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## THE TIMES

Rush keeps alive Liverpool's hopes

Liverpool 1 Manchester City 1

IN THEIR next match, Liverpool begin their defence of the FA Cup and, increasingly, their season appears to depend upon another appearance at Wembley. Yesterday, they stopped the rot which had set in during their previous two matches, but the championship looks a long way off.

"The FA Premier League championship is not decided until May," Graeme Souness, the Liverpool manager, said in a brief statement of hope in his programme notes. A goal of spectacular quality by Ian Rush, after City had gone ahead, keeps those hopes flickering.

In the first quarter of an hour, City were overrun. Rush, who had scored only twice in the league this season, headed wide from a Walters cross, then had a fourteenth minute delivery by Redknapp knocked from his path by Hill.

In between, Marsh tried a drive from the edge of the area, the ball missing the bar. In the cold, Barnes wore his gloves and, on 80 minutes, he was burying his head in them. Unmarked, he headed over from Jones's cross. It should have been the winner.

The early onslaught over, City began to show their worth. Flitcroft angled a low shot past Hooper, but beyond the far post. Then Hooper blocked Quinn.

White had a seemingly good goal disallowed for offside before Quinn headed City ahead from Brightwell's cross after 39 minutes. Two minutes later, Anfield was shouting its anger at Rush for failing to control a cross when in a good scoring position.

The break brought out a new Rush. Four minutes of the second half had been played when he crashed in a volley from 12 yards out. Another like that in the Cup at Bolton Wanderers on Sunday might do Liverpool's season the power of good.

LIVERPOOL: M Hooper; M Marsh, R Jones, S Nicol, T Piechnik, S Bjornebye, S McManaman, J Redknapp, I Rush, J Barnes, M Walters.

MANCHESTER CITY: A Coton; I Brightwell, T Phelan, S McMahon, K Curle, A Hill, D White, M Sheron (sub: P Reid), N Quinn, G Flitcroft, R Holden.

Referee: D Allison.

## the guardian

High in the air and on anxiety - Premier League

A GOAL each from Quinn and Rush, both of whom have had trouble finding the net this season, was no true reflection of the balance of play as Liverpool tried to assuage their 5-1 defeat by Coventry in their previous match.

It was no comfort to them either to learn that Coventry had met their come-uppance yesterday at the hands of their arch enemy Manchester United. With their Boxing Day match against Oldham frozen off, Liverpool had nine days to ponder the thrashing meted out by Coventry, and they played as though they had spent Christmas in sackcloth and ashes vowing to atone for their sins.

Barnes, in sparkling form, set the pace which saw Liverpool, without Wright, Thomas and Stewart, all said to be for sale, constantly on the attack. It was a measure of the ability of the City defence to harry and close them down that shots from Rush and Walters flew off target in the opening minutes.

The ball can rarely have been off the ground so often at Anfield. City's manager Peter Reid, who went on as substitute on the hour, blamed the conditions. 'It was icy and both teams did well under the circumstances,' he said.

But the tradition of accurate passes to feet at Liverpool seems to come now only in cameo. Both sides were perhaps too anxious for the points for there to be any hope of sophistication and elegance, but all the energy and running might have served better purpose if brains had also been in top gear.

When City did break out of defence they looked dangerous. White, who ended a scoring famine of only two goals in 16 games by scoring twice against Sheffield United on Saturday, had the ball in the net just after the half-hour. But Flitcroft was ruled offside and it was Quinn, who has also been off target, who opened the scoring.

The Irishman, who had scored only three league goals all season, got his head to a superb cross from the byline by Brightwell after Liverpool's defenders had blocked a shot by Sheron. Hooper pushed the ball against a post but it rebounded into the net to put City ahead six minutes before half-time.

Liverpool retaliated early in the second half when McManaman, who had run tirelessly down the right wing and released cross after cross, found a willing and well-placed recipient in Rush, who can seldom have got so far into a season with only three league goals to his credit. He volleyed home his fourth for the equaliser in the 49th minute.

Both sides lived dangerously at times, with McMahon booked for a particularly harsh and late challenge on his old team-mate Rush. Hooper once had to come out quickly to save at the feet of Sheron.

But Liverpool came nearer to winning. Barnes, playing in a central role, had the chance to clinch the points with nine minutes left but placed his header high, and Rush, given a final chance a minute before time, saw Coton scramble to save a point for City.

'I'm disappointed. I thought we played well enough to win,' said Reid.

Liverpool: Hooper; Marsh, Jones, Nicol, Piechnik, Bjornebye, McManaman, Redknapp, Rush, Barnes, Walters.

Manchester City: Coton; Brightwell, Phelan, McMahon, Curle, Hill, White, Sheron (Reid, 59min), Quinn, Flitcroft, Holden.

Referee: D Allison (Lancaster).

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## BRITISH SOCCER WEEK

### Rush hits a cracker

A vintage Ian Rush strike saved Liverpool boss Graeme Souness from ending the worst year of his career with a home defeat against battling Manchester City.

The Welsh international striker swivelled to meet Steve McManaman's cross with a superb right-foot volley into the roof of the net after 49 minutes.

City took the lead after 39 minutes, Liverpool's defenders half-blocking from Mike Sheron only for Ian Brightwell to snap up the loose ball and cross for Niall Quinn to head powerfully.

Liverpool goalkeeper Mike Hooper did well to get his hands to the ball but could only push it against the post and in.

City enjoyed the better chances of a hard-fought but lacklustre first half, David White having a goal ruled out for offside, Garry Flitcroft twice going close and Quinn bringing a fine save out of the busy Hooper.

John Barnes produced Liverpool's first shot on target after 42 minutes, a rising effort straight into the hands of Tony Coton.

Hooper was out bravely to block at the feet of Sheron after 56 minutes, while Coton had to be equally alert to kick the ball off the toes of the menacing Rush six minutes later.

Barnes could have sealed victory nine minutes from time, diving to just head over City's bar from a McManaman cross and Coton saved well from Rush in the last minute.

City boss Peter Reid paid tribute to the magnificent Rush goal. "Seeing that goal was worth the entrance fee. It was a fabulous strike by a quality player," he said after the 1-1 draw. "I'm pleased with the way my team played and a little bit disappointed for them. They were superb under difficult conditions for both sides. I thought we deserved the three points but if you want to win games, you have to stick chances away."

Meanwhile, Liverpool chief executive Peter Robinson dismissed stories about possible transfer deals involving a string of the club's apparently out-of-favour stars including Mark Wright, Paul Stewart and Michael Thomas as "press speculation." He denied rumours that centre-half Wright was in London for talks with Tottenham and said of rumours players were available for transfer: "The matter has not been discussed at all."