

Date: 3 April 1993
 Opposition: Blackburn Rovers
 Competition: League

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THE SUNDAY TIMES

Victory tastes extra sweet to Dalglish

BLACKBURN 4, LIVERPOOL 1

BLACKBURN 4

(4-4-2): Mimms; May, Le Saux, Hendry, Moran; Sherwood, Ripley, Cowans, Wilcox; Gallacher, Newell.

LIVERPOOL 1

(4-4-2): James; Marsh, Burrows, Nicol, Harkness; Whelan, Hutchison, Barnes, Walters; Rosenthal (McManaman 56min), Rush.

Goals: Newell (13min) 1-0; Moran (25min)

2-0; Gallacher (41min) 3-0; Wilcox (65min)

4-0; Rush (84min) 4-1.

Weather: overcast & cold. Ground: firm.

Referee: K Redfern (Whitley Bay).

HOW THE mighty have fallen. Liverpool were taken apart by an unexceptional Blackburn, who scored four and could have had more. It was a sweet victory for Kenny Dalglish, the Blackburn manager and former Liverpool idol, but he could not have envisaged how easily his old club would capitulate. This must be the poorest Liverpool team for years, lacking in character as much as ability. Their only consolation was a typical opportunist goal by Rush, who seized on Hendry's wayward header.

Life suddenly looks much brighter for Blackburn, who gained their second consecutive three-goal win. The outlook for Liverpool, though, is bleak. Such is the sorry state of affairs at Anfield that one suspects they will be happy just to finish in the top half of the Premier League.

Liverpool's one justifiable complaint was that the build up to Blackburn's first goal looked offside. Graeme Souness, the harassed Liverpool manager, said that his players were punished for their naivety and that defensively this was the worst Liverpool had been all season.

Blackburn are still in contention for a UEFA Cup place, which is more than can be said for Liverpool, who are having their most unproductive season since their days in the old First Division more than 30 years ago.

The pressure has clearly got to Souness, who has trouble keeping his mouth shut when he is near match officials. Last week he was charged with bringing the game into disrepute after allegedly making abusive comments to a linesman during a recent fixture at Crystal Palace. Banished from the dug-out in the closing stages, Souness, if found guilty, faces the prospect of a hefty fine and touch line ban.

A crippling injury list has hindered Liverpool all season, and there is no sign of it shortening. Yesterday they were without Wright, Redknapp and Jones.

Grobelaar, recalled from a loan spell with Second Division Stoke, was on the bench instead of Hooper, who has an injured arm.

Liverpool went into this match fortified by the return to form of Rush, who is scoring regularly again after a barren period, and three wins and a draw from their previous four games have eased the fear of relegation.

Rosenthal, that rescuer of lost causes, was in Liverpool's starting line-up instead of McManaman, while Blackburn fielded their two new signings, Le Saux, from Chelsea, and Gallacher, from Coventry.

The first genuine attempt at goal arrived after eight minutes. Gallacher's neat pass inside Marsh, the Liverpool full-back, sent Wilcox scurrying clear. His centre was allowed to reach Newell, who pivoted sharply to lash in a left-foot shot, but James saved excellently. It was a short reprieve. Five minutes later Ripley caught the Liverpool defence badly out of position when he fed Gallacher and the forward had all the time in the world to square the ball across the goalmouth, where Newell scored from close in.

Newell had a drive charged down in Blackburn's next attack. The hosts were then given a scare by their erratic goalkeeper, Mimms, who spilled a cross from Rosenthal. Rush, lurking at the far post, put the ball back into the danger area but Hendry cleared.

Blackburn made the most of the escape to go two ahead. Liverpool failed to deal with a Cowans corner, and Newell's effort was parried by James only as far as Moran, who crashed in the rebound. Newell had done well to force the corner in the first place with a shot that James pushed around the post.

Liverpool's defence, once formidable, was full of holes and Blackburn scored a third shortly before half-time. May's sweeping pass found Liverpool without cover. Wilcox, hardly able to believe his luck, made rapid strides down the left before providing Gallacher with the sort of opportunity he does not often miss.

The only blot on Blackburn's display was the uncertainty of Mimms. He was a helpless onlooker as a Rush header struck the crossbar, but the forward was unable to get any power into his follow-up attempt. Then Mimms, having misjudged a Barnes free kick, was grateful to see Moran rescue the situation. James, much more adept with his hands than his feet, kicked a clearance straight at Newell early in the second half yet escaped punishment as the striker's shot drifted inches wide of a gaping net.

Liverpool brought on McManaman for Rosenthal in an effort to salvage something, but Blackburn were in less generous mood than of late. Things went from bad to worse for the visitors and Cowans created an opening for Wilcox, who took the chance superbly to score the fourth.

BRITISH SOCCER WEEK

Rovers rout Liverpool

Blackburn, still clinging to the faint hope of a place in Europe next season, gave Kenny Dalglish revenge for the defeat they suffered at the hands of his old club earlier this season.

Kevin Gallacher, making his debut after his deadline-day move from Coventry, was among the scorers as Blackburn manager Dalglish saw his team build a handsome victory.

Liverpool boss Graeme Souness, Dalglish's old Anfield team mate, was on his feet protesting that Blackburn's opening goal was offside, but after that he could have had few complaints.

Mike Newell was first on the scoresheet after 13 minutes, popping up at the far post to find the net from Gallacher's cross.

Rovers skipper Kevin Moran showed astonishing athleticism for a man coming up to his 37th birthday when he added a second in the 25th minute.

Gordon Cowans' corner kick brought a Newell drive bravely blocked by keeper David James whose luck was out when the ball fell for Moran to score with a spectacular bicycle kick.

Four minutes before the break Blackburn went three up when David May's long punt from defence found the Liverpool defence at full-stretch and Gallacher got on the end of a cross from Jason Wilcox.

Within a minute Ian Rush hit the bar with a drive and was first to the rebound with a header which Bobby Mimms saved with some difficulty.

Souness must have agonised at the ease with which Wilcox was able to hold off a double challenge to run on and score Blackburn's final goal in the 65th minute.

The only consolation for Liverpool was a typical strike six minutes from time by Ian Rush, pivoting on a sixpence and volleying in style into the roof of the net.