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Liverpool escape with a replay

Ipswich Town 0 Liverpool 0

REDISCOVERING an instinct for goal that was once upon a time second nature to him, John Wark came within the width of a crossbar at Portman Road yesterday of knocking Liverpool, one of his former clubs, out of the FA Cup. It would have been no more than either he or Ipswich deserved.

While a gale force wind made for conditions which John Lyall, the Ipswich manager, described as the worst he had known, there were moments in this fifth round tie when Ipswich rolled back the years to the days when they were more than a handful for the Merseysiders. Whether or not the reason was the sight of the old enemy, it did bring out the best in Wark, who had won the championship during his four years at Anfield but never in his 15 years with Ipswich.

Now in his third spell with the Suffolk club and operating in central defence, Wark, aged 34, provided a formidable obstacle to Liverpool alongside the rock-solid Linighan. Time and again the old campaigner rose above either Rush or Saunders to clear Ipswich's lines with firm headers, but it was his isolated effort at the other end of the field which evoked a touch of nostalgia.

With the wind to their backs in the first half, Ipswich had allowed three of their corners to be carried out of play before Whitton used it to his advantage to send in two consecutive vicious in-swingers which Grobbelaar did well on each occasion to flip over the crossbar to safety.

The third, however, from the right, after 41 minutes by Thompson, escaped him but not Wark, who arrived at the far post with one of those late runs for which he was once renowned and sent a header crashing flush against the crossbar. "The ball came so quickly," Wark said. "I could only run on to it and couldn't direct it." Liverpool had been forced into some desperate defensive work in the first half, threatened by the pace of Kiwomya. A lovely little pass struck with the outside of his foot by the England under-21 forward in the tenth minute almost did for Liverpool. Stockwell carried on the good work only for Johnson to head his cross wide. Even with the wind against them in the second half, the second division side continued to look the more lively. All that Liverpool could point to was a disallowed "goal" from Wright.

Liverpool's defence had itself in a tizz again after 63 minutes when a free kick by Thompson snaked its way through, much to Grobbelaar's surprise. Seconds later in his desperation to prevent Johnson seizing upon a loose ball, Houghton steered it inadvertently against his own upright. There was no doubting that it was an ill wind but one could not help feeling that it blew Ipswich, in particular, no good. Their prospects for the replay at Anfield may not be so bleak, however, even if Ipswich have never won there in their history. "I'm bound to say," Lyall said, "there's always a first time."

IPSWICH TOWN: C Forrest; G Johnson, N Thompson, M Stockwell, J Wark, D Linighan, S Milton, S Palmer, S Whitton, J Dozzell, C Kiwomya.

LIVERPOOL: B Grobbelaar; R Jones, D Burrows, S Nicol, M Wright, M Marsh, D Saunders, R Houghton, I Rush, J Redknapp (sub, I Kozma), S McManaman.

Referee: A Buksh.

the guardian

Grobbelaar's goal weathers wind and Wark

SHOULD Liverpool win the FA Cup for a fifth time this season they will remember with gratitude the day the fates combined to keep them in the competition at Portman Road yesterday. Well though parts of their injury-raddled team performed, Liverpool were more than a little grateful for the chance of a fifth-round replay back at Anfield, where Ipswich have never won, next week.

Luck was with Graeme Souness's side as Ipswich hit the bar in the first half and a post in the second, and it was Liverpool's overall good fortune that the gale which plagued the match throughout upset the Second Division team's rhythms even more than their own. Ipswich like to build their attacks from the back and play to feet. With the wind dictating the course of events even at goalkicks, free-kicks and corners, when the ball had to be teed up rugby-fashion, they were always going to struggle to retain sufficient accuracy with their passing.

Yet, well though this pair played, John Wark's was the outstanding performance. During his three years at Anfield Wark never quite fitted in, but yesterday he mastered the conditions better than anyone, and as well as giving an impeccable display at the back for Ipswich he came as close as anybody to settling the tie.

Whenever Ipswich were able to give Kiwomya the chance to turn defenders or Dozzell the opportunity to hold the ball up, they looked capable of scoring the sort of goals which are promising to take them back to the First Division after an absence of six seasons. But the longer the first half progressed the more Ipswich looked to corners and free-kicks for some reward.

Grobbelaar dealt with two corners from the left with some firm punches, but a corner on the right followed and as Thompson curled the ball in towards the far post Wark, timing his run and leap well and soaring above the defenders, met it with a header which ricocheted off the bar.

Maybe in that instance Liverpool half-suspected that their Cup ambitions would remain intact. Certainly once the teams changed ends, Ipswich found it much more difficult to recover their earlier momentum.

Yet just past the hour Kiwomya's cleverly angled pass found Dozzell bearing down on Grobbelaar from the right. The ball was half-cleared and found its way to Johnson, who shot as he was falling and saw Houghton drive another attempted clearance against the foot of his own post.

Deprived by injuries of the experience of Molby and Thomas in midfield, Souness fielded his younger legs - Redknapp and Marsh, with McManaman offering his spindly skill on the left - and on the whole was not disappointed by their attitude and discipline. Souness also introduced his new Hungarian, Istvan Kozma, for the last 25 minutes.

Had Saunders shot straightaway midway through the first half, when he outpaced Linighan with Wark for once unable to cover the threat, Liverpool might have spared themselves another replay. The wind probably persuaded the Wales striker that he needed another couple of touches to get the ball under control. Either way his delay enabled Ipswich to smother the danger.

In the second half Grobbelaar, now kicking the ball three-quarters of the length of the field, put Linighan under pressure, and after the defender had been caught in possession by Marsh another chance fell to Saunders. This time he was denied by Forrest's save, and after that the possibility of a goal for either side became even more remote.

Ipswich: Forrest; Johnson, Thompson, Stockwell, Wark, Linighan, Milton, Palmer, Whitton, Dozzell, Kiwomya.

Liverpool: Grobbelaar; Jones, Burrows, Nicol, Wright, Marsh, Saunders, Houghton, Rush, Redknapp (Kozma, 65min), McManaman.

Referee: A Buksh (Dollis Hill).