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## THE TIMES

Beardsley proves worst fears

Liverpool 4 Manchester United 0

THE deepest fears of the first division have been realised. Whispers of Liverpool's continuing superiority have been circulating around the country and yesterday, in the first fixture of the season to be televised live, ominously ample confirmation was provided during their biggest defeat of Manchester United, their traditional rivals, for 65 years.

Beardsley, a United old boy who did not know that he had regained his place in Liverpool's line-up until an hour before the kick-off, celebrated his comeback with three goals. The other was scored by Barnes, who can be comparatively reassured that he will stay in the side. All of them were gems.

They crowned a performance which progressed from uncharacteristic uneasiness at the start to a characteristic exhibition of their omnipotence by the end. Alex Ferguson, the United manager, who believes that he may be without Pallister for the European Cup Winners' Cup tie on Wednesday, had no doubts about Liverpool's quality.

"We didn't get any more than anyone else will here, I suppose," he said.

Liverpool, in winning all five of their League games so far, appeared to be so dominant that Tottenham Hotspur's record opening sequence of 11 victories, set in 1961 and threatened by United themselves six years ago, is in obvious danger. Their eleventh game, by coincidence, is at White Hart Lane on November 3.

Liverpool will as usual not allow themselves to look beyond their next fixture, against Everton at Goodison Park next Saturday, but Ferguson for one is dazzled by their collective form and by the contribution of one individual in particular.

Barnes, who tormented the right back Ferguson bought for Pounds 625,000 from Oldham Athletic, was a constant source of discomfort. "Irwin didn't do too badly and it was a good experience for him," Ferguson said. "But Barnes's vision is magnificent, his passing was unbelievable and we just couldn't handle him. He is a magnificent player who is right on song at the moment."

Barnes and Liverpool did eventually flow like mercury, but United, as Kenny Dalglish was prepared to admit, were the more menacing at the start of a compelling first half which unfolded at bewildering speed.

Liverpool players, accustomed to seeing three or four options whenever they are in possession, were given scarcely a glimpse of one for some 20 minutes.

Ferguson, in discarding the sweeper system, decided "to give them something at least to think about and mark them man for man."

United, their fires burning passionately, created several early opportunities and almost had the audacity to take the lead through Robins and McClair. "Our forward play was very good," Ferguson claimed justifiably. "We had something like nine chances in the first half and Robins could have finished up with three goals." But the United defence was vulnerable. McMahon, escaping regularly from Webb, was the most penetrative.

He followed a vacant road up the left flank and exchanged delightfully with Barnes to set up the first goal. He burst through to lay on the second for Beardsley in the 33rd minute, before Houghton took over the assistant's role a few seconds before the interval.

His cross, helped on by Nicol, was nodded in by Barnes and the contest was effectively over. Ferguson brought on Donaghy in place of Pallister, who sprained an ankle and is considered doubtful for the mid-week tie against Pecs Munkas.

The second half became almost a personal crusade for Rush. The forward who was once so prolific had never scored against United in 19 previous games and Liverpool seemed committed to ending his personal sequence of failure. Their attempts were in vain.

Three times he was invited to beat Sealey but on each occasion his aim was wayward. Houghton was even more profligate, after Barnes had rolled the ball back conveniently into his path, but at least he compensated with a moment of quick-thinking which provided Beardsley with his crowning glory.

Taking a free kick rapidly, he released Beardsley who, with a gentle lob, claimed his fifth goal in three home games.

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

MANCHESTER UNITED: L Sealey; D Irwin, C Blackmore, S Bruce, M Phelan, C Pallister (sub: M Donaghy), N Webb, P Ince (sub: R Beardsmore), B McClair, M Robins, M Hughes.

Referee: L Shapter.

## the guardian

Beardsley hat-trick sweeps United aside

THIS time it seems Liverpool are determined not to let potential rivals for their League title even dream a little. At Anfield yesterday Manchester United, needing three points to go top, played imaginative football which on other grounds might have earned them a comfortable victory. Here they lost 4-0.

Peter Beardsley, dropped by Graham Taylor, the new England manager, scored a hat-trick his first at Anfield as Liverpool completed their biggest win over United since 1925-26. The other goal came from Barnes, back to his inspired best, who with Beardsley, McMahon and Houghton led an exhibition of skilful control and precise passing which increasingly exposed a defence which at other times in other places has looked reasonably solid.

It was minimal consolation for United that Rush, in spite of several chances, has now failed to find their net in 20 matches. Alex Ferguson's players started the game with optimism in their hearts and Hughes recalled to the attack alongside the new prodigy, Robins, but by the end were facing an autumnal chill of reality. Liverpool now lead the First Division by four points and next weekend visit Everton, whose hopes of achieving their first League success of the season will be slim if the champions repeat this performance.

Even though they rarely played like this last season, Liverpool still won the championship. Unless the north London clubs can stay with them until the new year, Anfield's 19th title cannot be far away.

Yet there were times yesterday when the continuing vulnerability of Liverpool's defence in the face of the hard, flat, accurate centre promised United another rewarding afternoon on a ground where they have tended to do better than most in recent years.

Webb's ability to find telling angles with his crosses or passes created gaps near goal which gave Robins and Hughes clear headers that lacked the direction to beat Grobbelaar. Webb did better when he met Blackmore's centre but his header struck the bar.

On chances created, United had a prima facie case for getting more out of the game. The trouble was that Liverpool's attack had the means to take the play beyond United's reach almost whenever they chose.

Their defenders had no answer to Barnes and by half-time, when Pallister stayed off with an ankle injury, Donaghy taking his place at centre-back, the walls had crumbled.

Liverpool's opener, after 12 minutes, came against the run of play and owed everything to Beardsley's quick reflexes. McMahon exchanged passes with Barnes on the left and surged past Pallister before attempting a cross-shot which Bruce deflected towards the near corner. Sealey blocked the ball but Beardsley still ran it past him.

Just past the half-hour McMahon and Barnes again combined to sweep aside thin cover on the left and Beardsley scored from McMahon's pass. A third followed two minutes from half-time. Blackmore sold himself cheaply to Houghton on the right and Nicol's attempt at a first-time shot as he met a centre simply directed the ball to Barnes, whose looping header floated past a confused Sealey.

Some beautifully composed movements in the second half would have doubled Liverpool's score but for wasteful finishing. Beardsley completed his hat-trick eight minutes from the end when Houghton's quickly-taken free-kick, a chip over the defence, enabled him to score with a simple lob.

Beardsley looked offside but the linesman was perfectly placed. United grumbled about it, but their cause had long ceased to have any meaning.

Beardsley did not get the match ball because Sealey had kicked it into the crowd. Anfield is still waiting for it back.

Liverpool: Grobbelaar; Hysen, Burrows, Nicol, Whelan, Gillespie, Beardsley, Houghton, Rush, Barnes, McMahon.

Manchester United: Sealey; Irwin, Blackmore, Bruce, Phelan, Pallister (Donaghy, h-t), Webb, Ince (Beardsmore, 80), McClair, Hughes, Robins.

Referee: L Shapter (Torquay).