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Opposition: Everton

Competition: FA Cup

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# THE TIMES

## Liverpool suffer McMahon blow in cup stalemate

Liverpool 0 Everton 0

FOR the second successive Merseyside derby, a Liverpool casualty has been helped away from the traditional physical warfare and taken to hospital for examination.

Last weekend, Ronnie Whelan, the captain, was found to have cracked a shin bone, and yesterday he was at Anfield to see his colleague, Steve McMahon, apparently suffer a similar fate.

Thirteen minutes of a typically robust FA Cup fifth-round tie had passed when McMahon and John Ebbrell launched themselves towards the same loose ball. The ensuing shuddering collision was by no means unique, especially during the first half when the neighbours insisted on flexing all of their muscles, but nonetheless Ebbrell spun away, complaining bitterly about the ferocity of his opponent's challenge, before the numbness faded and he felt the pain.

"His shin pad has gone to hospital," Howard Kendall, the Everton manager, said, "and he'll need a new one for Wednesday."

McMahon, however, had clearly not escaped as lightly. Clutching his left leg, he visibly winced in pain throughout a prolonged period of treatment, and when he at last attempted to stand up, it was clear that the injury was serious and that, albeit reluctantly, he would have to retire.

The initial indication was that his tibia was broken, but those fears later receded when Kenny Dalglish indicated that there were "no problems with the bone".

The full extent of the damage is expected to be revealed today, but Liverpool can expect to be without another of their principal central midfield players for at least several weeks, and perhaps more.

No blame was apportioned to Ebbrell. The referee, adjudging that McMahon had been guilty of a foul, significantly gave a free-kick against him, but another of Neil Midgeley's decisions caused widespread mystification. Late in the first half, it seemed that he must award Everton a penalty after Pat Nevin had been brought down, yet, not only did he interpret Gary Ablett's mistimed tackle as a legitimate attempt to claim the ball, but, after booking Graeme Sharp, he went on to accuse Nevin of over-reacting.

"I am sure the television will prove it was a penalty," Nevin said, "but the referee suggested that I'd dived and warned me he would send me off if I did it again." Kendall pointed out that Nevin had also been felled inside the area the previous weekend "and got nothing then either".

Kenny Dalglish predictably took a different view. "In two games, two different referees have seen the incident in the same way. There must be something wrong somewhere," he said.

Liverpool, all but knocked out by Blackburn Rovers in the third round and almost eliminated by Brighton in the fourth, could thus be considered fortunate to earn a replay at Goodison Park in midweek. Nevin was not alone in threatening to gain revenge for Everton's recent defeat, their fifth, incidentally, in succession.

Glenn Hysen, without first checking to see whether a back pass was advisable, handed Sharp an open invitation midway through the first half, for instance.

Bruce Grobbelaar advanced to smother the danger and recovered in time to block Nevin's attempt to turn in the rebound.

The Liverpool goalkeeper went on to tip over a header by Martin Keown immediately before the interval and, seconds after it, watch Nevin's lob bounce the other side of a post.

At that stage, Everton, who were employing three central defenders and restricting the space in midfield, had established indisputable superiority. Once Kevin Sheedy had been withdrawn with a pulled hamstring, which will keep him out of contention on Wednesday, they lost their balance and control of the afternoon.

It was only then that John Barnes, supplied persistently by the composed Jan Molby, was allowed to make any impact.

In rapid succession, Neville Southall was forced to deny Molby and David Speedie, who was eventually taken off to make way for Peter Beardsley. He almost completed Liverpool's belated recovery in the closing minutes with a crisp drive which grazed the foot of an upright.

"We learned from last Saturday," Kendall said, "and we changed a couple of things. We did enough then to go into this game with confidence, but it would be wrong to say that we have done the hard part now."

# the guardian

## Nevin's claims take a dive

FEW people would care to predict the winner of this tie. Merseyside derbies are invariably the closest of close encounters and clearly this was no exception, although Evertonians filed across Stanley Park with a quiet confidence.

Naturally enough the post-match inquests centred on the penalty incident in the first half, a half when the Liverpool defenders frequently shielded their eyes against the western sun. That sun must have looked blue.

Everton felt deeply that the previous weekend's 3-1 League defeat at Anfield heavily flattered Liverpool, and there was an intensity to their play in those first 45 minutes that saw Liverpool so squeezed that their pips squealed.

Howard Kendall chose to bolt and chain his defence by adding Keown to Watson and Ratcliffe and bringing in the Dutchman Atteveld to clamp Barnes.

The play worked perfectly and with Sharp winning virtually everything in the air Liverpool were distinctly rattled, so much so that Hysen, attempting to personify calmness in the face of a gathering storm, passed back directly into the path of Sharp. Grobbelaar did wonderfully well to close the Everton striker down and then deny Nevin as the ball broke.

Nothing, or so it seemed, could deny the little Scot a penalty when, skipping lightly past Ablett, he was clearly tripped. Neil Midgeley decided Nevin had dived and gave a goalkick, a decision that prompted an immediate protest that saw Sharp booked. Television showed it as one of the more obvious penalties. 'I have my own views,' said Kendall, 'but we have to forget about it.'

Dalglish pointed out that this was the second week Nevin had gone down under an Ablett challenge, and that neither referee had awarded a free-kick. 'That says something,' Midgeley actually ticked off Nevin, and warned him he would be booked if it happened again. Talk about salt into sore wounds.

Prior to this Liverpool had lost McMahon. The England midfielder plunged into a tackle on Ebbrell and was carried off. A broken leg was suspected but Liverpool must await a specialist report today to discover the exact extent of the injury. It did, however, appear serious enough to almost certainly rule McMahon out of the replay and follows last week's incident when Whelan cracked a bone in his shin. It was a cruel blow for Liverpool although here, it has to be said, was a clear case of the biter bit. Ebbrell was indeed lucky not to be seriously injured himself. 'His shinpad,' said Kendall, 'is going into hospital for treatment.'

Liverpool did not exert any consistent pressure until the second half, and still Everton chances came. Nevin lobbed narrowly wide and Atteveld shot over. Yet inevitably the pace dropped, so frenetic had been that first half. Sheedy tweaked a hamstring that will keep him out of the replay allowing Cottee to enter, although to no great effect.

Nicol, switched to midfield after McMahon's injury, began to find some space on the right while Molby probed with greater effect. Southall saved well from the Dane, then superbly from Speedie after Nicol had flicked on Staunton's corner. Beardsley, to an enormous cheer, eventually replaced Speedie and clipped a post, but perhaps the best chance fell to Everton's McDonald after McCall had seized on a piece of careless play by Burrows to release Nevin. His pass rolled perfectly into McDonald's path but his shot was snatched.

And so to Goodison on Wednesday where West Ham will watch with considerable interest, not to say nervousness. On this display you would not want to face either.

Liverpool: Grobbelaar; Hysen, Burrows, Nicol, Molby, Ablett, Speedie (Beardsley, 70min), Staunton, Rush, Barnes, McMahon (Venison, 15).

Everton: Southall; McDonald, Ebbrell, Ratcliffe, Watson, Keown, Atteveld, McCall, Sharp, Sheedy (Cottee, 56) Nevin.

Referee: N Midgeley (Bolton).

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# PRESS ASSOCIATION

## Penalty row as giants draw

Everton paid the penalty for one of the worst pieces of refereeing of the season on Sunday in the Merseyside clash of the giants. The Blues came close to their first ever FA Cup win at Liverpool and undoubtedly would have grabbed that historic victory but for the failure of referee Neil Midgeley to award one of the most clear-cut spot kicks imaginable.

After 39 minutes man of the match Pat Nevin burst into the penalty area and sped towards the goal only to have his legs whipped away from him by Gary Ablett. Mr Midgeley was the only man at a packed Anfield not to see the incident as a penalty and understandably protests broke out as he signalled a goal kick. Graeme Sharp was the only Everton player booked for protesting but he merely got punished for saying what everyone else knew to be true.

Everton were so much on top in the first half that they deserved to be ahead at the interval.

The reason for their dominance was both the success of manager Howard Kendall's decision to play Martin Keown in a sweeper system and due to the loss of Steve McMahon from the Liverpool midfield.

Just 14 minutes into the Fifth Round tie McMahon committed a foul jump tackle on John Ebbrell but came off worst. The England player was helped off the field, taken to hospital for an X-ray, and was replaced by Barry Venison. That allowed Everton to assume command of the midfield and Liverpool were put under increasing pressure as the half wore on. So much so that skipper Glenn Hysen almost paid the ultimate price when his poor back pass was only robbed from the grateful Sharp by alert keeper Bruce Grobbelaar.

Neil McDonald's shot also forced Grobbelaar into action before Keown got forward to see the keeper produce the goods yet again in the final seconds of the first half when he made solid contact with a header.

But if Everton held the upper hand in the first 45 minutes Liverpool edged the second half on points, although it was not until the final 15 minutes that they looked like breaking the deadlock.

Ray Atteveld and Kevin Sheedy were both booked before Everton's Neville Southall pulled off a sparkling save from a Jan Molby powerblast after the Dane had been set up by John Barnes. From the resulting corner David Speedie's spectacular volley again brought the best out of Southall.

It was Speedie's final effort, the recent 750,000 pound signing being substituted by Peter Beardsley just five minutes later.

And it was Beardsley, four minutes from time, who almost became the latest in a long line of Liverpool heroes. Barnes weaved his magic on the left and set up Beardsley whose first time shot clipped the foot of Everton's post with Southall, for the only time, well beaten.