly and with stealth. To sell a goalscorer who has topped the charts for the past two years, but whose age suggests that the best has been seen, takes what is known in the game as bottle.

But then Dalglish has kept to himself what his expert eye must have told him in training: that the old Rush is back.