

Date: 12 February 2011  
 Opposition: Wigan Athletic  
 Competition: League

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12 February  
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## THE TIMES

Plus ca change as Liverpool slip up

Liverpool 1 Meireles 24

Wigan Athletic 1 Gohouri 65

Referee: K Friend. Attendance: 44,609

There are times when the similarities between fixtures are so compelling that any analysis should be premised on an A-level style "compare and contrast" game A with game B. The two matches that have taken place between Liverpool and Wigan this season are a case in point as almost identical scenarios yielded the exact same result, the only differences being found in style and reaction.

Two score draws is the most obvious starting point, with Liverpool having little cause for complaint at either the DW Stadium in November nor at Anfield on Saturday that they failed to secure maximum points after taking the lead.

That they went into both games on the back of a quartet of consecutive victories, the fourth of which was a morale-boosting win over Chelsea, and the parallels become inescapable. But while everything felt the same, right down to the Liverpool manager complaining about his players being left low on energy by the unrelenting demands of modern football, everything somehow also felt different, and not only because Kenny Dalglish's almost unchallenged legendary status means he is so readily cut the kind of slack that Roy Hodgson, his predecessor, could only dream of on the previous occasion that the sides last locked horns.

Roberto Martinez, a renowned student of the game, is better placed than many to assess the differences and the one he pinpointed further underlines the growing feeling, prompted by recent results, that Dalglish is getting a great deal more out of the Liverpool players than Hodgson ever did, in terms of levels of performance and desire.

"The intensity they play with now is a lot higher and makes it very difficult to play them," the Wigan manager said. "The tempo and the enthusiasm of the team make it very, very difficult. We're a good team on the ball and found it very difficult to get our possession going. They played with huge belief, which has obviously come from their results of late."

The key point of divergence between Hodgson and Dalglish, though, is that while the new West Bromwich Albion head coach cited the failure to defeat Wigan as evidence of a lack of quality in the Liverpool squad and thereby endeavoured to lower expectations that he felt were unrealistic, his successor at Anfield refuses to pursue a negative path. Dalglish prefers to view such setbacks as minor in the grand scheme of things. He bluntly rejected the suggestion that there has been a check on reality that demands a reduction in aspirations. "Expectations dampened?" the Liverpool caretaker manager asked rhetorically.

"They've not been dampened in any way. I would think we are disappointed at only getting a point. "But no spirits have been dampened because we have drawn a home game against Wigan after winning four on the spin. The expectations here have always been manageable." It is that kind of belief that fires the Liverpool players at present, with Raul Meireles embodying the marked improvement that has taken place after the change in manager. The Portugal midfielder player scored his fifth goal in six matches under Dalglish on Saturday, yet another technically inspired volley, before illness curtailed his contribution and Liverpool's standards subsequently slipped. Under Hodgson, Meireles had not struck a single goal.

"He [Dalglish] has given Raul a more advanced role and given him the belief to score goals," Lucas "Every day Dalglish Leiva, his fellow midfielder player, said. "The little advice he gives to us is massive.

"He knows so much about football and he knows the way he wants us to play. He wants us to play like Liverpool did in previous seasons. We want to do what he wants us to do.

"Every day he gives you little bits of advice and makes you think. When you believe in a manager, it is always really important.

"You listen to him all the time. He has opened our mind to doing things differently."

Martinez is performing a similar task with Wigan, beseeching his team to maintain their footballing principles even when the pressure is at its most acute.

Trailing 1-0 to Liverpool at Anfield, they continued to pass and move when others might have taken an easier more direct route and their perseverance was rewarded when Steve Gohouri popped up in a seemingly offside position to score an equaliser that was just about deserved despite Luis Suarez hitting the woodwork twice on a promising full debut.

It also ensured that the symmetry was complete with Wigan once again finding a way to defy Liverpool. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

"Every day Dalglish gives advice and makes you think. He's opened our minds to doing things differently" LIVERPOOL 4-2-3-1 J M Reina 6 MKelly 7 M Skrtel 6 J Carragher 0 7 G Johnson 6 Lucas Leiva 6 F Aurelio 6 MRodriguez 6 R Meireles 6 D Kuyt 5 L Suarez 7 Substitutes: D Ngog 6 (for Meireles, 54min), M Jovanovic (for Kuyt, 73). Not used: P Gulacsi, D Pacheco, S Kyrgiakos, DWilson, C Poulsen. Next: West Ham United (a). Ratings WIGAN 4-3-2-1 A Al Habsi 6 S Gohouri 0 6 G Caldwell 0 6 A Alcaraz 0 6 M Figueroa 6 J McCarthy 7 MDiame 7 BWatson 6 V Moses 6 C N'Zogbia 7 H Rodallega 6 Substitutes: T Cleverley 6 (for Moses, 66min), J McArthur (for Watson, 73). Not used: M Pollitt, F Di Santo, S Caldwell, Gomez, R Stam. Next: Manchester United (h).

## the guardian

Dalglish reveals long-term thinking despite setback

If you wanted a hint that Kenny Dalglish is no longer just for the short term it came when the Liverpool manager was debating the impact of the midweek friendlies on his side's performance. Dalglish was arguing that the late-night flights carrying his players back to John Lennon Airport from Wednesday's internationals had dulled Liverpool's edge.

In fact, only four of his starting line-up - Raul Meireles, Lucas Leiva, Glen Johnson and Dirk Kuyt - had been seriously involved internationally, although Daniel Agger, injured in training with Liverpool after returning from England's 2-1 win in Copenhagen, would have been a fifth. Wigan, who also had players away including Maynor Figueroa who returned from Honduras on Friday morning, had as much cause for complaint.

More interestingly, the man who is nominally in charge only until the end of May added: "We had a look at the fixtures for next season, which starts on 13 August, but there is a friendly on the 10th. That is a Wednesday but why not play it on a Tuesday? We could have the players for the extra day and that might be beneficial for everybody. They have tried it in the European Championship qualifiers, where they have played on Fridays and Tuesdays, so maybe they can change it for next season."

Despite seeing Dalglish's run of four straight wins grind to a stop against a Wigan side who have been a jagged thorn in Liverpool's flesh for a number of seasons, there would be nobody at Anfield who would not want the Scot to continue. In November Liverpool had drawn 1-1 with Wigan after a display against Chelsea that was as impressive as their victory at Stamford Bridge at the start of this month. That initial win over Chelsea was Roy Hodgson's fourth in a row as Liverpool manager. Finally, it seemed he could look further ahead than the next crisis only for the ground to be cut from beneath his feet for the last time.

Dalglish runs no such danger; he has too much credit in Liverpool's bank and his is on the gold standard. Hodgson's was based on IOUs and promissory notes. It might, however, have amused Hodgson as he sat in the directors' box at The Hawthorns, watching his new charges dragged back to earth by West Ham, to have learned that Meireles had scored his fifth goal for Liverpool. None had been for him.

When asked why, the Wigan manager, Roberto Martinez, suggested that Meireles, coming from Portuguese football, would always have required time to adapt, the kind of time Hodgson was never offered. Lucas Leiva thought the answer lay in the way Dalglish employed him.

"He has given him a more advanced role and the belief to score goals," he said. "The little advice he gives to us is massive. He wants us to play like Liverpool did in previous seasons. Every day he gives you a piece of advice that makes you think."

Martinez, whose side earned a point when Steve Gohouri prodded in an equaliser, acknowledged this had been a different Liverpool from the one he encountered three months ago. Luis Suarez may know when to fall to the floor but his two drives against the frame of Ali al-Habsi's goal were further proof he is an electric footballer. "The intensity they play with now is a lot higher and it makes it far more difficult to face them," said Martinez.

Martinez, unlike Dalglish, can only think in the short term. This was Wigan's fourth game without defeat but only one was a victory and they face both Manchester clubs, Tottenham and Chelsea in their next five fixtures. Dalglish, the stopgap manager, knows what he will be doing on 13 August. Martinez will be far less certain.

Man of the match Luis Suarez (Liverpool)

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## The Mail

Swanky Suarez; New Liverpool signing pushes the boundaries  
 LUIS SUAREZ had just shuffled out of Anfield clutching a magnum of man-of-the-match champagne when Roberto Martinez was asked for his thoughts on Liverpool's new darling.

While Suarez (right) clearly has a swaggering talent, a number of incidents for his former club Ajax and his country Uruguay show he has no qualms about pushing the boundaries of fair play to the limit in his pursuit of victory.

Certain managers, then, would undoubtedly have taken umbrage with some of the striker's antics in the frantic closing stages of Liverpool's 1-1 home draw with Wigan but there were no complaints from Martinez.

The visiting manager said: 'He came from a difficult league to play in a different culture and his type of football will change over the months.'

'There is nothing wrong with players trying to buy freekicks but take nothing away from the quality of his play. His movement behind the centre halves is very good. He is the type of player who will find the net regularly and he will be outstanding for Liverpool.'

Liverpool fans might be waiting impatiently for a first glimpse in a red shirt of Andy Carroll but Suarez's performance on Saturday confirmed he will make as many headlines in the future as the [pounds sterling]35million man signed from Newcastle.

Possessing a tasty combination of speed and skill, Suarez should have become the first Liverpool player since Nigel Clough in 1993 to score on his first two appearances for the club. If Carroll's fee appears exorbitant, Suarez's [pounds sterling]22.8m could be a snip.

One glorious turn that was reminiscent of Robbie Fowler in his pomp ended with a shot that struck the post in the first half, while a free-kick that thudded against the bar after Suarez had tangled with Wigan defender Gary Caldwell deserved better.

Most encouraging of all for his boss Kenny Dalglish was the way Suarez was always trying to make things happen.

'Luis works really hard to help the team,' said Brazil midfielder Lucas. 'It was a shame that he couldn't score but he will, I'm sure of that. He is settling in well.' For all the quality in Suarez's play, this was not the collective display Dalglish was anticipating on the back of the victory over Chelsea six days earlier and it was impossible not to make comparisons with a period earlier in the season. Liverpool, after a lull in late October and early November embarked on a four-game winning spree that culminated with a dismissal of Chelsea but was brought to a halt with a 1-1 draw against Wigan at the DW Stadium.

Booed off that night, Liverpool -- who lost four of their next six league games -- were given warm applause this time despite running out of ideas after Steve Gohouri cancelled out Raul Meireles's first-half volley at Anfield.

This setback may be the one that prevents Liverpool reaching the top four but the fact they have been mentioned in relation to the Champions League shows the astonishing transformation in the mood around Anfield.

'A lot of things still need to improve,' said Lucas, who made his 100th Premier League appearance. 'I don't think it would be clever on our part to talk about the top four. Two months ago, we were only three points above the relegation zone. But we are playing better.'

So much better, in fact, that Martinez was much happier with this point than the one he gained on home soil three months ago.

'The intensity they play with now is a lot higher and makes it very difficult,' he said.

## The Daily Telegraph

Liverpool lack zest but Dalglish is still the king

Liverpool 1

Meireles 24

Wigan Athletic 1

Gohouri 65 Att: 44,609

Liverpool have been here before. A disjointed, lacklustre performance yielding a disappointing home draw against spirited, but limited, opponents.

A manager unconvincingly laying the blame on tiredness following international exertions. A generous acceptance that the opposition warranted their point, a sentiment at odds with Anfield's historical ruthlessness.

Yet where Roy Hodgson's side would have been jeered from the field, Kenny Dalglish's team were warmly applauded for their efforts; where Hodgson's excuses would have been lampooned and his munificence judged inappropriate, Dalglish's complaints seemed logical, his praise of Wigan accepted by his subjects as warmhearted, right-thinking.

"They would have been treated harshly not to come away with a point," the Scot said. Hodgson often spoke with the same honesty. "After internationals, most players come back and it is a burden on them," opined Dalglish. Had Hodgson suggested the same, he would have been reminded that Wigan, too, had players jetting off for international duty this week.

Such are the benefits of being a king. Dalglish, though, knows that such leeway is not granted by divine right. Beneath the relaxed demeanour, even in disappointment, is a man who understands his public, who knows that his cult status survives only as long as he delivers what they want.

"Expectations here have always been manageable," he said after the game. Hodgson, and Rafael Benitez, disagreed. Maybe they did not feel as instinctively what Liverpool's fans wanted. They expect to win, and if they cannot win they expect not to win in the right way.

Herein lies the difference; Hodgson, as Fernando Torres has suggested, never grasped that. The 63 year-old's Liverpool drew 1-1 with Wigan this season, too. But while the end was the same, the means could not have been more different. Roberto Martinez cited "the tempo and enthusiasm of the team" as the primary difference between the Liverpool he drew 1-1 with in November and the Liverpool he drew 1-1 with on Saturday. "They play with huge belief," the Wigan manager added. "There is great understanding, and the intensity they play with now is a lot higher."

They are also much more attractive. Hodgson had instilled in Liverpool a doctrine of hoof and hope; under Dalglish, it is back to pass and move. None exemplifies the change better than Raul Meireles, scorer of his fifth goal in six games with yet another sumptuous volley, or Luis Suarez who, on his full debut, twice struck the woodwork and was an allround energetic menace. Liverpool's fans have taken to the Uruguayan. Suarez possesses a dash of flair, a turn of speed and a streak of trouble.

"Players on the pitch are trying to win games," Martinez said. "We knew he would look for contact, but there is nothing wrong with trying to buy free-kicks." It was easy for the Spaniard to be so considered, given that Steve Gohouri's tap-in from an offside position gave Wigan the draw Dalglish asserted they deserved.

Still, he was not as positive as Dalglish. Returning to the perils of international football, the Scot revealed he had been studying the fixtures for next season. "It starts on Aug 13," he said. "There's a friendly on Aug 10."

Officially, Dalglish does not know if he will be manager then. Had Hodgson said such a thing, he would have been called presumptuous. The same charge will not be levelled at Dalglish.

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## THE INDEPENDENT

### Streetwise Suarez promises a brighter future

If this result was a reality check for Liverpool supporters after four successive victories, then the performance of Luis Suarez on his first start for the club after his [pounds sterling]22.8m transfer from Ajax contained the promise of better things.

The Uruguayan is expected to be half of a forward double act with Andy Carroll when the former Newcastle United striker is fit, but in the meantime he whetted the appetites of the Kop with a performance of industry and skill, hitting a post after a twisting run and angled shot, and the crossbar with a curling free-kick. But Suarez has proved as capable of annoying opposing supporters as of delighting his own. Alienating the city of Eindhoven by biting a PSV player would have been bad enough had he not already turned an entire nation against him when handling Asamoah Gyan's late goalbound effort for Ghana in last summer's World Cup.

In England, the problem is likely to be his ability to earn free-kicks. Roberto Martinez, the Wigan manager, first suggested that "three-quarters" of the free-kicks given in Suarez's favour on Saturday had not been fouls, before turning from prosecution to defence.

"He came from a different culture, and his type of football will change over the months," Martinez said. "But there is nothing wrong with players trying to buy free-kicks. We knew before the game he looks for contact but take nothing away from the quality of his play. His movement behind the centre-halves is very good and he will be outstanding for Liverpool."

Martinez could afford to be a touch generous after seeing Steve Gohouri cancel out Liverpool's first-half opener, the latest in a series of perfectly-struck volleys from the Portuguese midfielder Raul Meireles.

"I think their goal was offside but they would have been harshly treated if they had come away with nothing from this match," Liverpool manager Kenny Dalglish said. "That was Luis' second game since December and it was a big ask for him to play 90 minutes. Raul came off feeling sick during the game and we were without [Daniel] Agger and [Steven] Gerrard, but we just have to get on with it.

"No spirits have been dampened because we have drawn a home game against Wigan after winning four on the spin. The expectations here have always been manageable." And there is also the Carroll-Suarez tandem to look forward to.

LIVERPOOL 1-1 WIGAN

Scorers: Liverpool Meireles 24 Wigan Gohouri 65.

Subs: Liverpool Ngog 5 (Meireles, 54), Jovanovic 5 (Kuyt, 73) Unused Gulacsi (gk), Kyrgiakos, Wilson, Poulsen, Pacheco. Wigan Cleverley 5 (Moses, 65), McArthur 5 (Watson, 72) Unused Pollitt (gk), S Caldwell, Stam, Gomez, Di Santo.

Booked: Liverpool Carragher Wigan G Caldwell, Alcaraz, Gohouri.

Man of the match G Caldwell Match rating 5/10.

Possession Liverpool 54% Wigan 46%.

Attempts on target Liverpool 5 Wigan 2.

Referee K Friend (Leicestershire) Att 44,609.

## DAILY MIRROR

### LIV AND LEARN.. Martinez: Reds have so much belief and tempo under King Kenny

LIVERPOOL 1

WIGAN 1

LIVERPOOL: Reina 6, Kelly 7, Carragher 7, Skrtel 6, Johnson 6, Maxi 6, Lucas 6, Aurelio 7, Meireles 7 (Ngog 52, 5), Suarez 7, Kuyt 7 (Jovanovic 72, 4). Goal: Meireles 24

WIGAN: Al Habsi 7, Gohouri 7, Caldwell 8, Alcaraz 6, Figueroa 6, Watson 6 (McArthur 72, 6), Diame 7, McCarthy 6, Moses 6 (Cleverley 65, 6), N'Zogbia 7, Rodallega 6. Goal: Gohouri 65

REFEREE: Kevin Friend

ATTENDANCE: 44,609

THREE months ago, Liverpool trudged off to boos from their own fans after a disappointing draw against Wigan.

They had gone into that match on the back of a victory over Chelsea, with a sense of optimism bolstered by a slick first-half display, only for grim realism to set in as Roberto Martinez's side rallied to take a well-deserved point. Cut to Saturday and Liverpool were again disappointing against Wigan, again going flat on the back of a terrific performance against Chelsea and again throwing away their momentum with a flat second half that cost two points. But that is where the similarities end for Kenny Dalglish (below) and the Reds earlier in the season.

There were no boos and no suggestion from the visiting manager that Liverpool were there for the taking.

Instead, Martinez identified one crucial factor which sets this Liverpool side apart from the one which visited the JD Stadium in November.

"Belief," the Wigan boss said afterwards. "That's the difference. You can see this Liverpool side plays with huge belief.

"We're a good team on the ball and found it difficult to get our possession going because of their tempo.

"They played with huge belief, which has obviously come from their results of late. They have strong partnerships - all over the park there is great understanding.

"The intensity they play with now is a lot higher and makes it very difficult to play them. The time is right for Liverpool to achieve something this season."

Martinez's comments may seem strange given that Liverpool again lost their way against Wigan and again threw away a commanding position with a tired second-half display.

Yet their performance before the break shows the difference Dalglish has made.

They played with a quicker rhythm, passed with a slicker assurance and showed a movement that had been beyond them earlier in the season.

It was breathtaking, with Luis Suarez - making his first start - interacting brilliantly behind Dirk Kuyt to bring Maxi and especially Raul Meireles into the play.

Suarez was unlucky not to score after jinking brilliantly inside to hit a shot against the post then hitting the bar with a late free kick. Yet some of Liverpool's old failings remained.

They created enough before the break to have put the game beyond reach, but had to settle for a brilliant volley from Meireles.

That failure to take chances again seemed to induce a collective unease and Wigan capitalised on another familiar weakness at setpieces to equalise when Steve Gohouri escaped at the far post to touch home Charles N'Zogbia's cross. Dalglish claimed offside afterwards, but the assistant referee may have got it right because the ball appeared to glance off Liverpool substitute David Ngog before reaching the far post.

No one was sure why the Wigan full-back was there in the first place, but Martinez wasn't complaining. "Early in his career he was a striker, which he keeps reminding us in training. It shows real bravery to be in that position," said the Wigan boss. There was a sense of reality clicking in after a run of four straight wins had Liverpool looking up towards a Champions' League place.

Some believe it may be a good thing that expectations are reined in, given the distance Liverpool still have to go to become a top four team again.

But for Dalglish, there are no problems with expectation and he welcomes the prospect of Liverpool performing strongly enough for their fans to dream of better days.

"Dampened? I don't think our expectations are dampened in any way. I would think we are disappointed at only getting a point," he said.

"The expectations have always been here at Liverpool and they have always been manageable."

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Reds thwarted by Latics

LIVERPOOL'S winning spree was halted at Anfield this afternoon after they were held to a draw by a battling Wigan side.

The Reds had to settle for a frustrating point which brings Kenny Dalglish's run of four consecutive victories to an end.

Raul Meireles' first half strike, his fifth in six games, gave Liverpool an early platform to build upon. But they were pegged back in the second half when an improved Wigan side equalised through Steve Gohouri. Luck was on the side of the Roberto Martinez's men as the defender was patently in an offside position when he slid home. Liverpool tried to fight back, with new £22.8m signing Luis Suarez impressive, and he almost pulled it off when his free kick smacked against the crossbar. But a resilient Wigan clung on for a 1-1 draw which ended a disappointing afternoon for the Anfield crowd.

The Reds remain in sixth place, but have lost an opportunity to gain more ground on Tottenham and Chelsea above them. Liverpool made two changes from the side which famously beat Chelsea at Stamford Bridge last Sunday. Steven Gerrard missed out with a groin injury along with Daniel Agger who scored for Denmark in Copenhagen against England on Wednesday night.

Fabio Aurelio came into left midfield while £22.8m signing Luis Suarez made his full debut up front alongside Dirk Kuyt. The Reds had an optimistic appeal for a penalty waved away by referee Kevin Friend after just three minutes when Suarez fell easily in the box while trying to reach Dirk Kuyt's low cross from the left.

The Uruguyan had started well, showing plenty of pace and good close control and his understanding with the Dutchman looked promising.

Liverpool's first effort on goal came after 18 minutes when good interplay again through Suarez and Meireles led to a shot from Kuyt which was spilled by Ali Al Habsi in the Wigan goal who grabbed it at the second attempt.

The Latics were still dangerous however, and only a last-ditch block from Jamie Carragher prevented the visitors from splitting the Reds wide open after good work from the lively Charles N'Zogbia. But it soon mattered little as Liverpool went ahead on 23 minutes thanks to the trusty right foot of Raul Meireles.

The Portuguese international pounced after Fabio Aurelio's chipped cross was headed poorly out by Steve Gohouri only for Meireles to volley home emphatically from 12 yards out. It continued the midfielder's incredible scoring spree, the strike registering his fifth in six games. The Reds were purring now and minutes later a flash of genius from Suarez almost led to Liverpool's second. A lovely feint from the former Ajax man saw him bear down on Al Habsi's goal and his raking right foot shot thudded against the post. It was hugely unlucky on the South American who is already looking like £22.8m well spent by owner John Henry. Dalglish's men largely controlled the first half, but Pepe Reina still had to stay alert to save an N'Zogbia free kick just before the break, and shortly later, punch away a Ben Watson inswinging cross.

Wigan started the second half well, Ben Watson to the fore for the Latics, before Liverpool made a quick change, replacing goalscorer Meireles, who'd picked up an apparent knock, making way for David Ngog.

The Frenchman joined Suarez up front while Aurelio came inside from the left to partner Lucas in the middle. Liverpool were now workmanlike at best as they struggled to find a rhythm in the second half to kill off the game. And they paid the price when Wigan grabbed an equaliser after 64 minutes. The lively N'Zogbia crossed from the right which got the sliver of a headed deflection across goal before being met with a close range finish from Steve Gohouri. The Reds looked for a linesman's flag which should have been forthcoming as it appeared Antolin Alcaraz had touched the ball following N'Zogbia's delivery. But Wigan deserved the goal after coming out in the second half with renewed purpose as Liverpool conceded their first goal in five games. This was now a real test for Dalglish's men as they were left with 20 minutes to continue their recent winning run.

Gohouri's strike had galvanized Wigan and Rodallega headed over the bar with Reina grasping at fresh air. But the Reds themselves upped the ante when Suarez powered through only to be brought down on the edge of the box by Caldwell.

The Latics captain was lucky to stay on the pitch after his earlier booking and the resulting 20 yard free kick from the Uruguyan was crashed onto the crossbar with Al Habsi a spectator. Liverpool were pressing for the winner now and neat interplay between Johnson and Maxi resulted in Suarez curling high over the bar. Aurelio was the next to go close with a fierce left-footed strike that flew just over. But despite the Reds late rampage, they couldn't force the winner that their performance just about deserved.

**"Luis made his first full start for Liverpool and he had a great game. He looked very sharp and dangerous up front. For us, it'll be very important to have this type of player."** FABIO AURELIO hails the impact of Luis Suarez

**"You remember Kenny being the architect of the great Liverpool sides when he was playing. But let's forget those memories, I want to concentrate on going to Anfield and performing."** ROBERTO MARTINEZ won't get carried away in his admiration for Kenny Dalglish

THERE was more than just a touch of 'after the Lord Mayor's show' as referee Kevin Friend drew a close to Liverpool's draw with Wigan on Saturday. After last weekend's famous win at Stamford Bridge, the visit of the Latics to Anfield was expected to be nothing more than a formality. On the back of four consecutive Premier League wins, anything seemed possible in the new brave Kenny Dalglish-led world. Reds fans were even daring themselves to dream of a possible Champions League spot after spiralling up the league merely weeks after contemplating the very real prospect of a relegation battle.

Saturday afternoon, however, brought a dose of reality to Merseyside and the realisation the Anfield revamp will not happen overnight. Liverpool were slightly unlucky not to emerge with all three points from this fixture, but there was no denying Wigan had impressed enough to justifiably head back home with a share of the spoils. It appeared to be plain sailing when Raul Meireles set the Reds on their way with yet another sumptuous volleyed finish, his fifth goal in six games. But Dalglish's men paid the price for a sluggish start to the second half when they allowed the Latics to establish a foothold in the game, and ultimately grab an equaliser. Steve Gohouri may have been offside when he prodded home at the Kop end, but the goal had hardly been against the run of play.

Liverpool remain in sixth place in the Premier League, but this was a golden opportunity missed to make up more ground on Chelsea and Spurs above them. One huge positive was the performance of £22.8m recruit Luis Suarez who had the crowd purring in the Anfield aisles. Twice the Uruguyan almost grabbed the headlines, first striking the post in the first half, and next, crashing a brilliant free-kick against the bar after the break. It wasn't to be.

But on this evidence, the forward will very soon be living up to his El Pistolero nickname during his time on Merseyside. Liverpool made two changes from the side which beat Chelsea at Stamford Bridge last Sunday. Steven Gerrard missed out with a groin injury along with Daniel Agger who scored for Denmark in Copenhagen against England on Wednesday night. Fabio Aurelio came into left midfield while new signing Suarez made his full debut up front alongside Dirk Kuyt. The Reds were to badly missed Gerrard's influence, and they were further hampered with Meireles was forced off through illness, upsetting the balance of the side. While Liverpool had looked impressive at times in the first half, Suarez and Kuyt dovetailing well, the second half was a different affair, and apart from a late 15-minute rally, Wigan looked relatively secure at the back. The Reds' first effort on goal came after 18 minutes when good interplay again through Suarez and Meireles led to a shot from Kuyt which was spilled by Ali Al Habsi in the Wigan goal who grabbed it at the second attempt. The Latics were still dangerous however, and only a last-ditch block from Jamie Carragher prevented the visitors from splitting the Reds wide open after good work from the lively Charles N'Zogbia. But it soon mattered little as Liverpool went ahead on 23 minutes thanks to the trusty right foot of Raul Meireles.

The Portuguese international pounced after Fabio Aurelio's chipped cross was headed poorly out by Gohouri only for Meireles to volley home emphatically from 12 yards. It continued the midfielder's incredible scoring spree, the strike registering his fifth in six games as he warms to life under Kenny Dalglish.

The Reds were beginning to purr and minutes later a flash of genius from Suarez almost led to Liverpool's second. A lovely feint from the former Ajax man saw him bear down on Al Habsi's goal and his raking right foot shot thudded against the post. It was hugely unlucky on the South American who is already looking like £22.8m well spent by owner John Henry. In the second half, Liverpool made an enforced change, David Ngog being introduced for the goalscorer Meireles.

The Frenchman joined Suarez up front while Aurelio came inside from the left to partner Lucas in the middle. It seemed to upset Liverpool's rhythm and they allowed Wigan in the game who grabbed the chance to pull level.

N'Zogbia, a previous transfer target of the Reds, crossed from the right which was headed on by Alcaraz to allow Gohouri's close-range poked finish. The Reds rightly looked for a linesman's flag which should have been forthcoming but the appeals fell on deaf ears. It was the first goal Liverpool had conceded in five games and left Dalglish's men with a real test to continue their winning spree. Gohouri's strike had galvanized Wigan and Rodallega headed over the bar with Reina grasping. But the Reds themselves upped the ante when Suarez powered through only to be brought down on the edge of the box by Caldwell.

The Latics captain was lucky to stay on the pitch after his earlier booking and the resulting 20-yard free-kick from the Uruguyan was crashed onto the crossbar with Al Habsi a spectator. It left frustration etched on the former Ajax man's face, but his performance will leave the Anfield faithful with a huge amount of optimism for the future. Liverpool pressed hard for a winner and both Suarez and Aurelio hammered efforts over the bar as Wigan clung on. Ultimately, the final whistle brought disappointment, but for Dalglish, who famously wore the Reds No. 7 shirt himself, the South American now sporting that jersey may have sent him to bed on Saturday with a conciliatory smile.

LIVERPOOL: Reina, Johnson, Meireles (Ngog 53), Aurelio, Suarez, Rodriguez, Kuyt (Jovanovic 72), Lucas, Carragher), Kelly, Skrtel. Not used: Gulasci, Pacheco,, Kyrgiakos, Wilson, Poulsen.

WIGAN: Al Habsi, Gohouri, Alcaraz, McCarthy, Caldwell, Watson (McArthur 71) N'Zogbia, Moses (Cleverley, 67), Rodallega, Diame, Figueroa. Not used: Di Santo, Pollitt, Steven Caldwell, Gomez, Stam.

GOALS: Name (time), Name (time); Name (time).

CARDS: Booked – Carragher; Gohouri; Alcaraz, Gary Caldwell.

REFEREE: Kevin Friend. ATTENDANCE: 44, 609.

Date: 12 February 2011  
 Opposition: Wigan Athletic  
 Competition: League

Sunday Times	Times	Guardian	Mail
Observer	Telegraph	Independent	Mirror
	Echo	Sun Independent	Sun Telegraph



12 February  
 2011



# THE INDEPENDENT

ON SUNDAY

## Gohouri pulls the reins on Dalglish's galloping recovery

The momentum built up by Liverpool over four successive victories under Kenny Dalglish slowed down unexpectedly yesterday against a stubborn Wigan. After the euphoria of their win at Chelsea seven days ago, the result showed that a bad habit of dropping points at home to lower-placed teams, that has developed over several seasons, cannot be overcome in a matter of weeks.

When Raul Meireles put Liverpool ahead in the first half with his fifth goal in six games, the pattern of the previous four matches seemed likely to continue. But Steve Gohouri's equaliser 20 minutes into the second half - 463 minutes after Liverpool had last conceded a goal - stunned Dalglish's men. Without the injured Steven Gerrard, they were unable to lift themselves again.

Dalglish blamed a flat second-half performance partly on midweek international matches. "We started well enough, scored a good goal and hit the post, but you could tell they'd been playing on Wednesday night, a lot of them," he said. "The sharpness was away a wee bit, which was understandable."

It was a valuable and deserved point for Wigan in their attempts to escape the Premier League's bottom three, with Gary Caldwell, their captain, playing in a Phantom of the Opera-style mask to protect a fractured cheekbone, leading a brave rearguard action after Gohouri's equaliser.

"Coming to Anfield at this time, if you're not at your best you're not going to get anything," Roberto Martinez, the Wigan manager, said. "Their goal was against the run of play, but I thought the reaction was great. We had long spells of possession and grew into the game. Experiences like today are going to be fantastic for our young players."

Wigan started like a team who believed they could end Liverpool's run of clean sheets, while it took 18 minutes for Dirk Kuyt to get Liverpool's first shot on target, so it was hard luck on the visitors that their second, six minutes later, found the net. Fabio Aurelio's cross from the left was half-cleared by the head of Gohouri, the ball bouncing out to Meireles, who volleyed home unerringly from 18 yards.

Liverpool almost doubled their lead three minutes later when Luis Suarez, who impressed on his first start for the club, beat Ali Al Habsi with a low shot from the left only to see the ball hit the far upright, and it looked as if the home side would go on to dominate. But Wigan recovered their composure, and Pepe Reina had to be at his best to deal with free kicks by Charles N'Zogbia and Ben Watson before the interval.

The second half began as the first had ended, with Wigan looking dangerous and Liverpool unable to deny them possession, especially with Meireles, who had been sick at half-time, unable to continue beyond the 54th minute.

The only surprise when Wigan equalised in the 65th minute was that the scorer was Gohouri, the right back, who arrived unmarked at the far post to touch in N'Zogbia's cross from the right. It was the first time an opponent had scored against Liverpool since Jermaine Beckford of Everton on 16 January. The defenders appealed in vain that a flick by Antolin Alcaraz as the ball travelled across the penalty area had rendered Gohouri offside. "We haven't had much luck this season," Martinez said. "I'm glad it went our way. The performance deserved a point."

They held on to it thanks to a determined performance in the final stages, although Caldwell was lucky to escape a second yellow card for bringing down Suarez just outside the penalty area and the Uruguayan nearly took revenge with a sweetly struck free kick that cannoned back from the crossbar.

"It's easy to warm to him," Dalglish said of Suarez. "He's very energetic, skilful and he loves to score goals."

Substitutes: Liverpool: Ngog for Meireles (54), Jovanovic for Kuyt (73). Wigan: Cleverley for Moses (65), McArthur for Watson (72). Bookings: Liverpool: Carragher Wigan: Gohouri, Alcaraz, G Caldwell.

Attendance: 44,609

Referee: Kevin Friend

Man of the match: G Caldwell

Match rating: 5/10

# The Sunday Telegraph

## Gohouri puts Liverpool out of their stride

Liverpool 1

Meireles 24

Wigan 1

Gohouri 65 Att: 44,609

If victory at Stamford Bridge last week had led anyone at Liverpool to believe that Kenny Dalglish possessed a preternatural power to summon miracles, a draw at home to Wigan yesterday confirmed that while he may still be the King, he is no conjuror. In a month in charge, the Scot has cured many of Anfield's ills, but there is much work yet to be done.

That is not to suggest that the 59 year-old's attempts to revitalise this club have stalled, nor that the improvement inspired by his appointment was an illusion.

This Liverpool are already twice, three times, the Liverpool he inherited.

Dalglish would be the first to admit, though, that they are by no means the finished article.

The Liverpool Dalglish desires would have asphyxiated Wigan once Raul Meireles, with his fifth goal in six games, had sent the hosts into the lead with yet another masterclass of volleying technique. They would have cleared the ball long before Steve Gohouri - from what Dalglish described as an offside position - equalised midway through the second half. They would not have ended the game ruing Luis Suarez's two encounters with the woodwork on his full home debut.

Liverpool remain a side still infused with a nervousness all too familiar after two years of doubt and despair, a trait exacerbated, according to Dalglish, in the aftermath of an ill-timed international interlude.

"There were a few occasions where we would have done better had we been as sharp as normal," he said. "You could tell they had played on Wednesday night."

Such reasoning is understandable, given the circumstances. Not just because of the vast improvement he has already overseen; not just because this might have been a very different occasion had Steven Gerrard, Daniel Agger or Andy Carroll been adjudged fit, or Meireles not fallen victim to sickness at half-time. Dalglish's greatest pleasure will have been not what was missing, but what was present.

"It is not difficult to warm to him," said the Liverpool manager, when asked about Suarez's display. The Kop evidently agree. He has not been on Merseyside for two weeks, but he already has at least three entries in Liverpool's songbook. They have taken to the Uruguayan rather quickly.

Gary Caldwell, it is fair to say, will be rather less fond of him. The Scottish international, nursing a facial injury, arrived at Anfield with a mask which gave him the air of the Lone Ranger. He will not wish to resume his battle with the man Liverpool's fans have nicknamed El Pistolero - The Gunslinger - any time soon.

The Wigan captain was reduced to chasing and kicking at shadows in his attempts to quieten the forward. Suarez clipped the post in the first half after cleverly dropping a shoulder and cutting inside. That came just after Liverpool's goal, Meireles volleying home after Gohouri failed to clear Fabio Aurelio's cross.

Gohouri, the Ivorian defender, made amends with Wigan's equaliser, puncturing Pepe Reina's increasing invincibility by tapping in after Antolin Alcaraz deflected Charles N'Zogbia's cross into his path. Then Suarez nearly won the game for Liverpool with a stunning free kick which curled onto the bar. Legally and illegally, he was a nuisance all afternoon.

"He won free kicks in a very clever way," said Roberto Martinez. "He has been doing that for Ajax and for Uruguay and the energy he possess, Dalglish will not mind if he is doing it for Liverpool for years to come, too."

Date: 12 February 2011  
 Opposition: Wigan Athletic  
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Sunday Times	Times	Guardian	Mail
Observer	Telegraph	Independent	Mirror
	Echo	Sun Independent	Sun Telegraph



12 February  
2011

## THE SUNDAY TIMES

Wigan strike back to slow the Dalglish revival  
 LIVERPOOL Meireles 24 1 WIGAN Gohouri 65 1

ANFIELD, once an almost invulnerable fortress, has turned welcoming to the least heralded of visitors. It's a problem that has plagued Liverpool for too long now.

This season, Northampton Town, Blackpool and Wolverhampton Wanderers have left the grand old stadium unexpected victors. Yesterday, relegation-threatened Wigan Athletic took a point that delayed Liverpool's recent advances.

Never one to promise more than he can deliver, Kenny Dalglish placed perspective on the dropped points, highlighting Wigan's offside goal and blaming midweek internationals for a lack of sharpness among his players.

"We were disappointed not to take the three points," the Liverpool manager said.

"With a wee bit of luck we would have, despite the performance not being as good as it has been in the past. Luis [Suarez] hit the post twice, their goal was offside, but these things happen. "We've just got to brush ourselves and get on with it. It's nothing too damaging anyway." For Wigan's Roberto Martinez it was fortifying, his young team moving to within a goal of levering themselves out of the drop zone. "It's a ruthless league and you don't get too much time to develop and learn," said the Wigan manager. "But we had two 20-year-olds out there and a few 21-years old, and with experiences like today they're going to be fantastic. We have 11 finals coming up, and we're catching up a little bit in terms of points."

Without a point dropped or a goal conceded in four Premier League fixtures Dalglish shuffled formation and personnel again. Having strained his groin in Denmark's friendly defeat by England on Wednesday, Daniel Agger dropped out and Liverpool's three-man defence went with him. Captain Steven Gerrard also watched from the stands. The compensation for the home support was a first start for Suarez; the stadium announcer even dedicating a pre-match song to the striker: Just Can't Get Enough. At the sharp end of a 4-3-1-2, Suarez started appropriately. Perpetual motion was the Uruguay forward's method, flitting across Wigan's back four, dropping deeper to collect possession, careering into space in search of a through-ball. He was always seeking an opportunity.

Collecting the ball outside Wigan's area at a 45-degree angle to the goal, Suarez was faced with a defensive line that would have seen most strikers opt for the percentage pass. Instead, he snaked his hips and sprinted directly to the box. The angle opened up for a shot that beat Ali Al-Habsi only to clatter off the far post. By then his team were ahead. For the fifth time in sixth league games, Raul Meireles was the scorer, elegantly volleying in Steve Gohouri's half-clearance after fine work by Martin Kelly and Fabio Aurelio. Again dynamic and intelligent in running the space between striker and midfield, the Portugal midfielder has been central to Liverpool's recent revival.

Confident in their early passing, Wigan were not without their chances. A sliding tackle from Jamie Carragher was required to halt Maynor Figueroa in the box and a series of free kicks around the penalty area had Pepe Reina punching crosses away or hauling in shots. The lead remained as half-time brought a musical message to the man Suarez had replaced. I Ain't Missing You At All was the dedication for a Senor Torres of London SW6. Early in the second half, Liverpool had to withdraw Meireles, who'd felt nauseous as the break approached and vomited during it. "He came in at half-time and spewed up," said Dalglish. "I don't know if it's been a result of the game in midweek that he played for Portugal and just a wee bit overexerted himself." David N'Gog came on at centre forward as Liverpool switched to 4-4-2. Wigan had already threatened an equaliser when Hugo Rodallega just failed to turn Victor Moses' cross in at the near post. There was more trouble to come. First, Reina saved from Rodallega at an angle, then Carragher was booked for a wild lunge at him.

Finally, Charles N'Zogbia's curling delivery from the right was left by the home defence for Gohouri to slide the ball in at the back post. Post-match, Liverpool claimed offside for a touch from Antolin Alcaraz so subtle that none of their players protested at the time. "If that's the case it was a very difficult decision and I'm glad it went our way," said Martinez. "I just feel the performance overall deserved at least a point. If you look back, we haven't had much luck this season with certain decisions, so if we got one today I'm pleased." The dimensions of the game changed. Suarez earned a free kick with which that Maxi Rodriguez almost found the top corner. Winning another one from Gary Caldwell, the Uruguayan took it himself and battered the crossbar. In between, Tom Cleverley set up Rodallega for a close-range header that flew just over. Martinez complained about Suarez's manipulation of the referee. "Maybe three-quarters of the free kicks he got weren't free kicks," he said. "He puts the body into a position and buys free kicks in a very, very clever way". No one could manoeuvre a Liverpool win.

Star man: Raul Meireles (Liverpool) Yellow cards: Liverpool: Carragher Wigan: Gohouri, G Caldwell, Alcaraz Referee: K Friend Attendance: 44,609  
 Liverpool: Reina 6, Kelly 7, Carragher 6, Skrtel 6, Johnson 6, Maxi 6, Lucas 7, Aurelio 6, Meireles 8 (N'Gog 54min, 4), Kuyt 6 (Jovanovic 73min), Suarez 7.  
 Wigan: Al-Habsi 6, Gohouri 7, G Caldwell 7, Alcaraz 6, Figueroa 6, Watson 6 (McArthur 73min), Moses 6 (Cleverley 66min), McCarthy 6, Diame 6, N'Zogbia 7, Rodallega 6.

2 The number of points Wigan have taken from six Premier League visits to Anfield. Liverpool have now failed to beat Wigan in three successive league matches

## The Observer

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"He won free kicks in a very clever way," said Roberto Martinez. "He has been doing that for Ajax and for Uruguay for years." If that is part of his arsenal, if that accompanies the electricity and the energy he possess, Dalglish will not mind if he is doing it for Liverpool for years to come, too.