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THE TIMES

Old guard steps in to salvage pride for Merseyside
 Manchester City 1 - Liverpool 1.

THE balance of power between Merseyside and Manchester shifted a further few degrees east on Saturday. While Manchester United won without playing well at Everton, the mark of Liverpool in their heyday, Liverpool themselves were glad to scratch an undeserved draw at Maine Road, where, in their pomp, they frequently used to win by four.

On Saturday, they were almost unrecognisable as the imperious conquerors of old. If anything, they were lucky not to be beaten by four goals, but while Ian Rush continues to lurk, nothing can be taken for granted and, typically, he snatched the equaliser two minutes from full time after hardly being allowed a kick until then.

Afterwards, with the flush of enthusiasm at the recovery fuelling him, he recalled the 1985-6 season, when United began with ten straight wins and Liverpool overhauled them: "We came back from the dead against Oldham with two late goals and again we refused to lie down today," Rush said. "We can still close the gap with United." United, though, are a much more durable bunch under Ferguson than Ron Atkinson's talented but frail team and Liverpool are considerably short of the team of Dalgligh, Hansen, Lawrenson and Gillespie.

On Saturday, their best performers were the three survivors from those days, Bruce Grobbelaar, Steve Nicol and Rush himself. Yet Nicol cannot get into the side when everybody is fit and Souness is trying to find another replacement for Grobbelaar, which says something about life at Anfield.

"At 36, he is still playing at the top of his game, his reactions are as sharp as ever," Rush said admiringly. "Other people have had their chance, but Bruce refuses to be budged by them." On Saturday, one save, from Quinn four minutes after White had given City the lead, stood out and, overall, Grobbelaar did as much as Rush to gain Liverpool their undeserved point with his athleticism and, on a couple of occasions, sound judgment.

The save from Quinn was as crucial as it was good. Had City scored a second, they would surely have won. As it was, they were left to rue two more points lost. Afterwards, watching a Faldo putt on the television in the corner of the press room, Brian Horton, their manager, was in reflective mood. "He knows how to win, Faldo, doesn't he?" he asked in his burr. "We've got to learn to win."

The result apart, it was a good day all round for the new and the old regimes at City. The "Swales Must Go" protest appears to be running out of steam and even before the match, the man handing out "Forward with Franny" bills was receiving little response.

Inside, too, chants of protest were joined by hundreds rather than thousands as City's second-half display, after reverting to a 4-4-2 formation, captured full attention. It was undoubtedly their best display under Horton, as the manager confirmed.

Kernaghan and Curle, Phelan, Quinn, White and McMahon were all excellent, but most satisfying of all were the displays of the young players. Flitcroft, Sheron, Edghill and Lomas all had impressive games.

Flitcroft stood out. When Peter Reid said before the season began that he could do the same for City and England as Colin Bell, it looked like an example of managerial hyperbole. On Saturday, it looked a perfectly reasonable analysis. Support came from McMahon. "From watching closely from playing alongside him in midfield, he looks a very good player," McMahon said, "and I intend to give him all the help and guidance I can."

That may explain why Flitcroft emulated his mentor's style with a couple of reckless tackles early on, earning a booking. Thereafter, however, he used his skills to make an impact, whether splitting the defence with clever passes or launching himself on well-timed forward runs.

His promptings might have produced a goal several times before they finally did so, White running onto his pass through the defence to beat Grobbelaar from close range. From then on, the result seemed a formality. "Swales In" one supporter shouted to his friend as the minutes ticked away, but he laughed as he said it.

Yet, City being City, disaster, in the shape of Ian Rush, lurked round the corner. Their next home game in the FA Carling Premiership is against United and, on their form of the second half, they may give the leaders their hardest game yet. If City win that one, it will take more than Saturday's plane flying a banner to put life back into the "Forward with Franny" campaign.

MANCHESTER CITY (4-3-3): A Coton R Edghill, A Kernaghan, K Curle, T Phelan G Flitcroft, S McMahon, F Simpson (sub: S Lomas, 53) D White, M Sheron, N Quinn. LIVERPOOL (4-4-2): B Grobbelaar R Jones, M Wright, N Ruddock, S Bjernebye M Walters (sub: J Redknapp, 53), S Nicol, P Stewart (sub: D Hutchison, 77), D Matteo R Fowler, I Rush.
 Referee: M Bodenham.

the guardian

Last-gasp Rush

SOMEBODY asked about John Barnes. John who? 'I seem to have been answering questions about his comebacks longer than I care to remember,' said a barely audible Graeme Souness. His unwillingness to make eye contact with his interrogators was more revealing than his answers.

Souness must know as well as anyone that it will take more than Barnes, who expects to be recovered from his long-term thigh injury by the end of November, to make the good times roll again at Anfield.

Liverpool rode their outrageous fortune, just as they had with their two goals in the last three minutes against Oldham. 'It is the second time in a week we have come back from the dead. We never gave it up,' said Souness.

That Liverpool tradition - and some of Grobbelaar's best work - were needed to jog the mind that the team in red shirts were Liverpool. One would have to go back a long way to find such a scrambling, scrabbling Anfield outfit.

City worked hard and their spirited performance left no doubt who more wanted to win. Souness pointed out that Liverpool had the youngsters - Fowler, aged 18, who has scored seven goals in 10 appearances, but only one in the Premiership, and Matteo, a 19-year-old midfielder making his debut - and had to call on Redknapp, still only 20, when Walters was injured early in the second half.

But City used young players too and frankly theirs looked better. Edghill, at right-back, is 19 and turned in another superb performance, and Flitcroft, who is 20, is developing into a cracking midfielder. The 19-year-old Lomas played so well he should have been on from the start, admitted the manager Brian Horton.

Flitcroft produced the pass from wide on the right which allowed White to put City ahead midway through the second half. By then they had Liverpool by the throat, but with a minute of ordinary time left the visitors threatened for the first time in the half. Fowler and Jones combined in the penalty area to provide Rush with a tap-in. It was cruel for City, whose chairman Peter Swales had left at half-time to go to a wedding.

Apart from a light aircraft towing a 'Swales out' banner, the demands for his head had been muted.

SCORERS: Manchester City: White (67min). Liverpool: Rush (89).

Manchester City: Coton; Edghill, Phelan, McMahon, Curle, Kernaghan, White, Sheron, Quinn, Flitcroft, Simpson (Lomas, 53).

Liverpool: Grobbelaar; Jones, Nicol, Wright, Stewart (Hutchison, 71), Rush,

Walters (Redknapp, 53), Bjernebye, Matteo, Fowler, Ruddock.

Referee: M Bodenham (Looe).

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The Mail

City young bloods warm boss' heart

Brian Horton must be beginning to feel snug in the combustible arena that is Maine Road, given that he's wearing conspicuous jackets with the word Boss stitched into the lining. As a fashion statement, it shows that Manchester City have got themselves a class act. In terms of footballing ability, he remains an understated quantity. But supporters will take him to their hearts should he succeed in a task that would destroy lesser men.

The signs are encouraging. The 1-1 draw against a similarly oppressed Liverpool was neither the result he wanted, nor City merited. But in the circumstances - where the fans don't know whether to back the team or vilify the chairman - it will have to do.

There is little point in being churlish about a couple of dropped points when Peter Swales is surrounded by more protection than the President of the United States, and his general manager John Maddock is spat upon whenever he walks into the ground. These people purport to support the club but are they, in reality, dangerous subversives?

They hardly deserve the brand of football City's young, trendy players are offering them. There's hope there, too, in abundance. Horton senses the start of something extremely good at City - as one defeat in nine games indicates - but he's attempting to bring youngsters up in an atmosphere that could seriously damage their potential.

The class of '93 includes Mike Sheron and Garry Flitcroft, who have already established themselves in the England Under-21 side. Behind them in age and experience are Richard Edghill and Steve Lomas. Both have been tipped for the fullest honours.

Horton confessed he should have kept Lomas in the side, rather than restrict him to 37 minutes as a substitute. This was Edghill's seventh consecutive appearance. He has just signed a four-year contract and he is a right-back of rare perception and authority for one so young.

Unfortunately, when the game was there to be won against Liverpool, he and a couple of others tried to play it too calmly. If there is a crying need for our young players to show composure on the ball and good movement off it, then there is also the demand for security that comes with team success.

"We made our own problems at 1-0," said Horton. "It started with the young boy Edghill. It's a shame because we want him to play in the right manner, but on the occasion that led to their goal he should have hit it 60 yards way out of danger."

"But he's a young kid learning the game as is Lomas and I thought Flitcroft had the best game for us since I came here. They're all smashing lads with great attitudes. They want to win. We switched it around to 4-4-2 at half-time and we're all disappointed, because we should have won the game."

If there was any consolation for the chairman - who left at half-time to attend a wedding - the goal came so late there wasn't time to round up enough people to start the familiar 'Swales Out' chant.

What it did do was offer Graeme Souness more of the breathing space he received in the previous week when two goals in the last three minutes did for Oldham at Anfield. Instead of no points, heaps of abuse and a place in the bottom half of the table, Liverpool have two points, leaving detractors to gnash their teeth. We had several young players out there and the longer the game went on, they found it harder to stay involved," Souness said. "It's the second time in a week we've come back from the dead and we never gave up, so that's encouraging." Just as City are proud of their clutch of teenagers, so Liverpool have unearthed a couple of gems. Much has already been said about Robbie Fowler, but Dominic Matteo's debut demanded attention - for the lad's cosmopolitan background as much as anything. England, Scotland and Italy may want his services. "He's a young boy with an awful lot to offer," said the manager who has shown a willingness to entrust his future to people half his age. "We just don't yet know his best position."

At the head of the long-in-the-tooth brigade, Steve McMahon did not mind the tear-aways taking all the limelight. "They played brilliantly," he said. "Take a lad like Edghill, who has come into the side and played like a seasoned campaigner. He's got two good feet and a smashing temperament. There are more good kids coming through across the country."

"They are being given their chance by their clubs, which is good. And if we're wanting to see the players who can play their part in the next European Championships with England three years down the road, then why not blood them now?" Flitcroft, Sheron, Lomas, Edghill, Fowler, Matteo - all English and all talented - gave the game its edge. But it was left to the older stagers, notably McMahon, Bruce Grobbelaar, Ian Rush, and, if he'll forgive me calling him an old stager, Niall Quinn, to determine the outcome. Grobbelaar distinguished himself with one magnificent save from Quinn - in the class of Bryan Gunn's against Bayern last week - when City's tails were up after David White rose above the fog of a dismal performance to roll home.

Rushie equalised a minute from time, stabbing in from a couple of feet. The draw means Liverpool are now 14 points behind leaders Manchester United.

But Rush has a message: "I remember the season United lad by ten points at one stage and who caught them? We did."

But that was then and this is now. Liverpool for the title? Even at a ground which lacks humour these days, those Cityites who hate their chairman more than United, would find that highly amusing.



EXPRESS

Liverpool rescued as ref adds 13 minutes

Rush's late, late equaliser for Liverpool came as the referee added an incredible 13 minutes injury time!

Six minutes were added in the first half and seven in the second to make a total of 103 minutes.

City manager Brian Horton joked: "I thought they were going to put the floodlights on. I know some of the fans left before the goal - I was going at a quarter-to-five."

"I went to see the referee to ask him to explain and he admitted he had played six minutes over in the first half and seven in the second."

"The linesmen both agreed with him and you can't argue with that."

But Horton, who said he was disappointed that Rush snapped up his one chance of the match in the 88th minute to earn Liverpool a point, added: "The game is played until the ref blows his whistle."

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THE SUNDAY TIMES

Rush plots second great escape

MANCHESTER CITY 1 (White 66) - LIVERPOOL 1 (Rush 90)

(4-4-2): Coton; Edghill; Kernaghan; Curle; Phelan; White; Flitcroft; McMahon, Simpson (Lomas 53min); Quinn; Sheron

(4-4-2): Grobbelaar; Jones, White, Ruddock, Bjernebye; Walters (Redknapp 53min), Nicol, Stewart (Hutchison 73min), Matteo; Rush, Fowler.

1-0 Flitcroft passed to White through the middle, who shot low past Grobbelaar.

1-1 Jones crossed low to Rush with defence ball-watching for an easy tap-

in. Booked: Flitcroft (5min); Phelan (43min); Walters (47min).

Weather: fair. Ground: good. Referee: M Bodenham (Looe).

LIVERPOOL are perfecting the great escape. Having played badly and won with two late goals at home to Oldham last week, they played only slightly better here and got a draw they didn't deserve thanks to Rush, who scored in the last minute of normal time. City were left kicking themselves for not hitting the net as often as their second-half superiority warranted.

Graeme Souness's problems are mounting. The famous passing was often ragged and inaccurate and moments of individual brilliance were scarce; rarely does he field the same side in consecutive matches and though his injury problems are severe, you wonder if he knows his best team any more. Youngsters playing yesterday struggled as the game wore on, which is excusable, and at least his players gave all to the end.

The equaliser was a choker for City. Edghill, the young full-back, would have been better knocking a long ball out of defence. Instead he passed short, possession was lost and three or four passes later, as City ball-watched, Jones crossed low from the right for Rush to tap in.

City, now with one defeat in nine games under Brian Horton's management, were all over Liverpool in the second half, after Lomas came on for Simpson, White moved up front alongside Quinn and Sheron dropped back. Three times in 10 minutes Liverpool's left flank, guarded after a fashion by Bjernebye, was breached, only for the final ball to disappoint.

Without Grobbelaar Liverpool would have lost. Early in the second half he had to back-pedal and scoop off the line a backheader gone wrong from Wright. When City were a goal up the Zimbabwean saved brilliantly from Quinn, diving the wrong way and keeping the ball out with an extended leg. Then, in the sixth minute of injury time, Grobbelaar tipped a White volley around the post.

The excellent pass through the middle to White that opened up Liverpool's defence for the goal came from Flitcroft, probably City's best player. There is promise in the squad, but still a shortage of real flair.

Good form under Horton has diluted the "Swales Out" chants, though the power struggle permeates Maine Road. The "Forward With Franny" brigade thrust flyers around outside the ground and the local paper reported that a multi-millionaire is joining Lee's forces. But until he makes a firm offer, it seems Lee has as much chance of taking over as City do of winning something.

Liverpool's own chances don't appear too rosy. It smacks of desperation, but their main scoring hope is Robbie Fowler, an 18-year-old who only made his debut last month, though he has scored seven times since. But then it doesn't say much for City's season so far that probably the fans' best moment didn't even involve their own team United's draw with Galatasaray brought them untold delight.

There is an anxiety and desperation for success in the supporters' demeanour that sometimes rubs off on the team. Flitcroft was booked after five minutes for a bad foul on Stewart, who was kindly reminded by the City fans as he writhed on the ground that he was a "City reject".

City were kinder to Liverpool soon after. The pro-Lee flyer had contained a reference to "watch out for free gifts and surprises at home games". Presumably this referred to some red card-waving proposal, not to presents from the City defence, such as the poor back pass by Simpson that let in Rush. The Welshman laid the ball back for Jones, whose shot was half-saved by Coton and cleared off the line by Kernaghan. Only as far, though, as another Liverpool player, but the shot was charged down. If Liverpool are missing those, no wonder their problems are mounting up.