

Date: 22 January 1994
 Opposition: Manchester City
 Competition: League

Sunday Times	Guardian	Observer
Daily Mail		

22 January 1994

The Mail

Rush makes sense of one-way traffic

Tony Coton came off second best, as he has so often against Ian Rush, and then spoke of Manchester City's urgent requirement to put safety first.

The defiant goalkeeper kept Liverpool waiting for victory at Anfield until Rush, who else, just 30 seconds into time added by referee Roger Milford to a completely one-sided 90 minutes. The build-up to that winner was a bone of contention. City manager Brian Horton tried to debate it with Mr Milford at the final whistle and had to be restrained by his assistant, David Moss. The City complaint was that Julian Dicks should have been penalised for a two-footed tackle on Kare Ingebrigtsen.

Seconds later Liverpool were given a free-kick for Michel Vonk's foul on Nigel Clough, who picked himself up and rolled the ball across for Dicks to take the kick yards away from where the offence occurred. Dicks sent it across to Rob Jones, who exchanged passes with Steve McManaman, swept into the penalty area and crossed for Rush to leap and power in his header at the far post. The referee said he saw it all and insisted his decisions were correct.

It was hard on Coton, who pulled off a series of saves and earned the tribute from Liverpool manager Graeme Souness that 'he is arguably the best around at the moment.' It was, as Horton conceded, just what the rest of the City team deserved. "If we play like we did in the first half we will be relegated," he said. He would have found few arguments if he had extended that to the whole game.

City, now in the bottom three, have horrendous problems. They still await the final settlement of the Francis Lee takeover. They have a pile of injuries and Horton has to play men out of position in a makeshift line-up. "Tell us about them," Liverpool could well be excused for saying with some irony. There wasn't much sympathy for City at Anfield.

Rush certainly didn't show any. He pounced for the equaliser - after Carl Griffiths' fourth-minute opener - in the 23rd minute when Coton pushed aside a low drive from Jamie Redknapp. He joyfully completed the victory just when City thought they had made their point. Rush has scored five goals in the last four meetings with Coton and City. "He's the scourge of me. He's probably the most prolific against me of all strikers," said Coton.

In 18 confrontations when on duty for Birmingham, Watford and City, Coton has conceded 15 goals to Rush. "I treasure the clean sheets," he added - and he has managed six.

Clearly Coton believes City have to be as determined and professional as Rush, who maintained his desire and concentration right to the end. He said: "Hopefully, after the boardroom things get sorted out the manager can go and use his cheque book. A fresh face gives everyone a lift." City need a few fresh faces.

Liverpool are still not singing the old harmonies. All their problems have not disappeared with an unbeaten run that goes back 11 games to December 4, apart from their Coca-Cola Cup elimination in a penalty shoot-out.

They still have a number of men injured and the latest - 2 million pound full-back Julian Dicks - had to have an X-ray on his injured ankle. "If it is cracked or there is ligament damage I will be out for a while, but hopefully it is nothing serious," he said.

But there are encouraging signs in midfield that Clough, Saturday's outstanding performer, and Redknapp are becoming attuned. Clough, signed for 2.275 million pounds as a striker, is revelling in his deeper role.

the guardian

Rush silences the shameless

UNDER normal circumstances neither Liverpool nor Manchester City supporters have much time for Manchester United. But Saturday was a special occasion. The Kop, who have buried too many of their own not to respect the grief of others, stood in silent tribute to the memory of Sir Matt. A section of the City support was less generous. Shameless, shameful, shamed: a deep growl of recrimination swelled from the Kop.

Ian Rush silenced the outcasts far more effectively, and rapped them where it really hurt, with a winning goal in injury time.

Afterwards the referee Roger Milford and his linesmen waited patiently on the pitch while the City manager Brian Horton was restrained. Although Horton would not explain, it seemed clear that the cause of his anger was the free-kick awarded to Liverpool which eventually led to the goal and the three points they deserved.

The defeat left City, who have won only one of their last 16 league games, third from bottom and a staggering 43 points behind United.

Their goalkeeper Coton saved them from an embarrassing scoreline. 'He was outstanding. He is the best around at the moment,' said Graeme Souness, the Liverpool manager.

Coton was kept extremely busy. With Liverpool's young striker Fowler out for at least six weeks with a fractured leg, Barnes played up front with Rush and looked very sharp.

'It is my belief that your best players should be in a position where they get most of the ball,' said Souness. 'Playing out on the wing John Barnes is sometimes in and out of games. In the middle he was holding things up and bringing people into the game.'

Liverpool were relentless, and City could not have been in the opposition half for more than 10 - at a generous estimate - of the 90 minutes, including the first three when they took a surprise lead. Griffiths took advantage of a gift from Ruddock and lobbed Grobbelaar. Defence? At that moment Liverpool did not seem to have one.

But they retaliated with an afternoon of pass, move and attack which gave City no respite, and after 20 minutes Rush stabbed in the equaliser at the far post after Coton had saved Redknapp's strike. But the Welshman could not produce the winner until the dying seconds when Jones, wide on the right, provided the perfect cross for his downward header. Clough produced the telling pass for both goals.

SCORERS: Liverpool: Rush (21 and 90min). Manchester City: Griffiths (3).

Liverpool: Grobbelaar; Jones, Ruddock, Nicol, Dicks, McManaman, Redknapp, Clough, Walters, Rush, Barnes.

Manchester City: Coton; Lomas, Edghill, Kernaghan, Brightwell, Ingebrigtsen, Rocastle, Flitcroft, Phelan, Vonk, Griffiths.

Referee: R Milford (Bristol).

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Rush delivers just reward for Liverpool

LIVERPOOL 2 (Rush 22, 90)

MANCHESTER CITY 1 (Griffiths 4)

(4-4-2): Grobbelaar; Jones, Nicol, Ruddock, Dicks; McManaman, Redknapp, Clough, Walters; Rush, Barnes.

(4-4-2): Coton; Lomas, Edghill, Kernaghan, Brightwell; Ingebrigtsen, Rocastle, Flitcroft, Phelan; Griffiths, Vonk.

0-1 Coton's goal kick was missed by Ruddock and the ball fell to Griffiths, who lobbed the advancing Grobbelaar from just inside the area.

1-1 Coton blocked Redknapp's shot but Rush hit home the rebound from close-range.

2-1 Jones escaped down the right and crossed for Rush to head the winner. Booked: Ruddock (84min); Rocastle (85min).

Weather: mild. Ground: good. Referee: R Milford (Bristol).

Best foot forward: Lomas, the Manchester City defender, makes a timely interception to deny McManaman possession Nigel Maples

TRY as they might and they tried mighty hard it seemed Liverpool's control was not to be rewarded with a win.

Then, just when Graeme Souness's side seemed to have been foiled by a combination of Tony Coton's top-class goalkeeping, and finishing which failed to equal the quality of their approach play, Ian Rush re-emphasised his reliability as a goalscorer par excellence. The clock was ticking down when Rush rose to head home Jones's cross, his second goal of the match.

Nobody was more enthusiastic in the ensuing celebrations than Ruddock, whose early error had handed City a head start via Griffiths's goal.

Ruddock was well aware that, as home frustration mounted, City could even have claimed an unlikely, wholly undeserved win. With Liverpool's defence pushing further and further up, and their reliance on offside increasing, Vonk sprang the trap and Flitcroft came within a whisker of a second City goal 10 minutes from time.

That was an extremely rare City chance and Brian Horton, their manager, admitted: "If we play as badly as in the first half, we will get relegated."

Horton then turned on his heel and stalked out of the press conference. Perhaps he should be grateful for small mercies like Francis Lee, the club's would-be owner, deciding to extend a holiday in Barbados. Sensible man.

One notable face in the crowd was that of John Smith, the leader of the opposition. On a two-day goodwill mission to Merseyside, Smith must have been miffed at the apathetic crowd reaction when his presence was announced.

But at least the Labour leader saw some early action even if Griffiths's clever lob left the home fans distinctly underwhelmed.

The bad mood began to lift as it became clear Liverpool were far from out of sorts. Clough set about silencing his critics with an attacking midfield performance. He unleashed one volley his father would have been proud of which grazed Coton's crossbar. Then there was a shot, again straight out of Brian's book, which whistled wide.

Significantly, it was Clough's intuitive pass which parted City's midfield for Rush's equaliser. McManaman then reminded everybody of his eye for the main chance by cutting in from the right and dispatching a fierce curler, superbly stopped by Coton.

City's decision to revert to a four-man defence after recent unhappy flirtations with three and five at the back did not seem to have the desired effect.

And Barnes revelled in a fluid role sometimes on the left, sometimes in the middle alongside Rush, so City's formation became, necessarily, ever more flexible. And ever more frequently, Phelan and Rocastle found themselves dragged back from midfield to deal with the latest defensive emergency.

It was probably a bonus for City that Fowler, Liverpool's latest scoring sensation, was sidelined by a hairline leg fracture. City's Griffiths, an astute buy from Shrewsbury on Horton's part, is another natural goalscorer. But having fully capitalised on Ruddock's rare howler, he could not realistically expect further generosity from his man-mountain of a marker.

Ingebrigtsen, playing wide on the visitors' right, was not exactly supplying Griffiths with an abundance of crosses. Presumably the perils of confronting Dicks, Liverpool's best defender, precipitated Ingebrigtsen's decision to concentrate on the more defensive aspects of his midfield role.

That afforded Dicks ample scope to do City some creative damage. One left-footed free kick in particular almost preceded another Rush goal and a direct one might have yielded a goal for Dicks had it not been deflected for a corner.

But despite some delightful passing sequences frequently involving Barnes, Rush and Clough Liverpool had still to get their noses in front.

They left that late, too late for the liking of much of Anfield. But if the crowd's impatience was understandable they also had much to applaud. It seems that Souness has been asking for a little more time, a little more charity, for many months now. But the performances of several of his players suggested that Souness's and Liverpool's time might just be approaching.

A place in Europe might even be beckoning. As a smiling manager said: "I enjoyed that, I enjoyed it very much." How many times has he said that during his Anfield reign?



Rush power brings City to a standstill.

Liverpool 2

Rush 22 90

Manchester City 1

Griffiths 4 Att:41,872

THE local paper build-up to this match featured a memorable quotation from Manchester City's left-back, Terry Phelan: 'We're on a roll.' A 4-1 win in the Cup and a 0-0 draw with Arsenal are hardly snowballs into avalanches but in City's miserable season it represents a foothold. Phelan was also relating the buoyancy which David Rocastle's signing and Flitcroft's long-term contract had brought to the club.

Therefore, as they had resisted Liverpool's advances for so long and with impressive doggedness, Ian Rush's injury-time winner brought added pain. However, any sympathy for City had vanished before the off when a section of their fans, not all, insisted on chanting 'City' throughout the minute's silence for Sir Matt Busby. Given that Sir Matt was a former City, and Liverpool, player, 60 seconds of respect was surely warranted. The Kop gave a mighty roar of disapproval to those who were chanting.

The Kop were quickly roaring again as Clough acrobatically volleyed wide. But then there was stunned silence when, from the goal kick, Ingebrigtsen's flick caught Ruddock flat-footed and Griffiths nipped in to lob the advancing Grobbelaar.

When Ingebrigtsen forced Grobbelaar into a diving save three minutes later it could definitely be argued City were on a roll. That it did not materialise was due as much to their deficiencies as to Liverpool's dominance. Griffiths did not get another chance all afternoon.

Volk is still his makeshift partner but there is little sense that the Dutch centre-half knows what he is doing at centre-forward. And yet in City's only significant attack of the second half it was Volk's subtlety which worked an opening for Flitcroft, only for Jones and Grobbelaar to close it down.

That was with 10 minutes left and the Blues' ambition by then stretched to no more than holding on to their point. They conceded two-thirds of the pitch as Liverpool enjoyed almost uninterrupted possession.

Forced into making changes because of Fowler's broken leg, Souness resisted the obvious call of Rosenthal and plumped for Walters. Along with McManaman, he gave Liverpool width but did not bring the chances the manager may have expected. Lomas and Brightwell stuck to their wingers to frustrate them and it was not until well into the second half that Walters began to escape regularly. Instead it was Clough through the middle who looked the man with the key. After 21 minutes his precise ball split City and allowed Redknapp to shoot and Rush to score with the follow-up after the admirable Coton had parried. And, with the final whistle looming, it was Clough who initiated the winner which saw Rush rise above the rest to head in Jones's cross.

Cruel on Coton indeed and it left Brian Horton playing the relegation rule: 'We got what we deserved. We didn't deserve anything.'