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THE TIMES

Kiwomya denies Liverpool at the last

Ipswich Town 2 Liverpool 2

LIVERPOOL'S early-season travails continued at Portman Road last night. Twice they led, through goals which owed as much to good fortune as good play, and twice they were hauled back, the second time in the final seconds of a thrilling game.

More worrying for Graeme Souness, their manager, will be the fact that his team scarcely deserved even a point, having been outplayed and out-thought by opponents who simply refused to give up, even when events seemed to conspire against them.

It was Liverpool's first match in a League game at Portman Road for six years and they started in the disdainful manner of the big red machine of old. Scarcely 30 seconds had passed before Rush shot narrowly wide from 20 yards and only another 60 had followed when Molby tested Forrester with a 30-yard free kick. But, thereafter, the match belonged to Ipswich. Goddard had a shot deflected wide and twice Kiwomya missed with headers from good positions. Their best chance came midway through the half when Thompson's neat pass put Dozzell through only for James to produce one of his trademark saves with his legs.

That escape brought Liverpool briefly out of their torpor. Walters beat Wark on the right, crossed and Saunders missed, inexplicably, from eight yards. It was only a temporary reprieve for Ipswich, however.

Seven minutes before half time, another misjudgement by Wark let Saunders put Rush clear on the left. The Welshman's low shot was only parried by Forrester and Whelan's desperate attempt to clear hit Walters and bounced into the gaping goal.

Ipswich's response was to attack with renewed vigor after the interval. For ten minutes, they took the Liverpool defence by the throat and simply shook it until the equaliser fell free. Kiwomya and Goddard had both come close to scoring before Thompson, enjoying a marvellous game on the left, reached the byeline and his cross was headed perfectly over James and under the bar by Dozzell.

Still Ipswich pressed forward and their ambition almost cost them dear. Saunders surged suddenly free and was only stopped 12 yards out by what seemed a finely-judged tackle by Whelan. It didn't seem that way to the referee, however, and Molby ignored the deafening derision of the crowd to convert the penalty. "If that penalty had been awarded against us," Souness admitted later, "I would have been disappointed."

Even then, Liverpool could not hold onto their advantage. Ipswich ran them ragged and in the final seconds Phil Whelan, who had indirectly been involved in both the Liverpool goals, fired a desperate shot towards goal and Kiwomya deflected it past James.

IPSWICH TOWN: C Forrester; P Whelan, N Thompson, M Stockwell, J Wark, D Linighan, G Williams, P Goddard (sub: S Milton), G Johnson, J Dozzell, C Kiwomya.

LIVERPOOL: D James; R Jones, D Burrows, S Harkness, R Whelan, M Wright, D Saunders (sub: S McManaman), P Stewart, I Rush, J Molby, M Walters.

Referee: R Hamer.

the guardian

Last-gasp Ipswich get just deserts

THE Premier League would have been poorer without Ipswich, whose concept of how football should be played was badly missed during their six-year absence from the First Division. Last night these qualities enabled them to dominate Liverpool for long periods of an exceptionally entertaining game at Portman Road, although it took a goal in stoppage time to spare them the injustice of defeat through myopic refereeing.

Bob Hamer was 40 yards behind the play when he decided that Phil Whelan, who had cleanly dispossessed Saunders after the Welsh striker had been sent clear by Molby's long pass, did so illegally. Saunders had not even dived in the hope of winning a penalty. Nevertheless, a penalty it was, and Molby put Liverpool 2-1 ahead with 20 minutes remaining.

Portman Road seethed as Graeme Souness's team, grateful for such good fortune so soon after Sunday's 2-0 home defeat by Arsenal, prepared to win a game which at one point they would have been content to draw. Then a free-kick from Thompson on the left was half-cleared by Molby straight to Phil Whelan whose firmly struck shot would probably have been saved by James had Kiwomya's head not deflected it out of the goalkeeper's reach.

A match full of good things - positive and imaginative movement, end-to-end play, fine saves and near-misses - did not deserve to be decided by one bad decision. A 2-2 draw was probably the right result for, although Ipswich enjoyed the bulk of the play territorially, Liverpool created enough opportunities in breakaways to match them goal for goal.

Yet Liverpool's football is still not as well-knit as it was, and last night there was a tendency to drop stitches in embarrassing places. Ipswich, like Nottingham Forest on the opening weekend of the season, gave them some lessons in close passing, and had their finishing matched the immaculate touches of their build-ups they could well have taken command by half-time.

By then, paradoxically, Liverpool were in front. Their goal had survived the vision of Goddard and Dozzell, Johnson's aggression and Kiwomya's explosions of speed. Dozzell, sidling through unmarked to collect Thompson's shrewd pass, should have put Ipswich ahead after 26 minutes, but not for the first time this season Liverpool were saved by James who stopped Dozzell's shot with an outstretched foot.

Two minutes later a rare slip by Wark allowed Walters to create a simple chance for Saunders who had only Forrester to beat but still shot wide. Then Goddard's under-hit pass put pressure on Wark who was caught in possession by Saunders. The ball ran to Rush, and after Forrester had blocked his shot, Phil Whelan's clearance rebounded into the Ipswich net off Walters.

The first half ended with Forrester twisting in mid-air to keep out a header from Rush. Early in the second the first of Molby's through-passes to Saunders sent him clear only to overrun the ball.

Goddard then wafted a shot over the Liverpool bar after Kiwomya had twisted away from two defenders on the right before crossing. But in the 56th minute one of Ipswich's more studied passing movements stretched the defence to breaking point and Thompson cleverly made space for himself before seeking out the head of Dozzell who brought the scores level for the first time.

The rest was all about the referee, recrimination and, for Ipswich, redemption. Ipswich, still unbeaten, will take considerable heart from their performance. Liverpool, improving but again ragged at the edges, must still be harbouring self-doubts.

Ipswich Town: Forrester; Whelan, Thompson, Stockwell, Wark, Linighan, Williams, Goddard (Milton, 73min), Johnson, Dozzell, Kiwomya.

Liverpool: James; Jones, Burrows, Harkness, Whelan, Wright, Saunders (McManaman, 77), Stewart, Rush, Molby, Walters.

Referee: R Hamer (Bristol).

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BRITISH SOCCER WEEK

Penalty row as Reds draw

Chris Kiwomya snatched a dramatic equaliser in the dying seconds at Portman Road after Liverpool's Dean Saunders became a target for angry Ipswich fans. Saunders was awarded a penalty by Bristol referee Bob Hamer in the 70th minute which Jan Molby blasted home to give Liverpool a 2-1 lead.

Molby instigated the move which led up to the penalty, releasing Saunders with a precision through-pass. Phil Whelan knocked the ball away from Saunders with his toe and the Welsh international toppled over the defender's outstretched leg. Saunders, who had been firing blanks all match, was jeered every time he touched the ball after that and was substituted seven minutes later to roars of "cheat, cheat" from the crowd. They even failed to forgive Hamer after Kiwomya's late equaliser and the official received a police escort as he left the pitch with his linesmen.

Kiwomya should have wrapped up the points for Ipswich by half-time. Three times he was clear of the Liverpool defence but on each occasion failed to get the ball past David James. Instead, Liverpool snatched a surprise 39th minute lead when Saunders robbed John Wark and put Ian Rush in for a shot parried by Craig Forrest. Whelan tried to clear but the ball rebounded in off Mark Walters.

Jason Dozzell headed a 56th minute equaliser from a Neil Thompson cross after Paul Goddard had missed a chance two minutes earlier.

Walters was guilty of a similar miss at the other end after having been sent clear by Saunders - then came the controversial penalty incident.

But justice was done for Ipswich when Whelan tried his luck with a last-minute snap shot which glanced off Kiwomya past James.

Hamer stood by his penalty decision: "It was a trip and I was happy with my decision." Forrest said: "From where I was it looked an exceptional tackle - but maybe it looked like a penalty from the referee's angle."

Team manager Mick McGiven said: "The referee gave the decision as he saw it - I don't think he is going to cheat anyone. No-one's perfect but I'd much rather discuss the game than the penalty. It was an entertaining match full of chances. I thought we did the town of Ipswich proud tonight. Anyone who thinks we are beaten in the 89th minute can't be aware of our players' commitment," added McGiven.

Even Anfield boss Graeme Souness was forced to admit that the decision by Bristol official Hamer to penalise Whelan's challenge was lucky. He said: "If it had been given against us I would not have been happy."