

Date: 26 October 2011  
 Opposition: Stoke City  
 Competition: Carling Cup

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26 October  
2011

## THE TIMES

Suarez strikes twice as Liverpool finally make their possession tell  
 Stoke City 1 Liverpool 2

Tony Barrett If ever the "cold night in Stoke" test could be applied to a team it would be Liverpool, who have toiled in the Potteries as much as anyone of late when confronted by a combination of plunging temperatures and Tony Pulis's direct approach.

In recent seasons Rafael Benitez, Roy Hodgson and Kenny Dalglish, the latter only last month, have discovered to their cost why an assignment against Stoke City on their own patch is considered such an exacting examination.

By coming up with the solution that his managerial predecessors had been unable to, Dalglish was able to guide Liverpool to a place in the quarterfinals of the Carling Cup for the first time in five seasons after Luis Suarez inspired them to a deserved comeback win.

Despite their poor recent record, Liverpool displayed little fear during a largely one-sided first half in which their dominance should have afforded them a healthy lead.

The five changes that Pulis made to Stoke's starting line-up appeared to affect them more than the eight that Dalglish made to Liverpool's and the hosts spent the majority of the opening 45 minutes on the back foot, overreliant on Thomas Sorensen to keep the scores level.

At times the Denmark goalkeeper was inspired as he pulled off a succession of saves to deny a Liverpool team who are becoming used to seeing their superiority go unrewarded. As was the case in their recent drawn games against Manchester United and Norwich City, however, Liverpool also had to accept that their profligacy was the main cause of their frustration.

Dalglish maintains that a change of luck is all that is required for Liverpool's chances-to-goals ratio to improve significantly and their results to be similarly enhanced. Certainly, there was little that Andy Carroll, in determined form, had to reproach himself for in failing to get his name on the scoresheet during an opening half in which he peppered Sorensen's goal.

Liverpool's best opportunity of the first half fell to Suarez after 17 minutes, after enterprising build-up play by Maxi Rodriguez and Lucas Leiva, but he shot close enough to Sorensen to allow the goalkeeper an opportunity to make a save that he should not have had.

An inability to accept good chances allied to a knack of conceding poor goals is only going to be a recipe for failure, particularly against opponents as enterprising as Stoke, and Liverpool ended the half a goal in arrears -- and the deficit could have been even greater only for the intervention of Lee Probert, the referee, as the hosts scored one legitimate goal and had another ruled out.

Jonathan Walters, who scored the only goal on the previous occasion the sides met, thought he had added to his account against Liverpool when he met Rory Delap's long throw with a header that defeated Pepe Reina, but his celebrations were cut short after Probert ruled that the goalkeeper had been blocked off by Ryan Shawcross.

If that discomfited Liverpool then what followed will have given them an unwelcome sense of deja vu as Stoke took the lead with a goal that demonstrated their tenacity.

Walters would have been within his rights to allow Sebastian Coates to see a bouncing ball out of play, but simply by putting the defender under pressure he unnerved him and Coates yielded possession, allowing Walters to find Kenwyne Jones with a cross that his strike partner met with an unerring header that Reina was powerless to stop.

No doubt chastened by the scoreline and aggrieved by the apparent unjustness of it, Liverpool in general -- and Suarez in particular -- went in search of an equaliser with zeal at the start of the second half and their endeavours were rewarded after 54 minutes. The evidence to date is that Suarez is a scorer of great goals rather than a great goalscorer, and that theory was given added credence by an impudent nutmeg that took him clear of Ryan Shotton and a sublime curling finish from the angle of the penalty area that brought the scores level.

Suarez was not finished there as he continued to run the Stoke back four ragged, pinning them back almost single-handedly and giving Liverpool the platform they required to go in search of a winning goal.

That he provided the decisive strike -- a well-placed header from Jordan Henderson's cross -- was entirely apt. That it came with just four minutes of normal time remaining edged them closer to passing the test that had recently been beyond them.

A late aerial bombardment followed as Stoke went in desperate search of a goal to take the tie into extra time, but it was too little, too late.

Stoke City (4-4-2): T Sorensen - R Huth, R Shawcross, J Woodgate, M Wilson - R Shotton (sub: J Pennant, 60min), R Delap, G Whelan, M Etherington (sub: C Jerome, 64) - K Jones (sub: P Crouch, 88), J Walters.

Substitutes not used: C Nash, S Diao, M Upson, W Palacios.

Booked: Shawcross, Whelan, Huth.

Liverpool (4-4-2): J M Reina - M Kelly, J Carragher (sub: M Skrtel, 46), S Coates, D Agger - J Henderson, Lucas Leiva, J Spearing, M Rodriguez (sub: C Bellamy, 82) - A Carroll, L Suarez (sub: D Kuyt, 88).

Substitutes not used: M Doni, F Aurelio, C Adam, J Flanagan.

Booked: Carragher.

Referee: L Probert.

## the guardian

Suarez swoops to see off Stoke and offers stylish riposte to critics  
 Stoke City 1 Jones 44 Liverpool 2 Suarez 54 85

Luis Suarez answered some of his critics with the two goals that took Liverpool into the Carling Cup quarter-finals. A goal down at the interval, the visitors were indebted to their Uruguayan striker for almost single-handedly masterminding their recovery, dispelling in the process the myth that he does not convert enough chances to be regarded as a clinical finisher. He missed a few chances here too, but took the important couple well enough to impress anyone.

"The wee man scored a fantastic goal," was Kenny Dalglish's appraisal of the stunning second-half equaliser. "And the header for the second wasn't bad either. We wouldn't mind him scoring the odd tap-in, and if we had put a couple of our chances away in the first half it would have made things easier, but all you can say about a goal like that is that it was worth waiting for."

Liverpool made eight changes from the draw with Norwich City at the weekend but kept faith with Suarez, their outstanding performer in that game, and kept Pepe Reina in goal. Both players were involved quickly, the goalkeeper backpedalling hastily and being relieved to see Jon Walters's speculative chip land on the roof of his net, then the striker just failing to fasten on to a rebound when Thomas Sorensen beat out a shot from Andy Carroll.

On Saturday Suarez was mostly foiled by the excellence of John Ruddy, a pattern that seemed to be repeating itself here when Sorensen saved at point-blank range midway through the first half. Liverpool had just put together their best passing move of the game through Maxi Rodriguez and Lucas Leiva, and when the latter's square ball found Suarez free on the six-yard line Sorensen had to react quickly to smother a first-time shot.

Apart from Rory Delap's long throws Stoke were finding it difficult to put Liverpool's defence under pressure, although Jamie Carragher was lucky to escape with only a yellow card for an ugly tackle that upended Matthew Etherington.

Sorensen was called upon again to save from Carroll and then Martin Kelly either side of the first half's major talking point. Stoke moving their touchlines in by a yard or so has given Delap even more of a runup, and he achieved such a velocity in the 36th minute that Walters was able to beat Reina with a simple glancing header. Lee Probert had already decided that the goalkeeper had been impeded, however, although it was impossible even after a few replays to establish by whom.

If that was an injustice, it was quickly corrected. Stoke took the lead on the stroke of the interval through a Kenwyne Jones diving header, following a fairly calamitous mistake by Sebastian Coates. Having indicated to team-mates he was about to deal with a bouncing ball near the left touchline, Liverpool's Uruguayan defender was dispossessed by Walters, and could only watch as Jones stooped to meet a low cross and direct a header expertly beyond Reina's reach.

It appeared that what the visitors lacked was a midfield presence, yet while Suarez is on the pitch there is always hope and the striker conjured an early equaliser without needing anyone's help. Cutting inside Robert Huth on the left, Suarez weighed his options, nutmegged Ryan Shotton on the edge of the area, then found the inside of the right-hand upright with a curling shot that not even Sorensen could reach.

A labouring Liverpool were unable to come up with any more moments of individual brilliance until Suarez hit the winner five minutes from the end. When the substitute Craig Bellamy struck a post moments earlier it was Liverpool's first real threat since their equaliser, but Suarez was in position once again when it mattered. Jordan Henderson deserved most credit, improvising cleverly to angle in a volleyed first-time cross, which found Suarez onside at long last for a firm header back across the goalkeeper.

"He's special," Tony Pulis agreed. "A real handful whether he's got the ball or not. I don't have any complaints about the result, I thought Liverpool were the better team, but we should have had a penalty at the end when Peter Crouch was brought down. It was a clear foul, and not getting anything for that was a bit hard to take after having a goal chalked off in the first half for something no one could see."

Stoke City 4-4-2

Sorensen; Huth\*, Shawcross\*, Woodgate, Wilson; Shotton (Pennant, 60), Delap, Whelan\*, Etherington (Jerome, 64), Jones (Crouch, 88), Walters.

Subs not used

Nash, Diao, Upson, Palacios.

Liverpool 4-4-2

Reina; Kelly, Carragher\* (Skrtel, h-t), Coates, Agger; Henderson, Lucas, Spearing, Rodriguez (Bellamy, 82); Suarez (Kuyt, 88), Carroll.

Subs not used

Doni, Aurelio, Adam, Flanagan.

Referee L Probert.

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## The Mail

Suarez strikes twice to bury battling Stoke

Stoke 1

Liverpool 2

LUIS SUAREZ conjured up a moment of sheer brilliance and a late winner to send Liverpool through to the quarter-finals of the Carling Cup last night.

Kenwyne Jones's header on the stroke of half-time put Stoke ahead and left Liverpool facing their first cup defeat in the Potteries in 11 meetings stretching back more than a century.

But Suarez produced a wonder goal to equalise in the 54th minute, nutmegging his marker and then curling a brilliant effort around Stoke goalkeeper Thomas Sorensen to keep Liverpool in sight of the quarter-finals.

The Uruguayan's class was in stark contrast to strike partner Andy Carroll who laboured in front of goal once again despite having twice as many chances.

Liverpool may have won this competition a record seven times but the last occasion was back in 2003 and it is four years since they last reached the quarter-final stage.

Kenny Dalglish's determination to end that sequence was evident in a strong line-up that included eight changes from Saturday's disappointing 1-1 draw at home to Norwich and saw his [pounds sterling]58million strike partnership of Suarez and Carroll starting for only the fifth time in 12 League and cup games this season.

It was hardly surprising to see the Anfield boss select a big side -- with the obvious exception of Jay Spearing -- to match their opponents at set-pieces, just 45 days after they were beaten on this ground in the Premier League.

Everton fan Jon Walters, who scored Stoke's winner from the penalty spot that day, was selected ahead of Cameron Jerome to partner Jones in attack, as Tony Pulis also gave the competition due respect in what was Stoke's third game in six days.

Dalglish had criticised poor finishing against Norwich and, unfortunately for him, it was a similar story in the first half last night. Carroll was particularly wasteful. Having tested Thomas Sorensen with a decent effort from 30 yards that the Dane parried after nine minutes, he was guilty of not scoring when much better placed on two occasions.

When Jordan Henderson drove in a corner from the right, Carroll found himself unmarked on the edge of the six-yard box but could only manage a weak downward header that Sorensen gathered easily to his left.

And minutes later, Maxi Rodriguez's effort was deflected into Carroll's path, but again his weak attempt did not test the keeper nearly enough.

By far Liverpool's best move came in the 17th minute and deserved a goal from Suarez. It was an exquisite piece of first-time passing as Lucas played the ball to Maxi and stayed just outside as the return was played over the top of the Stoke defence. The Brazilian squared it across the penalty box to Suarez who was unmarked with just Sorensen to beat, but the keeper spread himself brilliantly to block a low first-time effort.

Stoke had their moments too, however. Walters worried Pepe Reina with a curling effort from 25 yards, and Ryan Shotton drilled another shot just wide of the Spaniard's far post before Stoke had the ball in the net for the first time after 35 minutes.

A Rory Delap long throw had Liverpool in trouble and Walters got in ahead of Reina to head into an empty goal. Referee Lee Probert ruled it out on the basis that Walters had impeded the Liverpool keeper and it seemed a harsh decision. But there was no question about Jones's header just a minute before half-time. Sebastian Coates was guilty of dithering down the right flank, and Walters nudged the ball away from him before racing clear to the byline. He clipped it back perfectly for Jones, whose glancing header beat Reina and found the bottom corner. Liverpool were level just nine minutes after the interval, however, and what a goal it was: one that owed everything to the individual brilliance of Suarez and underlined just what he brings to this team.

There appeared to be little danger when he picked up possession on the edge of the Stoke penalty box but he made Shotton look rather silly with a cheeky nutmeg and then curled a quite magnificent shot around Sorensen and just inside the keeper's left-hand post. Liverpool thought they had made the decisive breakthrough with time ticking down when Craig Bellamy hit the post with a low cross from the edge of the box, two minutes after coming on as a substitute for Maxi.

But Suarez made sure they avoided extra-time when he hit the winner just moments later, meeting Henderson's crossed from the right and sending a header looping over Sorensen.

### MATCH FACTS

STOKE CITY (4-4-2): Sorensen 7; Huth 6, Woodgate 6, Shawcross 7, Wilson 6; Shotton 6 (Pennant 60min, 6), Whelan 6, Delap 6, Etherington 7 (Jerome 64, 6); Jones 7 (Crouch 88), Walters 8. Subs not used: Nash, Diao, Upson, Palacios. Scorer: Jones 44. Booked: Shawcross, Whelan, Huth.

LIVERPOOL (4-4-2): Reina 6; Kelly 6, Carragher 5 (Skrtel 46, 6), Coates 5, Agger 6; Henderson 6, Lucas 6, Spearing 6, Maxi 6 (Bellamy 82); Suarez 8 (Kuyt 88), Carroll 5. Subs not used: Doni, Aurelio, Adam, Flanagan. Scorer: Suarez 54, 85. Booked: Carragher. Man of the match: Luis Suarez.

Referee: Lee Probert 6. Attendance: 24,934.

## The Daily Telegraph

Super Suarez keeps Liverpool in trophy hunt

Stoke City 1

Jones 44

Liverpool 2

Suarez 54, 85 Att: 24,934

Luis Suarez was only a teenager when Liverpool last lifted any form of silverware but Kenny Dalglish's hopes of ending the embarrassing drought are improving after an outstanding evening from the Uruguay international.

Suarez produced a devastating display and two exquisitely taken goals finally to end Liverpool's struggles at this unforgiving venue.

His winner three minutes from time enabled the visitors to condemn Stoke to only their second defeat in 22 home games and maybe Dalglish can end this campaign with something tangible, with the five years to their last trophy, the FA Cup, an unwanted statistic.

Liverpool may have won the League Cup more than any other club, an impressive seven times, but their experiences of this competition have been frustrating since Gerard Houllier's side lifted the trophy in 2003.

Their last victory at the formidable Britannia Stadium was an 8&#x2013;0 triumph in November 2000 but Stoke are made of far sterner stuff now, with Tony Pulis continually etching chapters into the club's history with each passing campaign.

Pulis and his team of party poopers have turned putting noses out of joint into an art form and have claimed the scalps of many illustrious managers ever since their elevation into the land of cash and controversy. Dalglish was added to that impressive list in September, when Liverpool somehow emerged from the Potteries defeated despite dominating large portions of the match.

It was a similarly difficult experience for Dalglish here. Despite making eight changes from the team who drew with Norwich, the visitors could have been home and hosed by half&#x2013;time but for an inspired performance from Thomas Sorensen, who is surely enhancing his claims of a move away from the Potteries in the New Year.

Sorensen has had to get accustomed to being the No2 goalkeeper but was excellent in the first half, denying Suarez at point&#x2013;blank range before piling on more frustration for Andy Carroll with two saves. The Liverpool forward's partnership with Suarez is in its infancy, but it is not showing much sign of progress at the moment.

Stoke were strangely subdued in the early stages, probably due to the fact they were playing their third game in a week. But they sneaked ahead two minutes before the break after a defensive calamity that had Dalglish fidgeting with fury on the touchline. Jon Walters forced an error out of Sebastian Coates, the Uruguay international, and then delivered a fierce cross that produced a brilliant close&#x2013;range header from Jones.

But Dalglish was performing his trademark arms&#x2013;aloft routine in the 53rd minute when Suarez produced a quite brilliant equaliser. Picking the ball up 25 yards from goal, he bamboozled Ryan Shotton before bending his shot into the corner to end Sorensen and Stoke's resilience.

Stoke were clearly struggling to find any impetus as time ebbed away and Craig Bellamy, a substitute, nearly stole it when his shot struck a post. But as extra time looked, Suarez pounced to enhance Liverpool's aspirations of winning this competition for an eighth time.

Stoke City Sorensen, Huth, Shawcross, Woodgate, Wilson, Shotton (Pennant 60), Delap, Whelan, Etherington (Jerome 64), Jones (Crouch 88), Walters. Subs Nash, Diao, Upson, Palacios. Liverpool Reina, Kelly, Carragher (Skrtel 46), Coates, Agger, Henderson, Lucas, Spearing, Maxi (Bellamy 82), Suarez (Kuyt 88), Carroll. Subs Doni, Aurelio, Adam, Flanagan.

Referee L Probert (Wiltshire).

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## THE INDEPENDENT

### Suarez at the double to seal victory

The field is strong going into the last eight but Liverpool will still see the Carling Cup as an opportunity for a further step in the rebuilding process under Kenny Dalglish after two goals from Luis Suarez last night ended Stoke's hopes.

Dalglish's side trailed at half-time after Kenwyne Jones had headed the home side in front somewhat against the run of play but Suarez levelled with an exquisite curling shot soon after the restart and claimed the winner with five minutes remaining.

Unlike their hosts, Liverpool do not have the demands of a European campaign to consider this season, yet Dalglish left out eight of those who had started the 1-1 draw with Norwich, with captain Steven Gerrard not even on the bench.

Yet by fielding both Suarez and Andy Carroll in attack, he emphasised his interest in seeing Liverpool win this competition for an eighth time and provide him with the first silverware of his second stint as manager.

Indeed, the first half was one in which no player was busier than the Stoke goalkeeper Thomas Sorensen, as Liverpool created enough opportunities to have reached the interval with one foot in the quarter-finals.

All the more frustrating, then, for Dalglish that it was the home side who edged in front just before half-time after an error by the Uruguayan defender, Sebastian Coates, who allowed Jonathan Walters to dispossess him on the right touchline before sending in a cross that Jones steered past Pepe Reina with a neat, diving header.

Until then, it had seemed only a matter of time before Liverpool scored as Sorensen saved two shots from Carroll, blocked bravely at the feet of Suarez and kept out a low drive from Jordan Henderson at the foot of his left-hand post.

Dalglish would be encouraged to see spaces opening up, although it might be argued that Carroll, who also wasted a good chance with his head, needs clearly still to improve his finishing.

Happily for Dalglish, the same cannot be said of Suarez, who delivered a sublime equaliser nine minutes after the restart, collecting the ball near the left touchline, nutmegging Ryan Shotton and then beating Sorensen with a beautifully struck shot from outside the penalty area that evaded the keeper's outstretched hands before curling in at the far post.

It was a sixth goal of the season for the Uruguayan, leaving Stoke in need of something special from Jermaine Pennant against his former club when Pulis introduced the winger with an hour to go, also sending on Cameron Jerome in place of Matthew Etherington.

But, five minutes from time, the live-wire South American Suarez proved his quality for a second time, cleverly ghosting on to the blind side of Ryan Shawcross to meet Henderson's cross with a decisive header to move Liverpool into the next round.

Stoke City (4-4-2): Sorensen; Huth, Shawcross, Woodgate, Wilson; Shotton (Pennant, 60), Delap, Whelan, Etherington (Jerome, 64); Jones (Crouch, 88), Walters. Substitutes not used Nash (gk), Diao, Upson, Palacios.

Liverpool (4-1-3-2): Reina; Kelly, Carragher (Skrtel, 46), Coates, Agger; Lucas; Henderson, Spearing, Rodriguez (Bellamy, 82); Suarez (Kuyt, 88), Carroll.

Substitutes not used Doni, Aurelio, Adam, Flanagan.

Referee L Probert (Staffordshire).

## DAILY MIRROR

**SUPER SUAREZ SINKS STOKE;** Luis rules Britannia with deadly double  
 STOKE CITY 1 LIVERPOOL 2 LIVERPOOL can't win at the Britannia in the Premier League, but they just love playing here in the League Cup.

Luis Suarez's double, including a goal of the season contender, made it two wins out of two here for Liverpool in this competition - to go alongside their 8-0 thrashing of Stoke in 2000.

Liverpool boss Kenny Dalglish is getting used to the Uruguayan's brilliance, but says he struggles to find the words to describe his rare talent.

He said: "I ran out of words to describe him after I'd been here for just one week. "It was a fantastic goal, but you don't expect him to score tap-ins.

"Every win is important and for us the most important thing was the way we hung in there.

"In the first half, we missed six chances and we would expect to put one or two of them away.

"They got a goal in front and the boys dug deep, but we defended well and the wee man scored a fantastic goal, and had a good header too."

Tony Pulis admitted Liverpool were the better side. But he was angry with referee Lee Probert for ruling out a Jon Walters effort at 0-0, and ignoring a penalty claim involving Peter Crouch in the dying minutes.

The Stoke manager said: "The Walters goal decision from the long throw-in looked very, very soft.

"But the worst decision came in the 89th minute, when Peter Crouch was pulled back.

"Their lad wasn't even looking at the ball. The referee had a great view of it and didn't give it. That's disappointing." It looked like it would be the same old story for Liverpool as they missed chances galore against inspired keeper Thomas Sorensen.

Suarez and recalled hitman Andy Carroll had enough opportunities to settle the tie in the first half, while Sorensen also saved a leftfoot effort from Martin Kelly, low down at his near post.

Stoke were denied what Pulis claimed was a legitimate goal when Walters headed home a trademark long throw from Rory Delap and official Probert appeared to blow for a foul on Pepe Reina, even though the Potters striker didn't touch him.

Boyhood Evertonian Walters, who netted the winner when the sides met here last month in the Premier League, got his revenge a minute before half-time.

He robbed Reds defender Sebastian Coates on the right and crossed for Kenwyne Jones to head into the bottom far corner.

Liverpool's proud record of having never lost a cup tie to Stoke was in danger before Suarez hit a spectacular equaliser on 53 minutes.

The "wee man", as Dalglish calls him, received the ball out on the left and nutmegged Ryan Shotton, then curled a brilliant right-foot effort into the far corner.

Liverpool pushed for a winner and substitute Craig Bellamy exchanged passes with Carroll before shooting against a post.

But the Reds claimed victory on 85 minutes when Stoke failed to clear their lines and Jordan Henderson centred from the right for Suarez to head a second goal.

STOKE: Sorensen 8, Huth 6, Shawcross 6, Woodgate 6, Wilson 5, Shotton 5 (Pennant 60mins 6), Delap 6, Whelan 6, Etherington 6 (Jerome 64mins 5), Jones 6 (Crouch 88mins 5), Walters 7. LIVERPOOL: Reina 6, Kelly 6, Carragher 6 (Skrtel 46mins 5), Coates 5, Agger 6, Henderson 6, Lucas 6, Spearing 6, Rodriguez 6 (Bellamy 82mins 6); Suarez 9 (Kuyt 88mins 5), Carroll 6.

STOKE V LIVERPOOL MAN OF THE MATCH LUIS SUAREZStunning two-goal performance BALL POSSESSION 52 B 48 SHOTS ON TARGET 7 1 SHOTS OFF TARGET 5 S 3 CORNERS 53 OFFSIDE 6 3 FOULS 5 11 CARDS 1 3 0 0

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Stoke City 1 Liverpool FC 2: Classy Luis Suarez breaks Potters hoodoo RARELY has a Liverpool FC victory in the fourth round of the Carling Cup been celebrated so wildly.

As referee Lee Probert brought proceedings to a halt at the Britannia Stadium last night, Kenny Dalglish raised his arms aloft in delight.

The scenes of jubilation in the technical area were replicated on the pitch and among the thousands packed into the away end. Liverpool had only secured their passage to the quarter-finals of the Carling Cup – but it felt more significant than that.

The frustration of recent league stalemates was wiped away as the Reds produced a display of real character to dump out Stoke City.

The Britannia jinx has been broken. For the first time in five visits to face the Potters, Liverpool tasted victory.

And they did it by coming from behind to win a game for the first time since Dalglish returned in January.

Liverpool have made no secret of the importance they have attached to the Carling Cup this season – it represents their best opportunity of avoiding a sixth successive campaign without silverware.

A premature exit would have been a crushing blow and that looked on the cards when Kenwyne Jones headed Stoke in front against the run of play just before the break.

The Reds were in need of something special and Luis Suarez answered the call in emphatic fashion.

You simply can't keep him out of the headlines. Suarez has had to deal with plenty of unfair flack in recent weeks but this time it was his breathtaking talent which was the talking point.

Suarez has produced countless moments of magic since arriving from Ajax in January but none better than the strike which brought Liverpool level last night.

There appeared to be little danger when Suarez picked up possession wide on the right but he has a glorious habit of making something out of nothing.

He proceeded to nutmeg Ryan Shotton and then, from the corner of the box, bent a majestic shot past Thomas Sorensen and just inside the far post.

The striker then wrapped up the tie late on with a clinical header to take his tally for the season to seven.

Cramp forced him off at the death and ensured he got the standing ovation and the bear hug from his manager that his remarkable display merited.

Dalglish rung the chances with Suarez, Jamie Carragher and Pepe Reina the only players to retain their starting spots from Saturday's 1-1 draw with Norwich City.

Clearly wary of Stoke's aerial threat, Dalglish partnered 6ft 5ins Uruguayan Sebastian Coates at centre-back with Carragher, while Daniel Agger made his first start for a month at left-back.

Lucas Leiva was sorely missed against the Canaries and the Brazilian made a welcome return after suspension. Snapping into tackles and using the ball intelligently, Lucas ensured the Reds had a platform on which to launch their attacks.

Alongside him was the perfect accomplice in Jay Spearing. The Academy graduate hadn't featured since victory in the last round at Brighton but staked a claimed with a tireless performance.

What Spearing lacks in height, he makes up for in heart and he helped Liverpool stamp their authority on proceedings. The passing was neat and incisive but once again the Reds' quality outside the box wasn't matched by what went on inside it. Inside nine minutes Andy Carroll's fierce 25-yarder was parried by Sorensen and Suarez put the rebound wide.

With Agger impressing on his forays down the left, Stoke were repeatedly carved open. The Dane picked out Lucas who played a classy one-two with Maxi Rodriguez. The midfielder unselfishly squared for Suarez but Sorensen thwarted him.

Carroll failed to capitalise on a free header from Jordan Henderson's corner and the chances kept on coming. Just before the half hour mark Rodriguez's blocked shot fell kindly into Carroll's path but his low effort lacked the power needed to beat the keeper.

There was no let-up for Sorensen who made another smart stop to extend Martin Kelly's wait for a first Liverpool goal.

Jon Walters had a goal disallowed for a shove on Reina but Stoke had barely threatened as an attacking force when they were gifted the lead just before the break. Only Coates will know why he didn't simply clear his lines when he had Walters breathing down his neck 40 yards out. Instead the new boy from Nacional tried to lift the ball over Walters and was left red-faced as the striker dispossessed him.

Walters ensured the mistake was punished as his pin-point cross was nodded home by Jones.

Suarez almost provided an instant response with a passage of play Dalglish should copy on to DVDs and post to those unfairly slinging mud in the striker's direction.

The Reds' top scorer was clipped by Ryan Shawcross as he burst into the box but remained on his feet and dragged a shot just wide. If Suarez had gone to ground, the Reds would have had a penalty and Shawcross, who had already been booked, would surely have been heading for an early bath.

Martin Skrtel replaced Carragher at the interval and, nine minutes later, Suarez ensured parity was restored.

The Uruguayan took the plaudits but there was also a promising display from Carroll, who put himself about on his return to the side and won some key headers in both penalty boxes.

Craig Bellamy was denied by the post but with five minutes to go the Reds struck. Jordan Henderson's volleyed cross picked him out the unmarked Suarez, who planted a header past Sorensen.

The last time Liverpool knocked Stoke out the League Cup, they went on to lift the trophy a decade ago.

The omens are good and there's a real hunger to ensure this run leads all the way to Wembley next February.

Stoke City (4-4-2): Sorensen, Huth, Shawcross, Woodgate, Wilson, Shotton (Pennant 60), Delap, Whelan, Etherington (Jerome 65), Jones (Crouch 88), Walters.

Not used: Nash, Dia, Upson Palacios.

Liverpool (4-4-2): Reina, Kelly, Carragher (Skrtel 45), Coates, Agger, Henderson, Lucas, Spearing, Rodriguez (Bellamy 82), Suarez (Kuyt 89), Carroll.

Not used: Doni, Aurelio, Adam, Flanagan.

Referee: Lee Probert.

Attendance: 24, 934

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# The Sentinel

## Slick Suarez slays Potters

THERE is no whiter smile than Luis Suarez's – and there was plenty for him to smile about at the Britannia last night.

His two well-taken goals propelled Liverpool into the Carling Cup quarter-finals and left Stoke lamenting the loss of a quietly-cherished dream.

For Stoke will now have to celebrate the 40th anniversary of their famous League Cup triumph with something rather more mundane than a timely and emotional return to Wembley in the same competition.

There can be few real quibbles with the final outcome after Liverpool patently created the better and greater opportunities during a tie neither side wanted to see go into extra-time.

All too rarely could Stoke conjure up the kind of clinical quality that would see them exploit some poor defending for Kenwyne Jones to head them into a half-time lead.

But at least the home side were defending with so much zeal – and their goalkeeper protecting his clean sheet with such a watertight insurance policy behind – that Liverpool had to dig deep and produce two moments of brilliance from Suarez to inflict what was Stoke's first home defeat in 10 games this season.

Stoke, making five changes from Sunday's 3-1 defeat at Arsenal, were certainly indebted to one of those returnees as Thomas Sorensen pulled off four or five significant saves to thwart a distinctly lively Liverpool in the opening 45 minutes.

The big Dane frequently proved a defiant last line of defence as those in front of him were given the runaround all too easily.

Sorensen set the tone when sinking to his left to palm away Andy Carroll's stinging drive from distance, while that man Suarez couldn't steady his body in time to stab the rebound on target.

Suarez was to have an even clearer opening in the 16th minute when Lucas played a one-two with Maxi Rodríguez before providing a low pass for the Uruguayan striker.

But Sorensen anticipated superbly by diving to his left to block Suarez's first-time effort at close-quarters to leave the South American throwing his hands to the skies... and not for the last time.

Sorensen was also equal to a poor header from Carroll two minutes later after the big Geordie escaped Stoke's clutches rather too easily from a left-wing corner.

Maxi, one of eight changes to Liverpool's line-up who drew 1-1 with Norwich at Anfield at the weekend, then saw his shot half-blocked to Carroll for a low drive that – surprise, surprise – Sorensen was ready for by diving low to safely hold.

Martin Kelly was next in the queue for Liverpool, but the right-back's low drive after cutting in from the Stoke left was again held low down by Sorensen.

Pepe Reina was nowhere near so busy at the other end in the opening period.

Jon Walters curled an early effort on to the roof of the Liverpool net from the corner of the penalty area, while a Robert Huth header thudded into a defender before the Spanish keeper needed to react from a long throw.

And yet Reina was grateful for referee Lee Probert's charitable interpretation of events in the 35th minute when Ryan Shawcross, much to his angst, was penalised for impeding the keeper as he came, but failed, to prevent Walters glancing home his header for a disallowed goal.

Jones had required treatment on the half-hour after having his foot trodded on by Coates – the Liverpool defender, not the Stoke chairman – but the Trinidadian was smiling again after events in the 44th minute.

For Coates trod on nothing, least of all the bouncing ball, when hounded by Walters on the Liverpool left touchline to leave himself dispossessed and out of the game.

Walters then centred at pace for Jones to stoop and skid his header across Reina and into his far corner for 1-0 somewhat against the run of play.

Liverpool might still have levelled in what remained of the first half, but Suarez was seemingly so disorientated by Stoke taking the lead that he forgot to go down when half-tripped by Shawcross as he broke at speed into the City area.

He remained on his feet for once in his life and skewed his eventual shot wide of the far stick, before remonstrating with the linesman for not flagging ... and presumably with himself for not going to ground.

The atmosphere was still crackling after the break, particularly when Suarez was anywhere near the ball, but even the most one-eyed Stoke fan had to privately applaud his 53rd-minute equaliser.

There seemed little on as he ventured gamely into the left corner of the Stoke area, but in a flash he had nut-megged Ryan Shotton and then bent an absolute beauty of a shot around Sorensen's full-length dive and into the keeper's far left-hand corner.

The mood of celebration now belonged to Liverpool's 4,000 following as they anticipated further mayhem from Suarez.

Jermaine Pennant and Cameron Jerome were thrown on to try to tip the scales back in Stoke's favour after they had failed to create anything meaningful in the first 20 minutes of the second period.

Liverpool's passing remained the slicker, while lungs were bursting in both camps as the game became increasingly stretched in the final quarter.

There was a marked difference in the late shooting as Marc Wilson skewed a mile wide at one end, while Craig Bellamy announced his arrival from the bench by scraping the outside of Sorensen's right-hand post at the other.

But the visitors were to have their pound of flesh shortly afterwards when Jordan Henderson lobbed a half-clearance back into the Stoke box from the Liverpool right.

And the ever-sprightly Suarez, having given Shawcross and Co the slip, planted a free header across a helpless Sorensen and into the left of his goal for his side's 86th-minute winner.

Peter Crouch was thrown on for Jones as time ran out for the home side – and he was immediately appealing in vain for a penalty when he and Coates grappled for a corner.

The former England striker continued to generate late excitement by hooking wide from what transpired to be an offside position.

City attacked once more in stoppage time as Huth launched himself at a high ball, but nothing could silence a victorious rendition of Liverpool's You'll Never Walk Alone anthem from behind Reina's goal.