

Date: 1 April 2012
 Opposition: Newcastle United
 Competition: League

Echo	Times	Mirror
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THE TIMES

Red for Reina darkens cloud over Anfield

Newcastle United 2 Cisse 19, 59

Liverpool 0 Referee: M Atkinson Attendance: 52,363

As this game entered its final stages, it was merely another bad day at the office for Liverpool. Within a few minutes, with a brooding Andy Carroll joined in the dressing room by a seething Pepe Reina, it had descended into something far worse. A sixth defeat in seven Barclays Premier League matches is bad enough, with Papiss Cisse scoring another two goals in the Newcastle United No 9 shirt that was briefly synonymous with Carroll, but it was compounded by serious collateral damage. Carroll, his number up, trudged off muttering obscenities and walked straight past Kenny Dalglish to the dressing room. Barely a minute later Reina was sent off for violent conduct after a clash with James Perch and it all started to feel rather Sunday League.

It looked as if things were falling apart for Liverpool. They have the Carling Cup in their trophy cabinet and an FA Cup semi-final against Everton coming up, but right now, 31 points adrift of Manchester United and only three ahead of Fulham, Norwich City and Swansea City, their horizon is dominated by dark clouds rather than any silver lining, which is one reason Fenway Sports Group plans a wide-ranging end-of-season review into this campaign's failures.

In the same way that there is something wonderfully right with a Newcastle team who refuse to give up on a challenge for Champions League qualification, there is something wrong with Liverpool. It is not easy to pinpoint, given that they made a positive start at the Sports Direct Arena, but their response to falling behind after 19 minutes was terribly meek and, when stimulation was finally found in the closing stages, the reaction, from both Carroll and Reina in different ways, was entirely negative. Carroll's return to Tyneside was not a happy one. He was booked for diving in the fifth minute, a terribly misguided attempt to win a penalty when, having taken the ball around Tim Krul, it looked easier to score, and then saw a header blocked on the line by Danny Simpson's hand -- again, no penalty. At that point he and Liverpool were playing well, but the moment Cisse put Newcastle ahead with a precise header from Hatem Ben Arfa's cross, the narrative and the mood changed dramatically.

The locals jeered Carroll throughout and delighted in his substitution, but his reception lacked true spite. How angry could they be expected to get about Carroll -- or indeed Jose Enrique, who ended up replacing Reina in goal -- when it is clear that, as a team and as a club, Newcastle are so much richer, financially and otherwise, for his departure?

Newcastle have moved on so impressively that they did not need closure on the Carroll affair yesterday, but they got it anyway. There were times when Carroll looked like proving a point -- not that he is worth [pounds sterling]35 million but that he is at least worth something -- but by the end of the afternoon his contribution had been dwarfed by that of Cisse, who has now scored seven goals in as many games since his [pounds sterling]9 million move from Freiburg. Service is a huge factor. Alan Pardew made the point afterwards that, while Newcastle had favoured a more direct approach to play to Carroll's strengths while he was there, Liverpool have "struggled to find the game plan" to do likewise. These days Newcastle's style is more measured, based around the intelligent passing of Yohan Cabaye and the flair and incision of Ben Arfa.

For all that, the first goal came from the type of cross that Carroll would yearn for. Jonjo Shelvey's mistake was to allow Ben Arfa, a left-footed player on the right-hand side, the space to step inside and deliver an inswinging cross to the far post. As Martin Skrtel misjudged the flight of the ball, Cisse drifted into space behind him and steered a header in off the post.

Liverpool's performance seemed to be shaped by stupid decisions, whether it was Carroll's dive, Shelvey and then Enrique showing Ben Arfa the inside route, Steven Gerrard trying too many killer passes or Shelvey sprinting 40 yards to prevent a Newcastle throw-in and, in doing so, losing possession to Danny Guthrie, whose cross was headed wide by an unmarked Cisse.

Newcastle were not even in top gear -- aside from Cheik Tiote, who only ever plays flat out -- but, as in the 3-0 victory over Manchester United in January, they were extremely controlled. There remained an impressive degree of control in their play once they had taken the lead. Under Pardew they have become not only a resilient and eye-catching team but a tactically astute one.

After half-time Newcastle played with discipline and restraint, but when they attacked, they did so with purpose. Four minutes into the second half, Mike Williamson hit the post with a header from Guthrie's cross. Ten minutes after that Guthrie, Cabaye and Demba Ba combined to set up Cisse, who, having previously been in an offside position, steadied himself, took the ball around Reina and stroked it through a crowd of players to make it 2-0. Apart from when Luis Suarez saw a shot cleared off the line by Perch, Liverpool barely threatened to claw back the deficit. Indeed, both individually and collectively, they seemed to have accepted their fate long before Carroll decided to treat his substitution as an affront. It got worse when Reina reacted indignantly to a kick from Perch, lowering his head towards the Newcastle defender. It took some distasteful theatrics from Perch, throwing himself to the ground and clutching his face, to seal the goalkeeper's fate -- which will extend to a three-match ban that includes the FA Cup semi-final -- but even Dalglish admitted that the red card was deserved. Afterwards Dalglish said that Carroll and Reina should have found a better way to channel their frustration but that it was at least a sign

that Liverpool do not "enjoy losing games". Whether or not they enjoyed it, it is becoming a disturbing habit -- and one that they did far too little to fight off yesterday.

Ratings NEWCASTLE 4-2-3-1 TKrul 6 D Simpson 7 M Williams 7 J Perch 0 7 J Gutierrez 6 D Guthrie 6 C Tiote 0 7 H Ben Arfa 7 Y Cabaye 7 DBa 7 P Cisse 0 8 Substitutes: D Gosling (for Guthrie, 65 6), S Ameobi (for Cisse, 74), D Santon (for Ben Arfa, 90). Not used: R Elliot, R Taylor, H Vuckic, S Ferguson. Next: Swansea City (a).

LIVERPOOL 4-3-3 J M Reina 0 5 J Flanagan 0 6 J Carragher 6 M Skrtel 6 J Enrique 5 SGerrard 6 J Spearing 5 J Shelvey 0 4 CBellamy 6 A Carroll 0 6 L Suarez 6 Substitutes: S Downing (for Shelvey, 75), D Kuyt (for Carroll, 79), J Henderson (for Bellamy, 79). Not used: A Doni, S Coates, F Aurelio, M Rodriguez. Next: Aston Villa (h).

the guardian

Football: Dalglish fires warning to Carroll after Liverpool's misery deepens: Substituted striker storms off swearing: Red card rules Reina out of Cup semi-final

Kenny Dalglish has ordered Andy Carroll to deal better with his frustration after the pounds 35m centre-forward reacted to his second-half substitution by ignoring Liverpool's manager and storming down the tunnel swearing.

Carroll, who was booked for diving while endeavouring to win an early penalty, struggled painfully as Newcastle United enhanced their chances of European qualification with a 2-0 victory featuring two more goals from the prolific Papiss Cisse.

It consigned Liverpool to a sixth defeat in seven Premier League games and increased speculation that the Anfield club's owners may be tempted to part with Dalglish this summer. Liverpool are eighth in the Premier League, a position they have not finished below since returning to the top flight in 1962.

The Liverpool manager's afternoon was darkened by the sending off of Pepe Reina, his goalkeeper, for an attempted headbutt on the Newcastle defender James Perch seven minutes from time. Reina will miss the FA Cup semi-final against Everton.

Whether Carroll starts that game is anyone's guess. "Andy came off and went down the tunnel," said Dalglish. "He was frustrated with the way the game had gone. Not just for himself but for the team. That frustration takes him up into the dressing room.

"We have not got a problem with people showing desperation or disappointment or frustration. But we need to channel it better than we have done.

"We started well enough. We passed and moved and looked quite threatening but it ended with a lot of frustration and disappointment and I think that was a result of the actions that Pepe [Reina] took. He got a deserved red card."

Asked if Reina had apologised, Dalglish replied: "There was a bit of remorse there, yes." Even so, some Liverpool players seemed to feel that Perch, who was booked for fouling the goalkeeper at the incident's outset, had provoked matters before over-egging his reaction to the attempted butt. Although things had calmed down by the final whistle, Reina and Perch appeared to be agreeing to reconvene in the tunnel as the Spanish goalkeeper departed.

Asked about Perch's part in Reina's dismissal, Alan Pardew, Newcastle's manager, was circumspect. "I've watched it again and I don't want to delve into it too much," he said. "But the goalkeeper had to go."

Pardew was more forthcoming about Carroll, whom he sold controversially in January 2011. "Andy needs to have a game plan that works for him and Liverpool are struggling to find that game plan for him with the players they have," he said.

"When Andy was here we were more direct than we are now and he was magnificent. But Andy will be magnificent again. I felt for him today, I really did." Carroll might have scored with an early header had Danny Simpson not cleared the ball off the line with what looked suspiciously like an arm - Pardew insisted it was a shoulder. "We could have had a penalty kick in the first half," said Dalglish.

"That would have been them down to 10 men but we never got it." He agreed Tim Krul had not felled Carroll when the striker appealed for a first-half penalty in the wake of his collapse after a non-contact challenge from Newcastle's goalkeeper. Although Krul subsequently accused his former team-mate of diving - "He was looking for a penalty, like all strikers try to do" - Dalglish was rather less harsh in his assessment. "I thought it wasn't a penalty kick when Andy went down with the goalkeeper," he conceded. "But I also thought Andy was losing his balance anyway. Even if he had got fully past the goalie, I think he would have still fallen over. We don't have a problem with that. We might have a problem with the yellow card, though, because I don't think it was intentional him looking for a penalty kick."

Pardew attributed Cisse's performance to diet. The striker's two goals here took his Premier League total to seven since his debut in February - two more than Carroll has managed in the league in 14 months at Liverpool. "We had Africa day at the training ground on Friday," Pardew said. "We made him feel at home by having curried goat for lunch. It was lovely."

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The Mail

CISSE HAS THE JUMP ON REDS

Newcastle 2 Liverpool 0 PEPE REINA deserved to go. Kenny Dalglish said as much. But many more afternoons like this and Liverpool's American owners might wonder if the same applies to their manager. Over in Boston this will certainly be hard to stomach. A sixth defeat in seven Barclays Premier League encounters, thanks to two goals from Papiss Cisse and a fine Newcastle display, amounts to Liverpool's worst run in 59 years. Andy Carroll, the most expensive English footballer in history who cost them [pounds sterling]35million, responded to being substituted in the 80th minute by turning on Dalglish and storming down the tunnel. And Reina, a goalkeeper who has played in every minute of every Liverpool game since Dalglish took charge for a second time, will probably be suspended for the FA Cup semi-final against Everton as well as two league games. Liverpool have already slipped below Everton in the league and if they lose the derby at Wembley, the crisis will reach what would be intolerable depths for most owners. Dalglish is, of course, different. As untouchable as a manager can be. He already has a trophy in the bag this season, and with it the guarantee of European football. The supporters will never turn against him and have still not directed any of their frustration at the man they consider their 'King' -- not even when Jose Enrique pulled on Reina's shirt and Steven Gerrard moved to right back amid scenes of total chaos yesterday.

But business is business for John W Henry and his associates and right now Liverpool have the look of a team who are unravelling under the guidance of a manager who is suffering because the majority of his marquee signings have failed miserably to deliver. It takes far more than this to break a man like Dalglish but yesterday he looked utterly exasperated. 'If they start to enjoy losing games then we will have a problem,' he said with a chilling sense of desperation.

There was no attempt to direct any blame at James Perch, even if the Newcastle defender should be ashamed of his theatrical response to Reina's relatively harmless headbutt. The laws are the laws and Dalglish was the first to recognise that his goalkeeper had been stupid. He also acknowledged that Carroll had crossed a line but there was no public criticism. Dalglish, though, will not tolerate such insolence -- not from anyone but certainly not from someone who has been as poor as the [pounds sterling]35m man.

That said, Dalglish defended Carroll against accusations of diving by claiming he lost his balance as he tried to take the ball beyond Tim Krul. Television evidence did not flatter the towering striker and Newcastle's goalkeeper certainly saw the incident differently. 'He dived,' said Krul. Simple as that.

Some might say Dalglish contributed to the four-letter tirade that marked Carroll's departure. It was always going to be a difficult afternoon for this proud son of Newcastle who was booed every time he touched the ball, and he gave Alan Pardew a piece of his mind when the Newcastle manager also accused him of diving. But taking him off was a crushing humiliation.

If there were positives for Liverpool, there was the fact that they should have had a penalty when Danny Simpson denied them what would have been the opening goal with his left arm. They also had other opportunities during a decent first 15 minutes or so. But the moment Cisse scored his first goal, they looked like a team seriously lacking in confidence and unable to muster the required response.

They needed Martin Skrtel to score when he met Gerrard's freekick with a close-range header he somehow sent over the bar. They needed Carroll to finish rather than fall a touch too easily when he accelerated past Perch, leaving himself with only Krul to beat. After that Liverpool found the thickness of the woodwork once again denying them, on this occasion when Krul tipped a deflected cross from Craig Bellamy against his bar. Then there was Simpson sparing Mike Williamson the embarrassment of an own goal by blocking his colleague's header on the line with his arm. Carroll saw it, but referee Martin Atkinson did not.

It made Cisse's 19th-minute goal all the more painful for Liverpool. It was a marvellous delivery from Hatem Ben Arfa, the best player on the pitch hitting it with just enough weight to clear Skrtel. But it was a super header from Cisse too, the ball bouncing beyond Reina and off the far post. From there Newcastle, now within touching distance of the Champions League places, thanks to the skilful leadership of Pardew, dominated. Williamson met a cross from Danny Guthrie with a header that bounced off the foot of a post but when a return pass from Demba Ba eluded Ben Arfa, thanks to a challenge from Enrique, and instead fell to Cisse, the Senegalese striker scored his seventh goal in seven games by pushing the ball beyond Reina and finishing with ease.

With 31 minutes left, the Liverpool of not so long ago might have fought back. But the Liverpool of now imploded. First came the sight of Carroll swearing at Dalglish and then Reina reacting wildly to a late challenge by Perch. Enough, surely, to make any owner twitchy.

MATCH FACTS NEWCASTLE UNITED (4-3-3): Krul 7; Simpson 7, Williamson 7, Perch 7, Gutierrez 6; Guthrie 7 (Gosling 65min, 6), Tioté 7, Cabaye 6; Ben Arfa 8 (Santon 90), Cisse 8 (Shola Ameobi 74, 6), Ba 7. Subs not used: R Taylor, Vuckic, Ferguson, Elliot. Booked: Cisse, Tioté, Perch. Scorer: Cisse 19, 59.

LIVERPOOL (4-1-4-1): Reina 3; Flanagan 5, Skrtel 6, Carragher 6, Enrique 6; Spearing 5; Bellamy 6 (Henderson 79), Gerrard 5, Shelvey 5 (Downing 76), Suarez 6; Carroll 4 (Kuyt 79).

Subs not used: Aurelio, Rodriguez, Coates, Doni. Booked: Carroll, Shelvey, Flanagan. Sent off: Reina. Man of the match: Hatem Ben Arfa. Referee: Martin Atkinson 7. Attendance: 52,363.

The Daily Telegraph

Carroll outburst sets seal on Liverpool's misery

Newcastle United 2 Cisse 19, 59

Liverpool 0 Att: 52,363

Andy Carroll left the pitch swearing at Kenny Dalglish and close to tears. Pepe Reina departed after being shown a red card for his reckless butt on James Perch. Liverpool headed home both pointless and humiliated.

This was a chance for Liverpool to reassert their dominance over the Tynesiders, close an eight-point gap and justify the decision by Carroll and Jose Enrique to leave for supposedly bigger and better things.

Having paid [pounds sterling]41million for the pair, and in the process funded Newcastle's rebuilding work, Liverpool were expected to underline their supremacy over opposition they had beaten six times in seven meetings.

To say it did not go to plan would be a huge understatement. Rather than restore the natural order, Liverpool were reminded just how far they have fallen and how difficult it will be to climb back. Newcastle were excellent and in Papiss Demba Cisse they have signed a jewel. His two goals yesterday mean he has scored seven in as many games since his January move from Freiburg, two more than Carroll has managed in 36 league appearances for Liverpool.

It is a brutal statistic that Newcastle should feel smug about, given that he cost less than a third of the fee Liverpool paid for Carroll, their former No 9.

Liverpool have never finished lower than eighth in English football's top flight since Bill Shankly returned them there in 1962. It is a brave man who would bet they will not do so this season, as the team are in disarray.

For all the positives the Carling Cup victory brought - albeit only after a penalty shoot-out victory over a Championship side - and for the satisfaction achieved at reaching the semi-finals of the FA Cup, Liverpool are a pale shadow of the side they once were. League titles are a thing of the past; so too is the Champions League. On this evidence, coupled with that collected during their previous five defeats in six league games, Liverpool, now below Everton, are in danger of losing ground on the top clubs, not gaining it.

As for Carroll, he does not even resemble the shadow of the player he was when he wore black and white stripes. Liverpool probably should never have paid [pounds sterling]35million for a striker with just six successful months of Premier League football behind him, but few could have predicted he would go so far backwards so fast. He naively seemed to think he would receive a warm welcome on his first playing return to Tyneside, sheltered by the back slapping and well-wishes he receives whenever he returns for a night out. The venom of the boos and jeers stung. Carroll should have scored in the first half and his game disintegrated after the interval. When, to no great surprise, he was substituted, redfaced and emotional, he swore at Dalglish - his long-time protector - and flounced down the tunnel. Tyneside cackled its delight, although the home fans still had Enrique to goad. The Spaniard cynically agitated to leave last summer, refusing to discuss a new contract before criticising Newcastle's lack of ambition while predicting they would never "challenge for a top-six place".

They are comments that have come back to haunt him and he looked almost as uncomfortable as Carroll, eventually ending in goal after Reina's dismissal for his red-mist lunge at Perch, Liverpool having used all their three substitutes. The Newcastle defender was superb all game and while he made the most of the contact, referee Martin Atkinson was right to show Liverpool's goalkeeper a red card nine minutes from time.

Liverpool actually started the game brightly, particularly when they attacked down Newcastle's left-flank where winger Jonas Gutierrez was deployed as a makeshift full-back. There were also some encouraging signs from Carroll, who looked dominant in the air, but the Geordie is just not the same player in front of goal. Beating Mike Williamson in the air, Carroll was able to run on to his own header, skip past the covering Perch to bear down on goalkeeper Tim Krul. The entire stadium held its breath.

Carroll took the ball past Krul, but the goalkeeper withdraw his arm to allow him past. Carroll, anticipating contact that never came, tripped over his own feet. If he had stayed upright, he could have rolled the ball into the empty net; instead he was shown a yellow card for cheating.

The locals roared their delight and then turned their venom on him for diving. Even Alan Pardew berated his former striker.

Krul was needed to turn a deflected cross from Craig Bellamy on to the bar and Carroll also went close with a header after another cross from the Welshman looped up off Williamson. Liverpool probably should have had a penalty when Danny Simpson prevented Williamson from scoring an own goal with his arm. It was another hard luck story for Dalglish to whinge about, but Newcastle took the lead soon after. Hatem Ben Arfa picked the ball up on the right, drifted around Jay Spearing and delivered a perfect cross - just over the head of Martin Skrtel - to pick out Cisse, who scored via the inside of the far post.

Newcastle were a different side after that and Cisse should have made it two, but headed wide.

Williamson's header hit the post early in the second half, but Newcastle's second goal came when Ben Arfa caused panic in the Liverpool defence, combined with Demba Ba, before the ball found its way to Cisse who finished well again. The striker had been in an offside position, but the goal stood as he had not been active in the first phase of play.

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THE INDEPENDENT

35m striker finds only humiliation on homecoming

There was an attempt yesterday afternoon, as the enormity of Liverpool's capitulation was still sinking in, to rebolt the doors and hammer wood over the smashed windows.

But by then it was too late. By the time Kenny Dalglish tried to understate the size of the disaster which unfolded at St James' Park in front of the nation, intruders were in and the only question now is quite where Liverpool move on from here? There are seminal moments in the history of a football club. Andy Carroll's 79th-minute substitution and the tirade he aimed at his own bench as a result will become one, either as an admission that Liverpool erred horrendously in the [pounds sterling]35m acquisition of the player 15 months ago, or that the manager who made the decision is no longer equipped to get the best out of the near [pounds sterling]120m the Fenway Sports Group have so far given him to rebuild one of England's great institutions.

They did not feel like one yesterday, and certainly they did not look or act like one when Phil Dowd, the fourth official, informed a baying Tyneside crowd that the Liverpool No 9, their former No 9, was being taken off. It felt cruel because there have been miserable afternoons for Carroll since he flew away from the Newcastle training ground in owner Mike Ashley's helicopter, but nothing to compare with what he went through for 79 tortuous minutes yesterday. Those 15 months were encapsulated in that period of time.

His first homecoming did not start well; in fact it began awfully and it never got any better. He touched the ball after 10 seconds and was jeered. After 25 seconds some Newcastle fans verbally abused him. After 88 seconds he lost possession with an ambitious chip. And then in the ninth minute, it all simply became too much for him.

It will be forgotten that Carroll beat Mike Williamson in the air and went past James Perch as if he were still wearing black and white. Scientists have proven that time does not really stand still at those life-defining moments, but here it felt like it did.

Carroll, one on one, had only to go round goalkeeper Tim Krul to bury so much personal misery and put the ball into an empty goal to silence the abusers. And he did put the ball past the Dutchman, but at that point crashed to the ground, and every Newcastle supporter leapt in the air. Krul gesticulated furiously that it had been a dive, and as Martin Atkinson flashed a yellow card for that exact offence, Carroll's career must have flashed before his eyes. He would not accept that he had dived, furiously arguing with the Newcastle bench moments after launching a tirade at Alan Pardew, his former manager.

Then, with 11 minutes remaining, as Carroll's number was up and he walked off, came more abuse directed at his own dugout, who genuinely looked taken aback by the hostility. Among those words appeared to be something along the lines of "effin, joke this", and they are phrases you simply cannot direct at your boss, wherever you work.

Carroll was not done, storming down the tunnel without acknowledgment for Dalglish, the manager who paid all that money for him what feels like such a long time ago.

By then Liverpool trailed by two goals, the old king had been replaced by a new one, Papiss Ciss[c], and watching all this high in the stands sat Ashley and Derek Llambias, the men who oversaw the sale of a developing Geordie icon, and took flak for the decision.

They were smiling a lot yesterday, especially after the second, game-clinching goal scored by the new No 9, Ciss[c], the one Llambias and Ashley spent [pounds sterling]9m on in January, almost a quarter of the Carroll fee for a player whose two goals yesterday took his tally to seven from seven starts. The comparison is cutting. Carroll has five from 21.

Perhaps there is an explanation as to why Carroll fell over/dived/explored: the 23-year-old has too much on his shoulders. He got angrier as the afternoon went on, and his frustration could be understood in part as a result of events in the opening 18 minutes. In that period, aside from his own indiscretion, Liverpool hit the crossbar with a Craig Bellamy deflected cross-cum-shot and had a clear penalty turned down when Williamson headed towards his own goal and his team-mate, Danny Simpson, used an arm to stop the ball on the line.

But then came the collapse, and then came the home heroics with Williamson and the excellent Perch standing strong at the heart of a makeshift defence, Cheick Tiot[c] rampaging around midfield, Hatem Ben Arfa showing yet more glimpses of genuine, world-class talent, and Ciss[c] blending work-rate and desire with his natural, goalscoring instinct, a match-winning No 9, the antithesis of the big man in red.

After 19 minutes, Ben Arfa skipped past Jay Spearing and Jonjo Shelvey and crossed, cleverly, to the far post, where Ciss[c] beat the offside trap of Martin Skrtel and headed deep past Pepe Reina. Williamson had headed against the Liverpool post before Ciss[c] struck again, on the hour, this time looking offside but finding the quickness of foot to round Reina and score after more good work from Ben Arfa and Demba Ba.

Newcastle moved 11 points clear of Liverpool with this victory, but still there was more misery to come for the visitors, even after Carroll had stomped off. That it could get worse caused genuine shock. Liverpool were already beaten, when Reina lost his head, reacting to a late challenge from Perch by putting his head towards

the Newcastle player. Contact was debatable but intent was unquestionable, as was the red card. Reina waved down the tunnel as he went off - giving his goalkeeping shirt to the also much-abused Jose Enrique as Liverpool had already made three substitutions - and pointed at Perch, offering him the chance, it seemed, to meet after the game..

That did not happen, but it spoke volumes for Liverpool's misplaced aggression. Defeat means this is the worst run - six defeats in their last seven league games - the club has been on since the 1953-54 season. Even Newcastle have won a domestic trophy since then for goodness sake.



WORSE THAN HODGSON! ..that's the damning statistic after Toon expose brave new world of King Kenny

KENNY DALGLISH chewed on the zip of his jacket as Liverpool's humiliation unfolded - a man whose untouchable status at Anfield is punctured, perhaps beyond repair.

Discipline lost, heads gone, can Liverpool's season have reached a more sobering, depressing moment than the final chaotic minutes at Newcastle yesterday? The statistics mounting up against Dalglish and his side are damaging enough. Two league wins out of 12 in this calendar year. Six defeats in seven games, and three losses on the trot.

And one that might make Dalglish jump each time owner John W Henry phones - seven points in their last 10 games. That is six fewer than during Roy Hodgson's last 10 games in a run that earned him the sack.

It was the manner in which his players lost their cool, in the face of Geordie teasing - on the pitch, and from the terraces - that was most embarrassing. Keeper Pepe Reina was sent off for dipping his head into James Perch's late on. The three-game ban rules him out of the FA Cup semi-final with Everton.

Reina then stormed off, gesticulating at Perch and offering the Newcastle defender a fight in the dressing room. The red card was deserved, but Reina claimed Perch hammed up minimal contact. Alexander Doni, yet to play a minute for Liverpool, will have to deputise in goal.

Then there was former St James' Park hero Andy Carroll. Red-faced and close to tears when substituted, the Geordie barked f-word dissent at Dalglish and stomped straight down the tunnel.

"Frustration and disappointment" was how Dalglish summed it was ow alg s ued d up the reaction. Carroll will also want to forget the moment when he was booked for diving having rounded Toon keeper Tim Krul.

The heat is on Dalglish and Liverpool, now behind Everton in the league. Should they dip below their current position of eighth it would be their worst finish since returning to the top flight under Bill Shankly 50 years ago.

Further undermining Dalglish is that Liverpool have handed Newcastle pounds 41million for Carroll and left-back Jose Enrique in the last 14 months, and have a team 11 points adrift of the Magpies.

Enrique walked out on Newcastle in the summer by tweeting they "would never finish in the top six". He ended up in goal, and hearing 52,363 spectators remind him of that ill-advised quote. Liverpool could still do a cup double, but the weakness in their squad, and the loss of form is alarming.

As is their fruitless grasping for a pattern of play that suits their players. Carroll, as Alan Pardew later pointed out, being the biggest victim.

Unearthing a few decent players for their transfer mega-bucks would help Liverpool. That is what Newcastle have done, and Pardew has moulded a fluid, ferociously competitive and exciting team.

Match-winner Papiss Cisse is being compared to that most deadly of former Newcastle finishers Andy Cole, for his clinical poaching in the box.

He wanted to make an immediate impact at St James' Park and has done so in style, his sixth and seventh goals in seven starts and one sub appearance a handsome return for a player just two months into his career in England. Hatem Ben Arfa, showing the promise Geordies always believed he had, created the first goal. The French winger collected the ball and jinked past Jay Spearing, before bursting towards Jonjo Shelvey and turning inside to cross to the back post. Cisse peeled off Martin Skrtel and directed a header back across Reina and in. That was on 18 minutes and 40 minutes later, Cisse struck again. Yohan Cabaye played in Demba Ba on the edge of the box. He shook off a challenge and slipped a ball across the area. Ben Arfa was just too late to reach it, but Cisse collected the ball, put Skrtel onto his backside with a cutback and tapped home.

The visitors were bright enough early on and should have had a penalty, but referee Martin Atkinson did not spot Danny Simpson clearing the ball off the line with his arm.

Skrtel headed over from five yards after five minutes. Carroll dived after rounding Krul and was booked and ridiculed. Five league goals in 36 appearances is becoming a heavy burden.

Enough to make anyone swear in frustration.

NEWCASTLE: Krul 7, Simpson 7, Perch 7, Williamson 7, Gutierrez 7, Cabaye 8, Tiote 7, Guthrie 7 (Gosling 65 6), Ben Arfa 8 (Santon 90), Cisse 8 (Shola Ameobi 74), Ba 8. LIVERPOOL: Reina 3, Flanagan 4, Carragher 5, Skrtel 5, Enrique 4, Gerrard 5, Spearing 5, Shelvey 5 (Downing 76), Bellamy 7 (Henderson 79), Carroll 5 (Kuyt 79), Suarez 5. Att: 52,363 REF: Martin Atkinson

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Desperate Reds can't shake the losing habit

WHAT a desperate end to a wretched afternoon. As Jose Enrique pulled on the goalkeeping shirt, Pepe Reina walked off and out of Liverpool FC's FA Cup semi-final date with Everton at Wembley.

The raging Spaniard turned his fury on defender James Perch whose theatrics had contributed to him being handed his marching orders. But forget scapegoats and tales of injustice. The truth is Liverpool and Reina got what they deserved.

Reina only had himself to blame for picking up a three-match ban which will bring his run of 183 consecutive league appearances to a juddering halt.

His stupidity didn't cost Liverpool at St James' Park yesterday as they were long since resigned to their fate by the time the red mist descended. But his reckless decision to shove his head in the direction of Perch, who took the chance to audition for an Oscar, seriously risks consigning this rollercoaster campaign to one of abject failure. Easter is just around the corner and Liverpool have all their eggs in one basket. Put the FA Cup alongside the Carling Cup in the Anfield trophy cabinet come May and the pain of this pitiful sequence of league results will be eased.

But fail in that mission and there will be no escaping a major inquest into a league campaign of such glaring under-achievement. Having leapfrogged the Reds courtesy of their win over West Brom, Everton will be licking their lips at the prospect of facing Kenny Dalglish's side under that giant arch in the capital. Unless there is a dramatic transformation, they will be up against a Liverpool team woefully out of form and virtually devoid of confidence with a keeper untested at Premier League level between the posts. Alexander Doni, who arrived from Roma last summer, has yet to make a competitive appearance for the Reds.

The last time the Brazilian was spotted in action was in a friendly against Rangers at Ibrox back in October when he departed before the hour mark after suffering a dislocated finger. Doni has waited patiently for his chance and now he will be thrown in at the deep end against Aston Villa on Saturday.

After a full week to recharge the batteries, Dalglish was hoping to find solutions to their recent slump in the North East but the problems for the manager continue to mount. A third successive defeat and a sixth in seven league games means they have taken just eight points out of a possible 36 in 2012. The last time Liverpool endured a worse run than that in the top flight was in 1954.

As if being let down by under-performing players wasn't bad enough, Dalglish's squad decided to add indiscipline to their list of sins yesterday.

Reina lost the plot after being tripped by Perch but he wasn't the only one. Just minutes earlier there was the disgraceful sight of Andy Carroll muttering abuse in the direction of the bench as he was substituted and then heading straight down the tunnel.

The home fans, who had taunted their former hero throughout, lapped it up. The show of dissent from Carroll was painfully clear and unacceptable. What a contrast with Craig Bellamy who followed him off and shook his manager's hand before taking his place on the bench. It was always going to be tough for Carroll as he returned to Tyneside for the first time since his record-breaking £35million move 14 months earlier. His hopes of a warm reception were swiftly dashed and the baiting from the stands was constant.

Carroll, like Liverpool, promised much early on. Clearly fired up, he put himself about and provided the visitors' most potent threat. Yet it was typical of the way his Anfield career has gone so far that what should have been a moment of individual glory turned into abject embarrassment. Having got the better of Mike Williamson and Perch, a rampaging Carroll burst through on goal but as he skipped past Tim Krul he went crashing to the ground. Replays showed there was no contact from the keeper and rather than a penalty Carroll deservedly got booked for diving. From there his afternoon went downhill fast and with Luis Suarez off the pace and ineffective the Reds' challenge disintegrated.

Once again Liverpool paid the price for failing to make a sustained spell of dominance count as aside from that Carroll chance, Martin Skrtel nodded wastefully over. Of course they should have had a penalty when Steven Gerrard's corner struck Williamson and was then blocked on the line by Danny Simpson's arm. It was a big decision as Simpson would have seen red and referee Martin Atkinson got it badly wrong but that's still no excuse for what followed.

The Reds' big problem all season is that they have to work so hard to get a goal compared to how cheaply they concede. Newcastle's 19th minute opener with virtually their first attack simply underlined that. The impressive Hatem Ben Arfa was given far too much space as he ventured to the edge of the box unchallenged.

His deep cross picked out Papiss Cisse who pulled away from Skrtel and dispatched a header past Reina. It was all far too simple. Only once this season have Liverpool gone on to win after conceding the first goal and they never looked like changing that worrying statistic. Their passing was predictable and there was little show of fight. Newcastle should have killed them off before Cisse finally put the result beyond doubt just before the hour mark.

The Senegalese striker was clearly offside when he converted from close range but the fact is the £9million January arrival now boasts seven goals in seven games – just one less than Carroll has managed for the Reds in 48 appearances,

After that Liverpool's misery grew. The home fans taunted Enrique with 'You should have stayed at a big club' and sang about his prediction they would fail to make the top six. The away end hit back by reminding their hosts the left-back has won more major trophies in nine months at Anfield than Newcastle have managed in the last 43 years. It was all they had to cling to.

By the end Enrique had Reina's gloves on and it was simply a case of damage limitation. Chastening defeats are becoming a worrying habit this Liverpool side are struggling to kick.

NEWCASTLE: Krul, Simpson, Williamson, Perch, Gutierrez, Guthrie (Gosling 65), Tiote, Cabaye, Ben Arfa (Santon 90), Cisse (Shola Ameobi 74), Ba. Not used: Elliot, Taylor, Vuckic, Ferguson.

LIVERPOOL: Reina, Flanagan, Carragher, Skrtel, Enrique, Shelvey (Downing 76), Spearing, Bellamy (Henderson 79), Gerrard, Suarez, Carroll (Kuyt 79). Not used: Doni, Aurelio, Maxi, Coates.

GOALS: Cisse 19, 59.

CARDS: Yellow - Carroll, Shelvey, Cisse, Flanagan, Tiote, Perch. Red - Reina.

REFEREE: Martin Atkinson (W Yorkshire).

ATTENDANCE: 52,363.



NEWCASTLE United left the hallowed turf looking like a convincing and composed unit and a team who had no regrets after flicking the Scousers aside at St James' Park. This was a day that could have easily come back to hit the Magpies right where it hurts as Andy Carroll, Jose Enrique and Craig Bellamy all returned to a stadium in which they were once worshipped.

But rather than being haunted by former Toon stars, Newcastle exorcised some ghosts in a fixture in which the Geordie faithful have endured their fair share of agony down the years. Well, not this time. If it wasn't complete humiliation for the returning trio, it must have been close. Few could have written such a script, but with Liverpool 2-0 down Kenny Dalglish hauled off Bellamy and Carroll – with Enrique ending the game in goal!

Not that Pepe Reina's red card had any real bearing on the scoreline.

Here, United looked every inch a top-six outfit against a Liverpool side that started the season with top-four aspirations. True enough, Liverpool may well have out-spent Newcastle in transfer stakes, but against Alan Pardew's side they were outfought and then outclassed to the point where they lost their composure. Their lack of control was laid bare when Reina flipped after being fouled by James Perch before throwing his head towards the in-form United defender and seeing red for the error of his ways.

Carroll had departed minutes earlier on a day that he will quickly want to forget after being hooked by Kenny Dalglish before heading straight down the tunnel when the red shirt of Liverpool was ripped off and thrown to the floor.

Yet it wasn't all about Liverpool yesterday, it was about a controlled performance from Pardew's troops. Victory was deserved on the day but Newcastle had to survive a positive start from the visitors. Carroll, unsurprisingly, found him under the spotlight and was booed from the moment he left the Liverpool team bus. But before the game the threat from the Geordie striker was still there.

And when the Teams lad out-jumped Mike Williamson before skinning Perch, it looked like he was about to make a scoring return – only for him to go down under no contact from Tim Krul. Carroll – booked for simulation for the incident – claimed he hadn't dived shortly afterwards but it set the tone for a frustrating day for the Reds. Ref Martin Atkinson made the right decision on that occasion, but could easily have handed Liverpool a spot-kick when Simpson handled on the line as Carroll grappled with Williamson to send the ball towards goal.

Atkinson again chose not to point to the spot with 15 minutes played.

Enrique had never looked comfortable on his return to Tyneside, and former team-mate Hatem Ben Arfa – purring as part of a three-pronged attack – made his afternoon a misery with a series of penetrating runs down the right.

This was a day to praise new heroes as well as show former stars just what they are missing these days.

Ben Arfa was the architect of the first goal. And it was Cisse who showed how much adoration can be earned when wearing the No 9 shirt. There were oohs and ahs every time Ben Arfa had the ball – and the pair combined to serve up a delightful black-and-white cocktail of football to deliver the first goal.

Another scintillating run from Ben Arfa down the right on 32 minutes saw Enrique left floored after being dazzled by the French ace.

Ben Arfa was at the centre of a lot of United's passing play in the first period with some passages of interplay right up there in stature of the great Liverpool sides of the 1980s – something that must have been difficult for Kenny Dalglish to take as his current team struggled to carry the huge weight that stigmatises them. Newcastle were full value for their first-half lead, but even with Liverpool in Premier League freefall they still had enough attacking threat to get back into the game with Luis Suarez, Carroll, Steven Gerrard and Craig Bellamy on show.

A lively St James' craved a second goal in the second period – and they got it as their demolition men broke through into the last third again.

Demba Ba attacked down the right to rolled the ball into the box for Ben Arfa, and even though the playmaker fluffed his lines a grateful Cisse was there to net his seventh strike in as many games just before the hour mark.

It left Liverpool with a mountain to climb but nothing was getting past Krul as Perch and Williamson combined in the makeshift defence to earn their clean

Date: 1 April 2012
Opposition: Newcastle United
Competition: League

Echo	Times	Mirror
Chronicle Live	Telegraph	Guardian
Independent	Mail	



sheet.

Cisse must have felt he could have grabbed a hat-trick and in doing so evoked memories of ex-No 9 Andy Cole's treble back in 1993. Yet once more two was enough, and when he was replaced by Shola Ameobi he was able to milk the applause with a new No 9 now the hero in Toon. It was a moment in which Carroll opted to look the opposite direction on yet another day when Liverpool failed to produce the deliveries that most Geordie fans know he strives on.

When Dalglish eventually did introduce one of the game's best crossers in Stewart Downing, he then saw fit to hook Carroll minutes later. The look of disdain was obvious on the face of the ex-Toon star and he headed straight for the tunnel cutting a furious figure. There was still time for Liverpool to let their fans down a little more too.

Perch's kick out at Reina was naughty, but it certainly didn't merit the Spaniard's reaction. Reina's refusal to leave the pitch was simply lapped up by United players and fans alike.

Having lost 3-1 at Anfield back in December, it was also a dish served cold. Back then Liverpool had picked up three points to go four clear of the Magpies. Today that advantage stood at 11 points. Seeing Enrique – who was reminded of his claims United would never be in the top six – have to fish the ball out of the net would have been the icing on the cake. But this victory was sweet enough.