

Date: 11 April 2011  
 Opposition: Manchester City  
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11 April 2011

## THE TIMES

Kop finds full voice after first goals appear on Carroll sheet

Liverpool3 Manchester City 0 Oliver Kay If a gentle, confidence-building warmup for their FA Cup semi-final was what Manchester City craved last night, Anfield was not the place to find it. Liverpool, with two goals from Andy Carroll, inflicted an evening of misery on Roberto Mancini's team, who also lost Carlos Tevez to a hamstring injury. Tevez was waiting last night to discover if the injury would keep him out of Saturday's FA Cup semi-final against Manchester United, his former club, but the damage inflicted by Carroll and Liverpool went a lot deeper than that. City, their pursuit of Champions League qualification under threat from Tottenham Hotspur, were awful, their evening summed up once again by the display of Mario Balotelli, who replaced Tevez on 15 minutes and was substituted in the closing stages.

City, more than any other stage this season, looked like an expensive assortment of disparate individuals, whereas Liverpool played like a team. Carroll will rightly claim the headlines after scoring his first two goals since his [pounds sterling]35 million transfer from Newcastle United, but Liverpool were superior in every department, Lucas Leiva and the diminutive figure of Jay Spearing comprehensively winning the centralmidfield battle against Yaya Toure and Gareth Barry. By the time Carroll left the pitch to a standing ovation in stoppage time, walking straight into an embrace from Kenny Dalglish, City were longing to be put out of their misery. Carroll scored his first goal, a left-foot shot of prodigious power, on 14 minutes and added a second with a towering header before half-time after Dirk Kuyt made it 2-0. It was quite a way to open his goalscoring account for Liverpool, particularly since it has not gone unnoticed on Merseyside that Fernando Torres, his predecessor in the No 9 shirt, has gone ten appearances without scoring for Chelsea.

For the record, the clock stopped for Carroll at 305 minutes of action in a Liverpool shirt, whereas Torres will go into this evening's Champions League quarter-final second leg at Old Trafford having not scored in his first 648 minutes for Chelsea. Put simply, Liverpool are not missing Torres. Their first-half performance last night was excellent, with Luis Suarez and occasionally Raul Meireles providing the artistry and Carroll supplying the front line with the aggression and tenacity that was provided elsewhere on the pitch by Jamie Carragher, Lucas Leiva and two home-grown youngsters, Jay Spearing and John Flanagan, making his debut at right back.

City, by contrast, were abject in the first 45 minutes. There was no pace, no energy and no bite to their play. The departure of Tevez hindered their cause - and perhaps, with that Wembley debate looming, brought a reminder of the importance of getting through the match unharmed - but they had looked lethargic even before Carroll's goal, Liverpool being first to almost every ball. Only six minutes had passed when Carroll reacted quickly to prod a loose ball into the path of Suarez, running beyond the City defence. Vincent Kompany and Joleon Lescott could not keep up with Suarez, but the forward, taking his shot early, was denied by Joe Hart, getting down to his left quickly to push the ball against a post.

City briefly threatened through Tevez, setting up Dedryck Boyata for a headed chance, and Adam Johnson, but Liverpool's greater attacking impetus soon told. Meireles attempted to thread a pass through the City defence, Kompany stuck out a leg to intercept and, with the ball bouncing outside the penalty area, Carroll struck a thunderous left-foot shot that swerved viciously and deceived Hart, who this time could not get down quickly enough.

Jogging towards the bench for a drink during a subsequent break in play, Carroll looked rather pleased with himself, but Liverpool had no intention of resting on their laurels. Pressure continued to be exerted on the City goal and on 34 minutes a game of penalty-box pinball ended with Fabio Aurelio's cross deflected by Kompany into the path of Kuyt, who hit a precise side-foot shot into the bottom corner of Hart's goal.

Aurelio could feasibly have been sent off before that, having caught Johnson's with a wild lunge for which he was shown only a yellow card, but City's performance was not one that will have encouraged even Mancini to look for excuse.

Two minutes after the Kuyt goal it was 3-0, Meireles delivering a hanging cross from the left-hand touchline and Carroll rising to attack the ball. Whether it was Carroll or Aleksandar Kolarov, the City full back, who sent a glancing header beyond Hart, the notaltogether impartial stadium announcer was quick to award the goal to Anfield's new hero.

Mancini looked furious at much of what he saw in the first half, with Mario Balotelli, Tevez's replacement, and Edin Dzeko offering no outlet whatsoever in attack. Something different was needed - David Silva was the obvious candidate - and it was predictable that James Milner would be asked to make way. Milner trudged off the bench looking disgusted. And when an individual agenda even becomes apparent in a player like Milner, it only heightens concerns about the tensions that lie beneath the surface at City.

As he sat on the bench, Milner ripped off his black armband - worn in memory of the victims of the Hillsborough disaster ahead of Friday's 21st anniversary - but that was surely a regrettable oversight. Balotelli soon followed him to the City bench as the final half-hour passed without incident. Balotelli seemed less bothered. And that, too, seemed to speak volumes of the problems Mancini must overcome between now and Saturday evening.

## the guardian

Carroll puts the finishing touches to Liverpool's rout of feeble City Sir Alex Ferguson can rarely have found a Liverpool home win so encouraging. Manchester City were taken apart at Anfield and that does not begin to cover their problems on a night when Roberto Mancini's promises of Champions League football and the FA Cup final came with a smile but no substance.

The City manager accepted full responsibility for a calamitous warm-up for Saturday's FA Cup semi-final against Manchester United and vowed to learn from the lessons handed down by Kenny Dalglish's rampant team. Carlos Tevez limped off early with a hamstring injury and, as has so often been the case this season, City's inspiration and guile went with him. His replacement, Mario Balotelli, was replaced due to his ineffectiveness, James Milner sulked when withdrawn and even the resilient rearguard that had conceded only 16 away league goals before this game was shattered as Andy Carroll scored the first two goals of his Liverpool career. His partnership with the irrepressible Luis Suarez eclipsed the visitors' own expensive attack in every respect and Dirk Kuyt converted, too, as Liverpool ended the contest inside 35 minutes.

City have now gone six Premier League away games without a win in 2011. They have not tasted victory outside Eastlands since Carroll scored for Newcastle United on Boxing Day and whether they will venture among the European elite next season is open to question with Tottenham three points behind with a game in hand and scenting a repeat of last year.

The two clubs' preparations could not have contrasted more greatly, with Liverpool bereft of defenders after defeat at Roy Hodgson's West Bromwich Albion and City having rested players from their rout of Sunderland. Yet the difference in their responses was even more profound. Liverpool were outstanding, City woeful. The home side compensated for absentees with spirit, ingenuity and individual excellence; the visitors were laboured, lethargic and devoid of imagination.

A collective effort earned its standing ovation from the Anfield majority but no one epitomised Liverpool's superior level of performance and desire better than the debutant John Flanagan. The 18-year-old had not made even a substitute's appearance before being drafted into a depleted defence at right-back yet settled superbly. Liverpool's initial reluctance to give Flanagan the ball proved unnecessarily protective. A sweeping cross-field pass to Fabio Aurelio would have soothed any nerves in the teenager and defensively he was faultless, crunching hard but fair into Gareth Barry and muscling aside Balotelli as the Italian tried to break through on goal.

Balotelli's presence - and pitiful contribution - was indicative of City's evening. In the 13th minute Tevez was dispossessed by Carroll and pulled up in the process. He was quickly withdrawn but not before his opponent had swept Liverpool into the lead with an unstoppable drive beyond Joe Hart. Carroll's tackle on Tevez allowed Raul Meireles to strike from distance, though only into Vincent Kompany, and the rebound was returned with interest by the England striker as his low, left-foot drive beat Hart purely for pace and power, not precision, and Anfield erupted to acclaim Carroll's first goal since his pounds 35m transfer from Newcastle.

Hart had previously tipped a Suarez shot on to the post when the Uruguayan, displaying a sublime touch and an unerring knack of finding space all over the pitch, was sent through by Carroll's quick thinking. The England goalkeeper was beaten when Meireles, Suarez and Aurelio had shots blocked inside the area. The latter's effort was deflected across the area by Kompany, who appeared a lone defender against the Liverpool tide, and Kuyt picked his spot into the far corner. City were in complete disarray and seconds later Carroll glanced his second of the night past a despairing Hart when he towered above Aleksandar Kolarov to meet Meireles' cross.

In contrast to the pedestrian Edin Dzeko and Balotelli, Carroll and Suarez looked a double-act of rich potential. City's pounds 25m Italian substitute suffered the ignominy of being withdrawn with seven minutes remaining and, even with Tevez injured, his manager refused to offer the excuse that his withdrawal was a protective measure. He is the kind of signing that gets a manager the sack. City can look towards Wembley with trepidation.

Liverpool 4-4-2

Reina; Flanagan, Carragher, Skrtel, Aurelio \* ; Kuyt, Spearing, Lucas, Meireles; Carroll (Ngog, 90), Suarez.

Subs not used

Gulacsi, Cole, Rodriguez, Wilson, Shelvey, Robinson.

Manchester City 4-4-2

Hart; Boyata, Kompany, Lescott, Kolarov; Johnson, Y Toure, Barry, Milner (Silva, 59); Tevez (Balotelli, 16; De Jong, 83), Dzeko.

Subs not used Taylor, Zabaleta, McGivern, Wright-Phillips.

Referee M Halsey

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# The Mail

## ANDY LEADS A RAMPAGE

ONLY in his worst nightmares could Roberto Mancini have imagined anything as bad as this. Balancing Manchester City's quest for a Champions League place with the chance of FA Cup glory has been a juggling act for the Italian, but he could never have foreseen both ambitions taking such a savage hit in one night. City can still recover from this comprehensive defeat at Anfield to claim a top-four place. Whether they can make up for the loss of Carlos Tevez to beat Manchester United if injury rules him out of Saturday's titanic Cup semi-final is another matter.

If Wayne Rooney was important to United's chances, the value of City's captain and top scorer is immeasurable.

Tevez was hurt in the buildup to Andy Carroll scoring his first goal for Liverpool and limped off quarter of an hour into the game. One each from Dirk Kuyt and Carroll ended the game as a contest before half time, leaving City clinging on to fourth place ahead of Tottenham.

If Mancini's side were toothless in defence, they were equally poor in attack. Liverpool may have raised a few eyebrows with their [pounds sterling]35million purchase of Carroll in January but, on this evidence, it was a bargain compared to the combined [pounds sterling]50m City paid for Edin Dzeko and Tevez's replacement Mario Balotelli (below). To be fair to Kenny Dalglish's side, they were outstanding from the start, and thoroughly deserved a victory that keeps alive their own slim hopes of qualifying for the Champions League. They swarmed all over Mancini's side and barely gave them a sight of goal.

At least City can surely not be worse when they meet another red menace on Saturday.

Mancini left Nigel de Jong and David Silva on the bench, with Dedryck Boyata at right back in the continued absence of Micah Richards and Jerome Boateng, even though Pablo Zabaleta was available again.

Local teenager John Flanagan debuted for Liverpool in that position after hamstring injuries to Glen Johnson and Martin Kelly.

City could have been behind as early as the seventh minute, when Dirk Kuyt flashed a shot over and Vincent Kompany's weak header gave Liverpool a chance to expose them.

Andy Carroll slipped a firsttime pass down the middle for Luis Suarez, who raced clear and was about to score until Joe Hart lunged low to his left to touch the ball on to the post.

But it was only a temporary reprieve as Liverpool's lightning start was followed by an explosive opening goal in the 13th minute.

There was a hint of controversy as Carroll's high boot caught Tevez, causing the Argentine to lose possession in midfield. Kompany blocked Raul Meireles' effort but deflected the ball perfectly into the path of Carroll 25 yards out.

The England striker has earned a reputation for his ability in the air but can be just as lethal on the ground, and his thunderous low effort gave the City keeper no chance as it flew inside his right-hand post.

While Liverpool celebrated, Tevez left the field dejectedly, with what appeared to be a hamstring injury.

City failed to clear the danger from the Liverpool attack three times before Fabio Aurelio's blocked shot ran across goal for Kuyt, who stroked the ball rightfooted into the bottom corner.

And when Boyata was guilty of another poor clearance down the City right moments later, Meireles swung in an inviting cross for Carroll, who rose imperiously above Aleksandar Kolarov to glance the ball over England team-mate Hart.

Lescott's header a yard past the post was about as good as it got for City in the first half, and Balotelli's long-range effort high into the Kop on the stroke of half time was met with derision by the crowd.

c.wheeler@dailymail.co.uk WATCH highlights of last night's Barclays Premier League clash at Anfield: [www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/match/Facts\\_LIVERPOOL](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/match/Facts_LIVERPOOL) (4-2-3-1): Reina 7; Flanagan 7, Carragher 7, Skrtel 7, Aurelio 7; Lucas 7, Spearing 7; Kuyt 7, Meireles 7, Suarez 8; Carroll 9. Subs not used: Gulacsi, Cole, Rodriguez, Wilson, Ngog, Shelvey, Robinson. Scorers: Carroll 13, 35; Kuyt 34. Booked: Aurelio. MANCHESTER CITY (4-4-2): Hart 7; Boyata 6, Kompany 5, Lescott 5, Kolarov 5; Milner 5 (Silva 59min, 6), Y Toure 5, Barry 5, A Johnson 6; Tevez 5 (Balotelli 16, 4; De Jong 83), Dzeko 4. Subs not used: Taylor, Zabaleta, McGivern, Wright-Phillips. Man of the match: Andy Carroll. Referee: Mark Halsey 6. Attendance: 44,776.

# The Daily Telegraph

Carroll leaves Kop singing his tune after sinking City

Liverpool 3 Carroll 13, 35, Kuyt 34 Manchester City 0 Att: 44,776 Liverpool were as good as Manchester City were appalling last night. Liverpool were inspired by Andy Carroll, who scored twice, either side of a Dirk Kuyt strike on an evening which provided another stirring reminder of how Liverpool have been revived by Kenny Dalglish.

As well as further evidence of the potency of the Carroll-Luis Suarez axis, Anfield revelled in the fine displays from two of their youngsters, Jay Spearing and particularly the debut-making John Flanagan.

The contrast with City was marked. From back to front, the poverty of City's display was bemusing, their lack of midfield bite alarming, and questions will inevitably be raised over why Roberto Mancini rested Nigel de Jong on the bench. City have the FA Cup date with United on Saturday but qualification for the Champions League remains their No 1 priority. City could have gone into third, leapfrogging Chelsea, last night; instead City have allowed Tottenham Hotspur to stay within range, only three points behind with a game in hand.

Mancini can argue that he didn't want to risk injury before Wembley. The noisy neighbours have lost their big noise in Carlos Tevez, who appeared to tear his right hamstring. Even before Carroll's terrific finish, a strike that carried echoes of his goal for England against Ghana, the attacking intent of both teams had quickly been evident. City were first out of the blocks, Adam Johnson running at Fabio Aurelio, dribbling past the Brazilian left-back but nudging the ball just out in front of a relieved Kop. It proved a high point for the visitors.

Blue Moon, false dawn? Liverpool were more swiftly and effectively into their stride, flowing forward time and again, looking to find Carroll and Luis Suarez, creating chaos in City's box even before Carroll's majestic first.

Suarez set up Kuyt early on but the Dutchman fired over. Still Liverpool pressed. Carroll swept a fine pass through to Suarez, who darted past Jose Lescott and then left fly. The shot was low and hard, seemingly destined for City's net until Joe Hart stretched out a finger and pushed the ball onto the post. No matter.

Liverpool were in the mood. Spearing showed their belief with a neat turn round Edin Dzeko. Then came Carroll's first. Anfield's digital clock showed only 13 minutes when Vincent Kompany's clearance of a Raul Meireles shot fell to Carroll.

The England striker's response was immense, the ball drilled past Hart from 25 yards. City were culpable, Tevez having ceded the ball to Liverpool. Poor Tevez. Such a prolific force for City this season, such a tireless worker for the team, the Argentine soon limped off, indicating a torn hamstring. If confirmed, it will preclude Tevez's involvement in Saturday's FA Cup semi-final against Manchester United, whose first-team coach Rene Meulensteen was an interested observer last night. As Tevez trooped off towards the tunnel, cutting a totally disconsolate figure, Mario Balotelli ran on. City almost lost another player just afterwards when Johnson was caught by a nasty late challenge from Aurelio.

The Brazilian was fortunate that referee Mark Halsey deemed the offence only a yellow. Johnson was lucky he didn't depart on a stretcher. Liverpool were soon hurting City by more legitimate means shortly after the half-hour. As the rain prepared to descend, Liverpool struck like lightning - twice. First Kuyt capitalised on the chaos reigning in City's box, seizing on a loose ball to sweep a low shot from right to left past Hart. City were stunned, lacking inspiration without Tevez, lacking midfield steel without Nigel de Jong and touch without David Silva.

Mancini's defence, usually so strong this season, was a collection of strangers rather than a well-drilled unit. Kompany has been one of the best centre-halves of the season yet even he struggled here. City simply could not cope with the speed and angles of Liverpool's attacks. When Aurelio then passed to Meireles down the left, Carroll began moving towards the penalty spot. Meireles lifted in the ball and it was left to Kolarov to deal with the marauding figure of Carroll.

Liverpool's No 9 leapt to meet the ball; it hit Kolarov but Carroll appeared to get the last touch before it sped past Hart.

The visitors attempted to rally before the break, and Lescott headed Kolarov's free-kick wide, but the game seemed over as a contest. In a half full of joy for Liverpool, the Kop enjoyed a hugely promising showing by the 18-year-old Flanagan on his debut. The local lad clearly loves a tackle, sorting out Gareth Barry at one point, but he also demonstrated a decent touch, delivering a couple of good passes. Flanagan continued to look lively in the second half, making a strong run towards an admiring Kop. Flanagan continued to impress, dinking a pass accurately to Carroll. Liverpool's fluidity contrasted with City's stumbling. Mancini sent on Silva but to little effect. City needed their major players to stand up for them, to try and wrest the initiative from Liverpool. They needed Dzeko to look like a [pounds sterling]27million striker. He didn't. They needed Balotelli to become involved. He didn't. The City fans were badly let down by some of their stars last night. Liverpool had the game in a headlock, and could have made it 4-0 just after the hour-mark. When Meireles drove in a corner, the unmarked Lucas wasted a great opportunity with a header wide.

City's defending was wretched and Liverpool could easily have scored in the 68th minute. Kompany and Lescott were all over the place as Suarez threatened.

The combination of Carroll and Suarez has been an instant success. Liverpool fans loved it, chanting "Dalglish" and applauding the confi-dente touches of youngsters like Spearing and Flanagan.

City had a moment of hope, Yaya Toure letting fly and bringing some rare action for Pepe Reina, who fisted the ball over. Balotelli then departed, suffering the ignominy of being a substitute substituted.

The only ones in City blue who acquitted themselves well were their fans, as admirably defiant as their idols were wretched.

In the final minute, City fans began chanting "we're going to win 4-3". If only their players had showed that sort of belief.

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## THE INDEPENDENT

### Carroll destroys City's desperate defence to leave Mancini reeling

In the manager's mind, one of the defining weeks of the new world of Manchester City would have delivered an early Premier League cushion over Tottenham on which to settle back and contemplate the derby of all derbies at Wembley on Saturday. In the cold and unsparring Liverpool night, it delivered something quite different - an unravelling which, were not the spotlight trained so intensely upon him, Roberto Mancini would probably have watched behind his fingers.

Not only were City defeated in a wretched manner which confirms the suspicion that their search for Champions League football will be an agonising one, but they may enter Saturday's FA Cup semi-final without Carlos Tevez, who limped off after 15 minutes with suspicions of a hamstring pull. Wayne Rooney's absence for Manchester United is a mild inconvenience compared with City's loss of Tevez - the player who has scored 40 per cent of City's goals.

Wembley is another evening, though. The consequences of this one are of greater significance for a side who should be fighting for the Champions League qualification denied them a year ago but who instead had nothing to offer. Joe Hart admitted before the game that City "haven't really stamped a mark on the Premier League for the past seven or eight games" and their two points from six games away from home seems portentous. The cracks are barely concealed.

Mancini subbed his substitute Mario Balotelli after another eccentric display, as he did Robinho down the road at Goodison in what was the beginning of the end of the Brazilian's City career 15 months back. Even James Milner was disgruntled to be hauled from an anaemic midfield after less than an hour.

It made it all the worse that Liverpool provided the evidence of what money can buy. Their own hopes of Champions League qualification are not entirely dead, as they sit eight points behind City, but in the combination of Andy Carroll and Luis Suarez there was a glimpse of what a bright future might look like.

Mancini's decision to use two holding midfielders suggested some level of confidence - he has tended to use three for games that look a challenge like this - but City were overwhelmed in a display of defending which must be as dismal as anything Mancini has presided over in his managerial career, never mind his 16 months at Manchester City. City knew all about what Carroll can do - his last goal was against them for Newcastle on Boxing Day - but they could have expected nothing like this. Here, from the first moments, was the swagger Dalglish has been waiting for and the first real sense of what a menacing combination he and Suarez might prove to be. The two had already combined twice, with Carroll dropping to be the Uruguayan's provider, and City were already clinging on before the moment the night began unravelling beyond their manager's worst nightmares.

It was initially only Carroll who took the eye as he blasted a lead with his first goal in a Liverpool shirt, fastening onto a ball which spun up comfortably for him after Vincent Kompany only half blocked Raul Meireles' speculative shot. But then Tevez began hobbling around in the spot where Carroll had dispossessed him to feed Meireles in the first place. He had left the field two minutes later, apparently signalling that a hamstring had gone. City briefly entered the game. Edin Dzeko, the other of the evening's strikers without a goal to his name at a new club, fired a foot wide after Meireles had slipped in front of him and Adam Johnson's danger brought a two-footed challenge from Fabio Aurelio which might have seen the Brazilian dismissed.

But one side wanted possession. Suarez and Jay Spearing were winning every ball, Meireles was damaging Dedryk Boyata down Liverpool's left and Mancini's usually assured central defence could not cope with the pace and imagination of Liverpool's attacking thrusts. The second goal was as disastrous as any could be for a manager who builds a side around defence. City had fully five opportunities to clear the ball which rattled around their defence like a pinball before Boyata's poor clearance allowed Aurelio a shot which was blocked into the path of Dirk Kuyt, who calmly passed the ball into the net, right-footed. Within a minute, another gift of a clearance by Boyata gave Meireles the chance to deliver the cross from the right which Carroll muscled his way into to power a header.

Somehow Aleksandar Kolarov got the connection which helped the ball on its way past Hart. Dalglish was actually the manager with the greater defensive injury problems, though if he carried any inner fears about his decision to give the chirpy Liverpoolian John Flanagan his first taste of senior football, then they were assuaged. They say the boy from Childwall likes a tackle and his biting challenge on Gareth Barry suggested little anxiety about the player Rafael Benitez was so distressed to miss out on two summers ago.

Liverpool's dominance receded slightly in the second period but when Dalglish neatly caught the ball which was thumped in his direction towards the end, it seemed to provide a message about his powers of management. The City fans sang about Wembley and about the "35 years and we're still here". But Mancini is going to need mighty powers of motivation if their long wait for something to shout about is not to go on.

Liverpool (4-4-2) Reina; Flanagan, Carragher, Skrtel, Aurelio; Kuyt, Spearing, Lucas, Meireles; Carroll (Ngog, 90), Suarez. Substitutes not used Gulacsi, Cole, Rodriguez, Wilson, Shelvey, Robinson.

Manchester City (4-2-3-1) Hart; Boyata, Kompany, Lescott, Kolarov; Yaya Toure, Barry; Johnson, Tevez (Balotelli, 16; De Jong, 83) Milner (Silva, 59); Dzeko.

Substitutes not used: Taylor, Zabaleta, McGovern, Wright-Phillips.

Referee M Halsey (Hertfordshire). Attendance: 44,776



### ANDY'S DOUBLE BINGE LEAVES CITY IN RUINS

ANDY CARROLL didn't just open his Anfield account in spectacular style...he destroyed Manchester City in the process.

The pounds 35million Liverpool record signing scored two wonderful goals to display his dazzling potential, and cruelly expose the fundamental weakness that threatens to fatally undermine City's faltering campaign.

This defeat was nothing short of a humiliation, and dealt a confidence-shattering blow to Roberto Mancini's side on the eve of their biggest game of the season, the FA Cup semi-final against Manchester United. For all their massive investment and ambition, the moneybags Eastlands club find themselves, after Carroll's masterclass, with the same number of points as this stage last season, just a place better off.

Yet even worse for their expectant owners is the fact they now go into the contest that offers a final chance of silverware in a campaign that promised so much on the back of such a drubbing.

And without their talisman striker Carlos Tevez, who limped off with a hamstring injury after 16 minutes.

They were out-fought as well as comprehensively outplayed, outthought and their flaky defence again destroyed, which is perhaps the worst possible preparation for a tilt at bitter rivals United at Wembley.

On this performance and without their skipper, they will do well to cling onto the top-four spot they tenuously hold, with Tottenham lurking three points behind having played a game less. They will also do well to lift themselves for Saturday's semi after such shocking defending.

But it was still a fine way for Carroll to open his account for Liverpool, and serve notice on the frightening potential he possesses.

The British record signing and reformed hell-raiser is making something of a trademark of his delicious left-foot strikes that rifle into the net from distance.

So it was no surprise this goal was reminiscent of his first for England a fortnight ago, and indeed, the goal he scored against the Reds for Newcastle earlier in the season.

Just as against Ghana, he caused mayhem with his physical presence.

And when Raul Meireles' shot was blocked, he exploited perfectly the gaps he had punched in the City defence to smash a vicious, curling shot into the corner of the net that gave Joe Hart no chance.

It was a fine strike, but the reaction of Mancini on the touchline told its own story. He was almost apoplectic with rage at such feeble, disorganised defending.

Sadly for City fans, it wasn't the last time we saw that anger.

Tevez limped off soon after, and if anyone needs the story of why Sheikh Mansour's millions haven't bought the title this season, it was delivered here at Anfield.

For all their forwardline riches, and powerful depth in midfield, without the captain they are lost, and they still can't organise a simple line in defence...or follow the fundamentals of defending like clearing the ball. Their boss too, made some shameful errors. A pounds 100m forward line couldn't make an impression against a defence containing only one player who cost anything.

And when Tevez limped off, he brought on moody Mario Balotelli, rather than a match-winner in David Silva, to run at teenage debutant John Flanagan.

It was wonky thinking, and a woefully wonky defence, and as a smart observer commented later, perhaps it is time for Mancini to base his signings on talent, not height.

If a blocked shot exposed their lack of positioning for Carroll's first on 13 minutes, the goal Dirk Kuyt plundered showed the disarray at the heart of the visiting team.

The ball seemed to bounce around in the penalty area for ages, with the Blues spurning almost limitless chances to clear. And when Fabio Aurelio's shot was blocked, Kuyt was unmarked on the right to steer home a delicious finish for his sixth goal in his last eight appearances.

But Carroll stole the show with his second goal a minute later that illustrated his traditional centre-forward skills.

Meireles crossed intelligently from the left, and as the Geordie jumped with Aleksandar Kolarov, the ball squirted off the City defender's head to flick off the striker and fly into the net.

Game over, of course, and no surprise given City's focus was clearly on the semi-final, even before kick-off.

Mancini erred in changing his side with an tie, which set a poor example to his team that was emphasised by the lack of commitment shown by his players, with some even - criminally - jumping out of tackles. Do that at the weekend, and they will be eaten alive.

LIVERPOOL: Reina 6, Flanagan 7, Carragher 7, Skrtel 6, Aurelio 7, Kuyt 8, Lucas 7, Spearing 7, Meireles 7, Carroll 8 (Ngog 90), Suarez 7. MAN CITY: Hart 6, Boyata 5, Kompany 5, Lescott 4, Kolarov 4, Toure 4, Barry 4, Johnson 5, Tevez 4 (Balotelli 16, 3, De Jong 83), Milner 5 (Silva 59, 5), Dzeko 4. REFEREE: Mark Halsey ATT: 44,776

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Andy Carroll singing the right tune for the Reds  
 THEY may have a bottomless pit of cash but Manchester City discovered last night that there are some things money can't buy.  
 Liverpool sent the Premier League's big spenders packing in emphatic fashion with a remarkable performance.  
 Of course a big chunk of the damage was done by the most expensive British player in history as two-goal Andy Carroll lit up Anfield.  
 But there were heroes in red all across the famous turf as the Reds shrugged off their injury troubles with a display packed full of guts and character. This was a stunning triumph in the face of adversity.  
 You can have a side packed full of millionaire superstars but if they aren't playing for each other or their manager you're fighting a losing battle.  
 Liverpool don't have any such worries. Kenny Dalglish has instilled a sense of unity, team spirit and togetherness at Anfield over the past three months and it shone during a scintillating 90 minutes.  
 The Reds produced class in abundance but crucially it was coupled with a burning desire to succeed and total commitment.  
 If there were any doubts left in the minds of the club's owners about whether to give Dalglish the job on a permanent basis surely they were banished last night.  
 The Kop certainly spoke with one voice and left John Henry and Tom Werner in no doubt who they believe is best placed to turn their hopes and dreams into reality.  
 This performance was a ringing endorsement of what the Scot has achieved since picking up the pieces of Roy Hodgson's sorry reign and an exciting glimpse into what the future could hold during the King's second stint in the Liverpool hot-seat.  
 With plans in place for a big summer of transfer activity at Anfield, the platform is there for Liverpool to use the past few months as a springboard and reclaim their place among the Premier League's elite after a barren two years.  
 Fears that the Reds' season could simply fizzle out in the absence of key names were allayed as this thumping victory kept their hopes of Europa League qualification alive.  
 It was sweet revenge for the embarrassing defeat the Reds endured under Hodgson at Eastlands back in August.  
 Liverpool flew out of the traps and started at a tempo City simply failed to live with. The movement was clever and the passing precise. Inside six minutes Dirk Kuyt fired over after Carroll and Luis Suarez had combined to tee him up.  
 The Reds' £57.8million strikeforce, starting at Anfield together for the first time, continued to wreak havoc. Carroll's clever pass sent Suarez racing through and it took a fine finger tip save from Joe Hart to tip his shot on to the post.  
 For too long this season Liverpool were toothless up front as they put their faith in a striker whose heart already lay away from Anfield.  
 Now in his place they possess a top class double act with the ability to terrorise defences for years to come.  
 Suarez's impact on the Premier League has been nothing short of outstanding.  
 The Uruguayan plays like he has rocket fuel in his boots and City simply couldn't handle his dazzling skills and lightning quick feet.  
 Injury ensured the start to Carroll's Anfield career has been less eye-catching but last night he began to make up for lost time.  
 The moment he had waited for since his dramatic transfer deadline day switch from Newcastle arrived in the 13th minute.  
 Raul Meireles' ambitious effort was blocked by Vincent Kompany but Carroll pounced and unleashed a fizzing 20-yarder past Hart. It wasn't in the corner but it didn't need to be as the sheer brute force of the strike left the keeper flailing.  
 Three months of frustration was forgotten as Carroll showed why Liverpool were prepared to shell out £35million for his services.  
 His second goal 10 minutes before the break was very different but just as special.  
 Too often in recent weeks the service into Carroll has been poor but this time were no complaints.  
 Meireles' curling cross from the left was crying out to be attacked and Carroll didn't disappoint as he soared above Aleksandar Kolarov to power home a header. At 3-0 up Liverpool and Carroll were in dreamland. Less than 60 seconds earlier Kuyt had doubled the Reds' lead with a cool side-footed finish after Aurelio's strike had been deflected into his path.  
 The front two were outstanding but the supporting cast were just as influential.  
 Jay Spearing has already proved he's undaunted by big reputations around him and last night he showcased his growing confidence. The way he has stepped up to the plate in the absence of Steven Gerrard has been mightily impressive.  
 Snapping into tackles and using the ball intelligently, Spearing ensured it was a torrid evening for Gareth Barry and Yaya Toure.  
 Injuries to Daniel Agger and Glen Johnson coupled with the continued absence of Martin Kelly had left Dalglish down to the bare bones defensively.  
 Fabio Aurelio returned with aplomb at left-back after a month out with a hamstring injury and on the other side John Flanagan enjoyed a hugely promising debut.  
 The 18-year-old Academy starlet's call-up was reward for his outstanding displays at Academy and reserve team level this season and he hardly put a foot wrong.

Flanagan certainly wasn't overawed by the occasion and one crunching challenge on Barry nearly raised the roof. Dalglish's faith in the youngster was richly rewarded.  
 After a breathtaking first half, the second half was less dramatic but Liverpool's stranglehold on proceedings never loosened.  
 Kuyt and Suarez should have piled on the misery for City before Carroll went agonisingly close to completing a hat-trick but it mattered little.  
 On the night Anfield fell silent to remember the 96 supporters who died at Hillsborough 22 years ago this was the best possible way for the team to honour their memory. City were outclassed and outfought. This was priceless.  
*"Andy's scored his first goals today - it has been tough for him after injury, but he's played very well. No-one is more happy than Andy, but his team-mates are happy for him too. He's very good in air and can score with feet - he's a big threat."* DIRK KUYT on the impact of new signing Andy Carroll after he scored his first goal for the Reds.  
*"Tonight I made a mistake, it was my fault. I think the players can do better, but I made a mistake. I know (what the mistake was). It is for me. I am sorry for the fans. We only started to play after 20 minutes."* ROBERTO MANCINI after the defeat.  
 Man of the match: ANDY CARROLL: Opened his Anfield account in memorable fashion, hammering home a stunning opener early on before nodding in his second before the break. A constant threat and Man City simply couldn't handle him.  
 Next match: ARSENAL, away, Premier League, Sunday, April 17 (4pm).  
 LIVERPOOL (4-2-3-1): Reina, Flanagan, Carragher, Skrtel, Aurelio, Kuyt, Lucas, Spearing, Meireles, Suarez, Carroll (Ngog 90). Not used: Gulacsi, Cole, Maxi, Wilson, Shelvey, Robinson.  
 MANCHESTER CITY (4-4-2): Hart, Boyata, Kompany, Lescott, Kolarov, Barry, Toure Yaya, Milner (Silva 59), Tevez (Balotelli 16), Adam Johnson, Dzeko, Balotelli (De Jong 83). Subs Not Used: Taylor, Zabaleta, Wright-Phillips, McGovern.  
 GOALS: Carroll 13, Kuyt 34, Carroll 35.  
 CARDS: Liverpool: Aurelio. REFEREE: Mark Halsey (Lancashire).  
 ATTENDANCE: 44,776

Date: 11 April 2011  
Opposition: Manchester City  
Competition: League

Times	Guardian	Mail
Telegraph	Independent	Mirro
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