

Date: 6 November 1991
 Opposition: AJ Auxerre
 Competition: UEFA Cup

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THE TIMES

Liverpool confound critics

Liverpool 3 Auxerre 0 (Liverpool win 3-2 on aggregate)

NOT for the first time in their recent history, Liverpool rose to an unenviable challenge with immense courage last night to confound those who have not so much predicted, but announced with almost indecent haste, the end of an era in British football.

A young side, shorn of several leading and influential players, produced a marvellous display of fluent, attacking play to defeat Auxerre, of France, 3-0 and so move into the third round of this season's Uefa Cup.

This was the first time in 27 years of European competition that any Liverpool side had recovered from a two-goal first-leg deficit. But, sadly, on a night when a packed stadium, awash with anticipation, would undoubtedly have aided a cause which many felt to have been lost a fortnight earlier in France, large sections of Anfield stood empty.

However, as Guy Roux, the Auxerre coach, had warned, Anfield is an intimidating theatre irrespective of audience size. The noise was deafening, particularly during the opening minutes when the French tested the patience of the Danish referee by employing tactics designed to waste precious minutes.

Liverpool's need for an early goal was obvious, but even the most ardent loyalist could scarcely have anticipated that the Auxerre defence would succumb so swiftly.

A little over four minutes had elapsed when Mahe's frustration at his inability to halt the progress of McManaman manifested itself in a lunging, and clearly illegal, tackle. Molby calmly placed the penalty kick beyond Martini.

Occasionally, Liverpool's uncontained sense of adventure threatened to be their undoing, but when Kovacs got through in the eighth minute Grobbelaar dived at his feet to make an important save.

Liverpool's second goal, in the 31st minute, arrived from the most unexpected of sources. When Houghton crossed to the far post Marsh rose unchallenged to claim his first goal for the club with a powerful header.

By employing a less frenzied approach after the interval, Liverpool lost some of their momentum but they gained an important advantage when, with 15 minutes remaining, Darras, who had earlier been cautioned for time-wasting, was sent off for a cynical trip on Walters.

In the 84th minute, Molby's magnificent long pass split a tired and hesitant defence leaving Walters to race clear to clip a shot just inside the far post. "It was a wonderful night for the supporters and the players. We will know in four or five years time if this was also a historic night," Souness said afterwards.

LIVERPOOL: B Grobbelaar; G Ablett, D Burrows, M Marsh, J Molby, N Tanner, S McManaman, R Houghton, I Rush, M Walters, S McMahon.

AUXERRE: B Martini; F Darras, Z Kaczmarek, A Roche, S Mahe, R Guerreiro, C Cockard, D Dutule, K Kovacs (sub: D Otokore; sub: S Mazzolini), J M Ferreri, P Vahirua.

Referee: C Silva Valente (Portugal).

the guardian

Walters does the late trick

LIVERPOOL, with goals by Molby, Marsh and Walters, surged through into the third round of the Uefa Cup at Anfield last night with a performance of such white-hot intensity that Auxerre, 2-0 ahead at the start of the evening, shrivelled away.

Molby, playing his first game in Europe for **Liverpool**, was the focal force. First he scored from the penalty spot, to set **Liverpool** on a glorious path forward, and then he had an educated foot in both the other goals.

Marsh levelled the aggregate score and although **Liverpool** understandably tired during the second half, the sending-off of Darras was perhaps crucial and with seven minutes left Walters scored the winner.

Molby dispossessed Mahe and filtered a superb through ball to Walters. The former Rangers player hared clear to tuck a right-foot shot just inside the post and the Kop could have kissed him. So the night belonged to **Liverpool**, who came back from two goals down for the first time in 21 years of European competition. The time and space which Auxerre had revelled in during the first leg completely disappeared. They were harried, hounded and never allowed to settle. 'This club is made of sterner stuff than some people would have you believe,' the manager Graeme Souness said afterwards.

The start was quite extraordinary. Souness had beseeched the fans to lift his team and although there were only 23,000 present the wall of noise from the Kop was absolutely colossal. Within four minutes **Liverpool** had scored, flying forward on a strong wind and a tempest of support.

The **Liverpool** manager left out Saunders and Hysen, Molby partnering McMahon in the centre of midfield where Dutuel had caused so much trouble in the first leg. The surprise selection was Marsh at right-back, but it proved inspired.

The red tide surged forward with the inexorable self-belief of youth and when McManaman cut in from the left, Mahe scythed his legs away. Molby waited some considerable time while McManaman was treated and then struck the penalty low to Martini's right.

If **Liverpool's** performance in France had been limp and anaemic every single red corpuscle was zinging now. There was nothing particularly measured about **Liverpool's** play but no one could doubt the effort and the passion.

Yet even after the early goal the dangers of French counter-attacks were suddenly made vividly apparent when, with **Liverpool** straining forward and perhaps over-committing themselves for a rapid equaliser, Ferreri suddenly broke on the right with the home defence almost totally absent. His cross to Dutuel seemed certain to bring a goal, but Grobbelaar blocked the shot.

Undeterred by the warning, **Liverpool** thundered forward again and on the half-hour Auxerre's defence was penetrated for a second time. Molby found Houghton on the left and his deep cross was headed firmly in at the far post by Marsh - his first senior goal for the club.

All Anfield shook, to say nothing of French knees. With 30 minutes gone **Liverpool** had drawn level and at this point no Liverpudlian ever doubted victory.

And so it proved. With McMahon and Molby looking a little leg-weary, Auxerre threatened again in the second half, Grobbelaar saving well from Roche. But the sending-off of Darras for a foul on Walters in the 75th minute probably tipped the balance.

Eight minutes later Walters had done it and the only disappointment was that Burrows, booked in the first half, will miss the opening leg of the next round.

Liverpool: Grobbelaar; Ablett, Burrows, Marsh, Molby, Tanner, McManaman, Houghton, Rush, Walters, McMahon.

Auxerre: Martini; Darras, Kaczmarek, Roche, Mahe, Guerreiro, Cocard, Dutuel, Kovacs (Otokore, 19min; Mazzolini, 75), Ferreri, Vahirua.

Referee: C Da Silva (Portugal).

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BRITISH SOCCER WEEK

Kop that!

Liverpool staged the most magnificent recovery of their 21-year European history at a near-hysterical Anfield.

Mark Walters' 83rd minute strike enabled Liverpool's patched-up team to achieve a feat that had been beyond all their illustrious predecessors.

Never before had any Liverpool side overturned a two-goal first-leg lead in European combat.

But the Kop saluted their heroes with a rousing chorus of "You'll Never Walk Alone" as Liverpool warned the rest of Europe that they are still a force to be reckoned with.

The Reds had the breaks but they were richly deserved by players who were keen to atone for their abysmal first-leg display.

Auxerre lost Hungarian international striker Kalman Kovacs through injury after 16 minutes and defender Frederic Darras sent off in the 75th minute for a second bookable offence - a foul on Walters.

But Liverpool made a dream start with Jan Molby slotting in a fourth minute penalty after Stephane Mahe tripped Steve McManaman.

Auxerre should have equalised five minutes later when Jean-Marc Ferreri sped down the right and crossed for the unmarked Kovacs.

But his stab for goal was blocked by the diving Bruce Grobbelaar.

The Zimbabwean had kept the score down in France and was to rescue Liverpool again after the break when he stuck out a leg to foil an Alain Roche volley.

Souness omitted Glenn Hysen and Dean Saunders, moving Mike Marsh to an unfamiliar right-back role. But Marsh was one of the outstanding players in a performance full of spirit. He mastered lively winger Pascal Vahirua and stole forward for the 30th minute goal which levelled the aggregate scores heading in a Houghton cross.

Goalkeeper Bruno Martini tipped around a swerving Molby free-kick before the first-half ended on a farcical note.

Two supporters were involved in a skirmish with stewards and police in the back of the French goal as a Steve McMahon shot cleared the cross bar with Martini impeded by the struggling figures beside him.

Extra-time looked a certainty despite Nick Tanner almost turning a Vashirua shot into his own goal before Walters provided the explosive finish.

Match-winner Walters paid tribute to the Kop after the historic win.

Walters insisted the volume of support from Liverpool's fans was crucial: "The fans were the vital factor. The noise they created put fear on the faces of the French players. You could see it. It was nice for us to give them something to shout about as we have had to take a lot of flak recently. We had a dream start with a goal after four minutes and didn't panic when it would have been easy to start pumping the ball upfield. We showed patience and got our reward."

Jubilant manager Graeme Souness also appreciated the value of the Mersey sound but also recognised the Herculean efforts of his players. He said: "Considering our injuries and the four foreigners regulation the performance was immense. In terms of the silky football this club is famous for, there wasn't much of that. But in terms of grit, determination and will to win I could not have asked for more. Everybody had written us off but we showed this club is made of sterner stuff than some people would have you believe. The crowd was superb, we have a young team and they need to know they have the backing of supporters. I feel more tired now than when I was playing on one of the old European night here."