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THE TIMES

Liverpool progress to fifth round in breathtaking style

Liverpool 3 Norwich City 1

It was a privilege to be at Anfield last night. With Beardsley and Barnes in breathtaking form, Liverpool finally overcame Norwich for the right to entertain Southampton in the fifth round of the FA Cup, but the visitors took almost equal credit in a dazzling advertisement for English football.

Liverpool took the major credit, but Norwich's Crook, Fleck and Butterworth, made an immense contribution as Kenny Dalglish, the Liverpool manager, admitted: "There were two teams out there who were a credit to the League. Their ideals are the same as ours and we were fortunate we won 3-1."

Beardsley was supreme, the Kop choosing him for special salutation at the end. With Barnes and Beardsley on fire, much of the imaginative football came from the home side, the two England forwards proving that even mass defence can be breached with a little invention.

Whelan sent a warning shot scudding past Gunn's posts in the first minute and soon Beardsley's runs were stretching the Norwich defence to the full. Only the tall Linighan's outstretched leg deflected his shot to safety.

The pair's next combination brought the goal, Barnes sending Beardsley free down the left. Beardsley looked up, missed out the lurking Rush to find Nicol at the far post, and with Gunn stranded, the Scot side-footed the ball home.

But if Norwich had been getting nine or 10 men behind the ball when under pressure, with Crook pulling the strings with some sweeping passes, they had also been getting forward in numbers at every opportunity and it was no surprise when they equalized so promptly. Crook released Phillips down the left and from his centre Fleck, who had already put one snap shot just wide, turned the ball past Grobbelaar from close range.

That response raised Norwich's confidence sky high. For a time Crook and Townsend took over midfield, and Fleck was a constant threat as they passed the ball round and through the Liverpool defence. Fleck sent another bullet just past Grobbelaar's post, but their best chance of the half fell to Gordon, who snatched at his shot with glory beckoning.

For a time Liverpool looked bemused, but as they rallied they too could have claimed the lead before the interval. Barnes, however, put his header high after soaring to meet to Nicol's centre, and then Gunn denied Beardsley's fierce low drive with an exceptional save.

As that suggested, the home team were getting back on terms with themselves, and they took the lead after 56 minutes with a stunning goal. It began with Hansen winning a tackle in midfield to find Beardsley, whose early ball picked out Barnes racing between the two central defenders to leave Gunn helpless with a firm header.

Norwich's response was again positive, but soon after the hour they were shattered by a harsh penalty award, which Beardsley converted.

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

NORWICH CITY: B Gunn; I Culverhouse, M Bowen, I Butterworth, A Linighan, A Townsend, D Gordon, R Fleck, R Rosario, I Crook, D Phillips.

Referee: K Hackett.

the guardian

Barnstorming Beardsley flattens Norwich

STEVE McMAHON warned before the replay that 'this tie could run and run'. In the event, it ran more in the way of a ladder in a stocking, a tradition of goalless draws tossed away on the gales as Liverpool took Norwich by storm.

Two superb goals and a penalty carried Liverpool through to a fifth-round tie against Southampton, who beat them 4-1 in the League at The Dell this season but will not relish a return match at Anfield.

The Liverpool stadium held no fears for Norwich, one of the few sides to win there in recent years. They have shown they are capable of subduing the Merseysiders in good form, but Liverpool were more than that. They were that old intoxicating mix of pace, power, guile and stealth, with Beardsley the genie popping the cork.

Bubbling, troubling, he was an effervescent force continually getting up the nose of the Norwich defence that imagined itself composed and sophisticated. He set off like a man closing his eyes and running across a minefield, rather than crawling cautiously through it.

There was a hint of desperation in Norwich's defending as Beardsley's cross rolled across the face of goal in the 17th minute. Rush, well marked, dummied and left the chance to Nicol, whose right-foot rising shot took Gunn by surprise.

But within three minutes Liverpool had lost the advantage. With only Norwich's second real chance of the half, Fleck equalised, potting Phillips's perfect left-wing cross past Grobbelaar's outstretched left hand.

The status quo restored, Norwich regained their composure and took the game to Liverpool, Fleck bobbing and weaving like a lifebelt on the Mersey, the rescue mission always on, and Rosario at 6ft 4in one of the tallest strikers in the League unable to use his height but working mischievously on the edge of the box on Norwich's infrequent excursions into the Liverpool area.

Barnes had two near-misses in the first half, a cunning 30-yard lob that wandered wickedly in the strong wind but was safely collected by Gunn, and a powerful header that looked certain to be a goal but soared over the bar.

He saved the damage for the second half. Beardsley, perpetual motion, put through a long ball and Barnes, running down the middle, headed Liverpool into the lead for the second time in the 56th minute.

Beardsley put himself on the score sheet with a 64th-minute penalty, after he had skipped round Linighan only to be pulled down by the goalkeeper. The referee, Keith Hackett, who had maintained the high speed-to-excitement ratio by hardly blowing his whistle, had no hesitation in awarding the spot kick.

Dalglish sent on even fresher legs, David Burrows replacing Steve Staunton, but by then Norwich, like the weather, had blown themselves out.

Liverpool: Grobbelaar; Hysen, Venison, Nicol, Whelan, Hansen, Beardsley, Staunton (Burrows, 82min), Rush, Barnes, McMahon.

Norwich City: Gunn; Culverhouse, Bowen, Butterworth, Linighan, Townsend, Gordon, Fleck, Rosario, Crook, Phillips.

Referee: K Hackett (Sheffield).