

Date: 21 March 1992

Opposition: Tottenham Hotspur

Competition: League

Times	Guardian	Sunday Times	21 March 1992
British Soccer Wk			

THE TIMES

Tottenham rue their luck

Liverpool 2 Tottenham Hotspur 1

THE adage says that if you win when not playing well, you're a good team. On Saturday, worryingly for them, Tottenham played well and lost. They eventually deserved better than defeat, only to be denied by one appalling refereeing decision, perhaps two.

They have now not won for 15 games, a run which has seen them plunge to nineteenth, only four points clear of Luton in the third relegation spot. They have games in hand, but if you can't win them, they are of little value.

Tottenham are having little luck. It is bad enough having to face Liverpool without losing your one proven goalscorer, but to then overcome Lineker's absence and mount a convincing fightback, only to have at least a point snatched from your hands, could convince you that the world is against you.

Yet self-pity would not be entirely justified. Although Tottenham rallied with a conviction which augurs well for their struggle, the game could have been over by half-time. Saunders should have scored from the best move of the game after 35 seconds, but a sidefoot volley flew over the bar from six yards, and that set the tone for the half.

"We felt at half-time we'd dominated the game, but the gaffer said we'd better start scoring or they might pinch it 1-0," Saunders said. He duly obliged, reaping the reward for persistence as Fenwick was betrayed by the high wind into error. At that, Tottenham began, belatedly, to play. Walsh came on to support Stewart, who had an excellent game back in his old position, giving Tanner an uncomfortable afternoon and equalising by bravely plunging in front of Grobbelaar as Fenwick headed back Edinburgh's cross.

Then came controversy. Rush blocked Edinburgh's clearance, Thorstvedt shepherding the ball to safety as Saunders pursued it. Incomprehensibly, a corner was awarded. Half cleared, it was put back in, and with Tottenham appealing for offside, Burrows's miscue ran to Saunders, who scored simply. Television evidence on the goal was inconclusive, but on the corner there could be no debate. "We give what we see," Milford said in exculpation. "The linesman gave a corner in good faith, and if Liverpool score from that we can't help it. Players make mistakes too the first goal came from a pass by a Spurs player, and I played a great advantage for Spurs's equaliser, but nobody mentions that." Spurs were not mollified. They look too good to go down, but that was also said about Sheffield Wednesday two seasons ago.

LIVERPOOL: B Grobbelaar; R Jones, D Burrows, S Nicol, J Molby (sub: R Whelan), N Tanner, D Saunders, M Marsh (sub: S McManaman), I Rush, J Barnes, M Thomas. TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR: E Thorstvedt; T Fenwick, J Edinburgh, S Sedgley, D Howells (sub: P Walsh), G Mabbutt, P Stewart, G Durie, A Gray, P van den Hauwe, P Allen.

Referee: R Milford.

the guardian

Spurs in a fateful corner

FOR Graeme Souness it was a case of a little bit of good fortune. For Tottenham it was a hard-luck story. And for Terry Venables, in the directors' box, it was a time to make serious notes on the back of his chequebook - whether of a monetary or tactical nature was not clear but Spurs cannot go on like this if they are to make the Premier League.

They have only 10 games left and, although they have matches in hand over two of the three relegation-zone teams, they would be unwise to take points for granted.

This result differed from their recent record only in that they scored. Stewart's equaliser was their fourth League goal this year. 'We are desperately fighting to save ourselves,' the player admitted.

The trouble was that Stewart, who played as lone striker in the absence of Lineker, seemed the only one aware that the ship was sinking. And after being booked he now faces suspension.

Until Walsh was introduced early in the second half Spurs rarely had the wit or guts to get themselves out of their own half. Durie, who last scored a League goal in September, was pushed back to midfield and Gray was pinned back.

A tricky wind rocked an already unsteady boat as Fenwick found to his cost when an attempted headed clearance fell directly into the path of Saunders, who ran through to place a low shot past Thorstvedt.

The Spurs full-back made amends by laying on a cross for Stewart to level with a powerful header from close range with quarter of an hour left.

But what happened next left Spurs cursing their luck. Thorstvedt, way out to the left of his goal, shielded the ball as it rolled towards the by-line. But the linesman, amid protests, awarded a corner. McManaman was prevented from taking it quickly by Edinburgh who was booked for not retreating.

Burrows miscued his shot from the resultant corner but, as the ball spun wide, Saunders got behind the defence to slot in the winner. Spurs now protested offside. Video recordings proved no corner but no offside either. 'Once you are down, you are down,' said Stewart, referring to Tottenham's luck. His remarks could well be prophetic.

SCORERS: Liverpool: Saunders (48 and 81min). Tottenham: Stewart (74).

Liverpool: Grobbelaar; Jones, Burrows, Nicol, Molby (Whelan, 72min), Tanner, Saunders, Marsh (McManaman, 59), Rush, Barnes, Thomas.

Tottenham: Thorstvedt; Fenwick, Edinburgh, Sedgley, Howells (Walsh, 53), Mabbutt, Stewart, Durie, Gray, Van den Hauwe, Allen.

Referee: R Milford (Bristol).

Date: 21 March 1992

Opposition: Tottenham Hotspur

Competition: League

Times	Guardian	Sunday Times	21 March 1992
British Soccer Wk			



THE SUNDAY TIMES

Saunders knocks Spurs down a few more pegs

LIVERPOOL 2 TOTTENHAM 1

LIVERPOOL 2(4-4-2): Grobbelaar; Jones, Nicol, Tanner, Burrows; Barnes, Molby (Whelan 72min), Thomas, Marsh (McManaman 59min); Rush, Saunders.

TOTTENHAM 1(4-4-2): Thorstvedt; Fenwick, Mabbutt, Van den Hauwe, Edinburgh; Sedgley, Howells (Walsh 52min), Durie, Allen; Stewart, Gray.

Goals: Saunders (48min) 1-0; Stewart (74min) 1-1; Saunders (81min) 2-1.

Weather: bright. Ground: churned up.

Referee: R Milford (Bristol).

IT HAS been a week of cups and sorcerers that both teams would like to forget. Spurs had suffered the attentions of Johnny Metgod, while Genoa's Carlos Aguilera had run rampant at Anfield, so both sides needed to make a fiery stab at regaining crucial confidence.

Liverpool did, although not prettily. But Spurs are now giving Arsenal fans genuine cause for celebration. They may bitterly protest that the home side's winning goal came from an unwarranted corner, but they have nobody to blame but themselves for a flaccid performance, infected with the disappointment of their Cup-Winners' Cup exit this week, that leaves them four off the bottom.

Spurs have not so much slumped since the new year as performed a spectacular plummet (with double somersault and pike). They stood shivering under the sign that menacingly reads "This Is Anfield", exposed to the cold blast of knowledge that since the first week in January they had won only one of 16 matches. This noteworthy run also included their dismissal from a trayful of cups.

Just to complete the misery, Gary Lineker had a sore throat which forced him to miss the match and Spurs were carrying a less than enviable record into Anfield. Played 79, won 2.

With all this in mind, Liverpool attached themselves firmly to Tottenham's jugular.

Twice Jones provided crosses and twice Saunders missed by the customary whisker in the opening five minutes. Van den Hauwe, appearing in the novel role of centre-half, did not seem to take this personally and Saunders was still looking safe and well in the immediate aftermath.

Van den Hauwe was obviously in the business of providing bite to Tottenham's defence, a prerequisite of surviving relegation scares, and it has to be said that this passionate start misleadingly settled into a more tepid affair.

Then a Barnes cross provoked a kind of mayhem in front of Thorstvedt, during which Saunders and Rush both missed. Molby had prefaced this with a shot from the edge of the penalty area saved valiantly by Thorstvedt.

Molby, as usual, looked the model of a mischief-maker with his casual passes into exquisite space. He was playing in a position you might describe as the pocket in front of the defence, if any pocket could be imagined to contain his less than sleek form.

But despite his promptings, lukewarmness resumed. Spurs seemed incapable of mounting attacks of genuine threat, and even when Grobbelaar helped by throwing the ball directly to Howells, Gray was offside when he curled a shot over the bar.

All this must have been disheartening to Peter Shreeves, the Spurs manager, who has talked heroically about still being the Leader of the Gang. But his similarity to Gary Glitter is not exactly overwhelming. On the other side, Graeme Souness has traits in common with the sequinned one, not least a hint of bouffant about the hairdo and the ability to rouse rabbles when required. Judging by his reasoned commentary from the touchline, his players should have considered themselves roused.

Yet the orchestrator of the home side's goal within four minutes of the restart was not a Liverpool player at all. It was Fenwick, mistiming a header back to his goalkeeper and then covering his eyes with both hands as Saunders happily scampered on to the ball and beat Thorstvedt with a purposeful shot.

Almost immediately Fenwick missed with a header at the other end, which was not all bad news for suffering Spurs supporters. At least he was as far away from his own defence as possible.

Away goals may not count for double in this particular match, but they would have counted a hell of a lot for Spurs in their current, and now genuine, plight. This must explain the arrival of Walsh.

Durie, reportedly homesick for Scotland, was certainly no help. He appealed for the odd throw-in, but was otherwise quiet. In the end, who should inspire the equaliser but the penitent Fenwick. As his cross was met by a firm header from St Thor full-back must have known happiness at last.

It was to be short-lived. Burrows completely miskicked a close-range shot from a corner and Saunders nipped in. Enough said.

BRITISH SOCCER WEEK

Spurs fume after loss

Welsh international striker Dean Saunders bagged a brace to pile on the relegation worries for Tottenham.

A defensive blunder by Terry Fenwick gifted Saunders his first goal after 48 minutes. Fenwick made a mess of a simple headed clearance from Steve Nicol's lob, leaving Saunders to run in unmarked and slot home from 10 yards.

Paul Stewart, playing up front for Spurs in place of unwell England skipper Gary Lineker, headed bravely home to equalise after Fenwick nodded on Justin Edinburgh's left-wing cross on 74 minutes. But seven minutes later Liverpool were controversially awarded a corner to the fury of the Spurs players.

The corner by Steve McManaman fell to David Burrows, who screwed a low shot which was going wide until Saunders nipped in to divert it inside the far post for his 23rd goal of the season.

Saunders could have scored twice in the first three minutes, volleying a Rob Jones cross over the bar and just failing to direct a header on target when Ian Rush nodded another Jones cross back to him.

Jan Molby brought the game's best first-half save out of Spurs' keeper Erik Thorsvedt, who flew to his right to touch the Dane's 20-yard drive wide at full stretch.

Tottenham's only serious first-half threat came after Andy Gray set Stewart up for a shot which flew straight at Grobbelaar.

Tottenham's players were seething after losing to a goal they claim was offside and came from a corner that should never have been given. Justin Edinburgh, booked for his protests to Referee Roger Milford, said: "We'd started to get on top after we got our goal and Liverpool were tiring. It is disappointing to think we've been cheated out of the game."

He said Thorsvedt had been shielding the ball out of play and did not make contact with it when the corner was awarded. And he added: "I thought Dean Saunders was offside when he scored."

Stewart agreed: "The television will tell us it was a goal kick and the goal was offside. Which do you moan at most? I thought we were worth a draw and could have even won it but then we got a bad break like that. When your luck is down, it's really down and they kick you in the teeth. I don't really see me playing up front again but while Gary wasn't so well, they asked me to do a job for them and in our present predicament it's all hands to the pumps. That will be my last game playing up front. I found it difficult but one goal from one game up front wasn't a bad return."

Saunders' two goals took his haul to 23, the first time he has scored more than 21, his tally in each of the last four seasons. "It's nice to get off 21," said the Welsh international. "They got back in the game and scored a good goal and if anyone was going to win it, then it looked as though they might just pinch it. But luckily David Burrows just mis-hit his shot and it ran for me."

Saunders now begins a three-match suspension which will see him sit out the FA Cup semi-final. "All I can do is hope that the lads get six points and win through to the final," he said.

Manager Graeme Souness said the teams were "emotionally and physically tired" after their midweek European disappointments. And he admitted: "We had a bit of luck with the corner. We haven't had too much of that lately but we are delighted with the three points."

Rob Jones has been withdrawn from the England squad after suffering a recurrence of a leg injury but Michael Thomas and John Barnes both travel, Souness confirmed.