

Date: 1 September 1993  
 Opposition: Coventry City  
 Competition: League

Times	Guardian	
British Soccer Wk		

1 September  
1993

## THE TIMES

Jones sent off to complete bad night for Liverpool

Coventry City 1 Liverpool 0

OLD age is catching up with Liverpool. Worse still, one of their younger players, Rob Jones, the right back recalled to England duty only three days ago, was sent off, and deservedly so after two impetuous tackles last night.

Jones was overcome, as Liverpool were, by the sheer pace and tenacity of Coventry. After his yellow card in the 68th minute for crudely bringing down Ndlovu on the edge of the area, an ugly foul on Wegerle almost in the same spot two minutes later gave referee Burge no choice but to send him off.

Jones said: "I don't really want to talk about it. What can I say? It's the first time I have been sent off in my career and I'm obviously disappointed. But I don't think it should affect me for England." In a bad night for Graham Taylor, David Bardsley, the QPR right back, withdrew from the England squad with Achilles tendon trouble.

The pattern of the match was obvious. Liverpool tried to draw the sting, to slow the pace so that their experienced and old legs six of the side were on the wrong side of 30 could prevent Coventry capitalising on a higher degree of desire which players bought from the bargain basement are expected to show.

Even before Coventry took the lead, Rennie, balding but only 28, was too sharp in midfield for the languid Molby and Whelan. They wanted time, he would not allow it, hustling them and directing Wegerle and Boland forward from midfield, or prompting the rapid wingers, Williams and Ndlovu.

The warnings were writ large in front of Grobbelaar. Three times he had to spring off his line, and once to come out of the area as a sweeper, behind a defence being caught flat-footed and square. One of those occasions was an all-Zimbabwean affair, with Ndlovu teasing his national team goalkeeper with a deceptive low cross, and Grobbelaar making three grabs at it, as if it had some strange influence.

Grobbelaar was culpable for the goal after 21 minutes. Rennie once more had instigated a raid behind the fallible Burrows, and when Williams out-sprinted Ruddock, the lurking Quinn drove in his first shot, which was deflected for a corner off Wright.

Liverpool were in disarray. Wegerle took the corner, Boland was free to glance it towards the near post and because of the inertia of Grobbelaar, Phil Babb was able to poach his first goal for Coventry.

Babb, a failed Millwall apprentice who reconstructed his career at Bradford, cost Coventry Pounds 500,000, for them a fortune. He was repaying much of that with his marking of Clough, and was comfortable in a Coventry defence so organised, and so willing that each man covered the other's back like a brother. This derives from the coaching of the former Liverpool defender, Phil Neal.

Liverpool, without the pace to penetrate or the customary rhythm of their passing, were confined to long shots, all of them on the left. But McManaman was twice thwarted by athletic dives from Gould, and Burrows drew a third acrobatic save. However, the tribulations of Liverpool were there in more than the disgrace of Jones. His red card came after justified yellow ones, first for Whelan, for grappling with Williams after the winger had cruised past him, and then for Ruddock for a lunge into the back of Quinn.

COVENTRY CITY (4-4-2): J Gould, L McGrath, P Atherton, P Babb, S Morgan, W Boland, R Wegerle, D Rennie, P Ndlovu, J Williams (sub: P Williams, 86min), M Quinn (sub: T Sheridan, 89).

LIVERPOOL (4-4-2): B Grobbelaar, R Jones, M Wright, N Ruddock, D Burrows (sub: M Walters, 65), S Nicol, R Whelan, J Molby, S McManaman.

Referee: K Burge.

## the guardian

Babb bubbles as Liverpool squeak

LIVERPOOL'S ambitions continue to find a cul-de-sac at Highfield Road. Last night's narrow defeat by Coventry City might have been less spectacular than their 5-1 rout on the same ground last season but the game still asked searching questions about the true strength of Anfield's revival.

Phil Babb's first goal for Coventry, allied to a lot of athletic pace and backed by solid defending, left Liverpool's football looking less immaculate than it had done in their earlier Premiership matches. To compound their discomfort Rob Jones, newly restored to the England squad, was sent off 20 minutes from the end for the first time in his short career.

In their previous away fixture Graeme Souness's team had sauntered through Swindon's defences like afternoon strollers flicking the heads off dandelions. Last night Liverpool looked more like middle-distance men who had wandered into the sprints by mistake.

There had always been a doubt about the ability of Liverpool's sedate midfield to withstand the sort of quick counter-thrusts consistently launched by their opponents last night.

In addition the resolute marking of Rush and Clough by Atherton and Babb restricted Liverpool to speculative long shots, busy though Gould was in saving some of these.

For the first time this season Souness was critical of his team's attitude. 'You must have passion when you play football,' he said, 'and tonight I thought we were a bit light in that department.'

The Coventry manager, now allowed to coach from the bench, spent almost the entire evening standing by the touchline. Someone suggested to Souness that Bobby Gould might as well have been playing. 'Maybe,' shrugged Souness, 'but nobody would have tackled him.'

Coventry have recaptured their effervescent spirit of a year ago. They are unbeaten in six matches and have again started the season among the leaders. Last night's win took them to fourth place.

The speed of John Williams and Ndlovu on the wings, Wegerle's deep plots, and the drive from midfield of Boland and Rennie denied Liverpool their normal relaxed rhythm. Yet Wright, whose header was tipped over the bar by Gould on the quarter-hour, had come closer than anyone to scoring before Coventry went ahead in the 21st minute.

The goal followed a corner conceded when Quinn's shot ricocheted wide off Wright. Wegerle took the corner short and, as Boland played the ball into the goalmouth, the Liverpool defenders moved out as one man, leaving Grobbelaar to tidy up. But as the goalkeeper waited for the ball to bounce Babb raced in to toe-poke it into the net.

Gould had to make several saves as Liverpool responded with a series of incisive attacks, and they should have scored on the stroke of half-time when Rush, McManaman, Nicol and Clough at last managed to pass their way through Coventry's cover. Nicol received Clough's return ball with the goal agape, but shot into the side netting.

That proved to be Liverpool's last chance of saving the match, and for the last 20 minutes they were down to 10 men. Jones, cautioned in the 67th minute for fouling Ndlovu, lunged wildly but not viciously at Wegerle three minutes later and saw red after the Coventry player had gone down.

Liverpool's previous defeat at Highfield Road had seen Jamie Redknapp dismissed. 'We didn't think it was warranted last year and this time even less so,' said Souness. 'Did Wegerle receive treatment?'

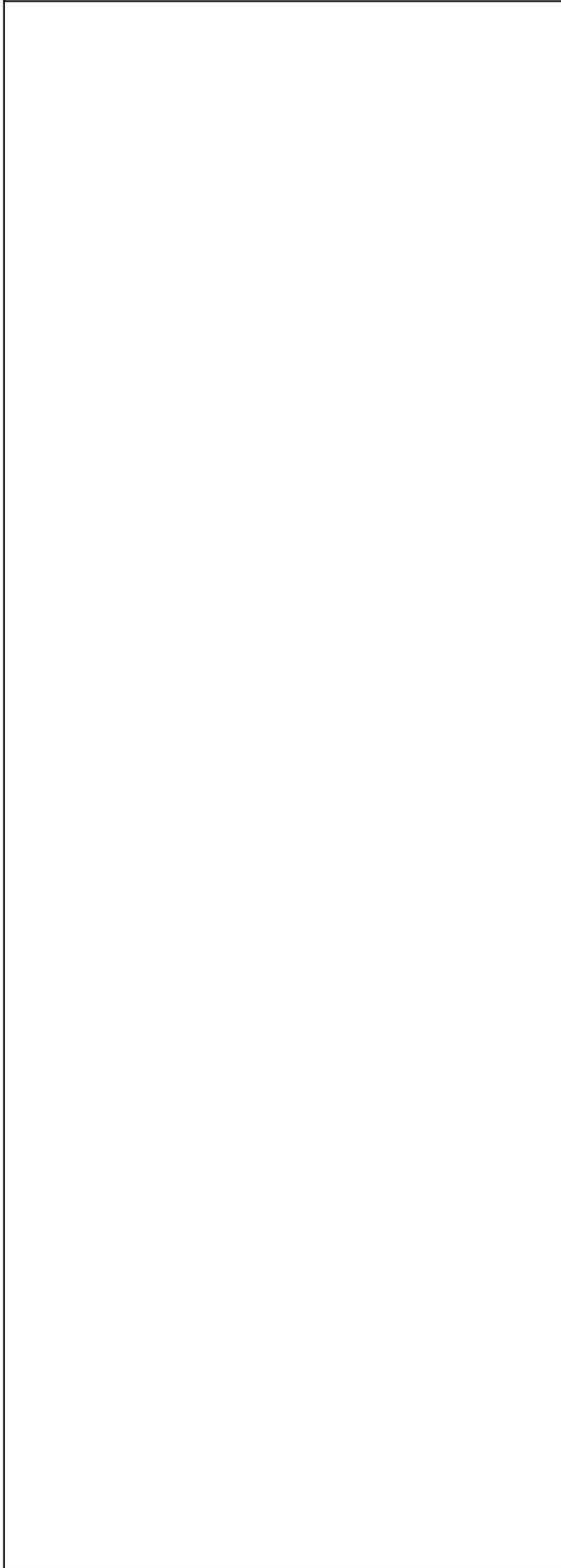
But Coventry were well worth their win, all the same.

Coventry City: Gould; McGrath, Babb, Morgan, Atherton, Rennie, Boland, Quinn (Sheridan, 89min), Wegerle, J Williams (P Williams, 86), Ndlovu.

Liverpool: Grobbelaar; Jones, Burrows (Walters, 68), Nicol, Wright, Ruddock, Clough, Whelan, Rush, Molby, McManaman.

Referee: K Burge (Tonypanydy).

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**BRITISH SOCCER WEEKLY**

**Jones off as Reds crash**

England's Rob Jones was sent off for the first time in his career as Liverpool crashed to a defeat against unbeaten Coventry at Highfield Road.

Phil Babb scored Coventry's winner in the 21st minute with his first goal for the club but it was completely overshadowed by Jones' dismissal. His red card was for a second bookable offence and came two days after his inclusion in England's squad for the crucial World Cup qualifier against Poland at Wembley. Both cautions came within three minutes of each other as Liverpool's frustrations at trailing to impressive Coventry began to boil over.

In the 67th minute Jones felled City's exciting winger Peter Ndlovu and then minutes later sent Roy Wegerle sprawling in almost the same spot. Tonypany referee Keith Burge had no hesitation in brandishing a second yellow card and then the red one to leave Liverpool fighting a lost cause with 20 minutes left. The rashness and irresponsibility of Jones' tackle puts a question mark over his place in the England side to face Poland on a night when cool heads and discipline will be essential.

Liverpool, who began the night second in the table, were certainly red-blooded throughout with Ronnie Whelan and Neil Ruddock also booked for fouls with goalscorer Babb booked for fouling Nigel Clough and Willie Boland cautioned for time wasting as the Sky Blues protected their advantage.