

Date: 20 October 2012

Opposition: Reading

Competition: League

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## THE TIMES

Rodgers faces losing battle to keep Sterling's talent hidden under a bushel

Liverpool 1

Sterling 29

Reading 0

Referee R East Attendance 44,874

On the weekend when the tenth anniversary of Wayne Rooney first etching his name on football's consciousness was commemorated, the temptation was to think "remember the name" when Raheem Sterling followed in his footsteps by scoring a decisive goal at a prodigiously young age.

Brendan Rodgers, though, would prefer that instead of burdening Sterling with star status before he is best able to handle it, the 17-year-old be allowed to fulfil his potential without being weighed down by expectation and over-exposure.

The problem is that talent sometimes waits for no one and when Sterling scored the goal against Reading that gave Liverpool their first home league win of the season on Saturday, Rodgers must have known that the teenager had unleashed the tide that his manager had been endeavouring to hold back.

The moment he became the second-youngest Premier League goalscorer in Liverpool's history was therefore a double-edged sword for Rodgers. While it afforded him relief after a testing start in his first season at Anfield, it also raised the stakes in his battle to ensure that Sterling does not become distracted. "He's still got an awful long way to go," Rodgers said. "We want to have him here as a legend for many years. We don't want him at 17 years of age getting carried away with all the adulation and then as 21 he's washed up and everyone wants him out. But he's been a revelation."

The Reading defence would not dispute that claim. Distracted by Luis Suarez, they found Sterling's movement and ability to switch from winger to free-running front man too much to handle.

That the most junior member of Liverpool's squad was the only one who kept his head when presented with a goalscoring opportunity was revealing and ensured that the rest of the team's wastefulness did not cost them the game.

Roy Hodgson confirmed later that the tyro will join Rooney in his squad for England's forthcoming friendly against Sweden. The likelihood is that Rodgers is fighting a losing battle as he tries to hide Sterling's talent under a bushel. People already remember his name.

Liverpool (4-3-3): B Jones 7 -- A Wisdom 7, M Skrtel 6, D Agger 6, G Johnson 8 -- J Allen 6, N Sahin 5 (sub: J Shelvey, 63min 6), S Gerrard 7 -- Suso 7 (sub: J Enrique, 74), L Suarez 7, R Sterling 8 (sub: J Henderson, 84). Substitutes not used: P Gulacsi, S Downing, O Assaidi, J Carragher.

Booked: Agger.

Reading (4-2-3-1): A McCarthy 7 -- S Cummings 6, A Mariappa 6, K Gorkss 7, N Shorey 6 -- J Karacan 5 (sub: G McCleary, 25 6), M Leigertwood 7 -- J Kebe 6, D Guthrie 6 (sub: J Roberts, 81), J McAnuff 7 -- P Pogrebnyak 6 (sub: A Le Fondre, 74).

Substitutes not used: C Gunter, A Pearce, H Robson-Kanu, S Taylor. Booked: Mariappa.

## the guardian

Rodgers says hunger will decide if Sterling is an Anfield legend or a letdown

Brendan Rodgers believes that hunger will determine whether Raheem Sterling is a star of the future at Liverpool or merely a

passing comet. At the end of a week in which Liverpool declared their intention to stay at Anfield, the teenager's appetite suggests they have something to build on.

The expert finish that delivered a deserved victory over Reading, and a first home league win as Liverpool manager for Rodgers, was the natural focal point of the 17-year-old's performance. But it was his doggedness in the tackle, the strength in his small frame and desire to assist Glen Johnson both in defence and attack that gave added hope to Rodgers. It did not go unnoticed. Anfield rose in ironic, amusing celebration of a free-kick decision in favour of Luis Suarez but also reserved its applause for every interception and challenge from Sterling on the day he became the second youngest goalscorer in the club's history.

"I think that's the ethos of the group that we're trying to evolve here," said Rodgers of the winger's willingness to do "the dirty work".

"Look at Andre Wisdom as well, we mustn't forget him. The attacking players tend to get all the praise but if you look at Andre, 19 years of age, up against a really experienced opponent [Jobi McAnuff], and he was magnificent. He was strong, aggressive and the pride they showed in their shirt was really impressive. All of them have that."

Wisdom's powerful display at right-back helped secure a second successive clean sheet for Liverpool, one that was not in doubt until Brian McDermott's side showed up in the second half and almost capitalised on another wasteful home performance.

Suarez was outstanding, except in front of goal, and only Sterling showed the ruthlessness required, finding the bottom corner superbly after Wisdom and the Uruguayan international combined to send the teenager clear. He now stands second behind Michael Owen on the list of Liverpool's youngest goalscorers.

"He's still got an awful long way to go," said Rodgers. "We want to have him here as a legend for many years. We don't want him at 17 years of age getting carried away with all the adulation and then at 21 he's washed up and everyone wants him out. The biggest thing for me is maintaining the hunger he's got now because he can be a really top player. It's a long way to go for him but at the moment he's been a revelation."

"I don't have any concerns about him at this moment. I talk to the players a lot about the good and the bad and just try and keep them developing. For him, right up until now, he's been brilliant. He's got a lovely way about him. He's a good kid. His mum does a great job with him and the people at the academy have taught him good values as well. He's made that transition very well."

Added satisfaction for Rodgers came from the run Sterling made for the goal, one straight from the training ground. The manager explained: "We've looked to develop his and Suso's game so that rather than being stuck out wide they come in around the corner, a half-position I call it, and that gives you that possibility to combine. Luis is one of the cleverest players in the world at that. In the box he sees little things and passes, and these players can pick up these things from him. I thought Raheem did that really well."

Liverpool controlled the game yet Reading would have added to Anfield's torment had Gareth McCleary or McAnuff found a way past Brad Jones, replacing the injured Jose Reina in the home goal, after the interval. But the visitors should never have had the encouragement of a way back.

Liverpool's generosity remains Rodgers' deepest concern.

Man of the match Glen Johnson (Liverpool)

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## The Mail

### Rodgers banks on value of Sterling

ONE of football's biggest stages already looks like the perfect home for Raheem Sterling's dazzling skills, but the screen is proving a different matter.

Less than 24 hours before capping another impressive performance with a matchwinning goal, Anfield's teenage prodigy was being taken to task by Brendan Rodgers on the Channel Five documentary Being: Liverpool.

The series started with Rodgers interrupting a pre-season training ground pep-talk in America, fixing Sterling with an icy glare and telling him: 'Say steady to me again, and you'll be on the first plane home.' In Friday night's instalment, there was a half-time rebuke for the 17-year-old for overelaborating in the 2-2 home draw with Manchester City.

If those TV transgressions suggest Liverpool's England Under 21 winger may be trouble, nothing could be further from the truth, according to Rodgers.

Reflecting on Sterling becoming the second youngest topflight scorer in Liverpool history, and the televised ticking-off that preceded it, the Anfield manager opened up on his methods for keeping him in check.

'You could call it tough love with Raheem, but I always offer the players the carrot, because there's no-one in this world who responds to being beaten with a stick all the time,' he said. 'That's the case in any industry, football or whatever, but Raheem is the type who likes you to be direct.'

'He likes to be told. He is a great boy, a really good kid. His mum does a great job with him, and he handles everything about the situation really well.'

'At 17, he's still got an awful long way to go, so it's important I try to manage him properly. We want to have him here as a legend for many years. We don't want him getting carried away with all the adulation and then find, at 21, he's washed up and everyone wants him out.'

'The biggest thing with me is just maintaining the hunger that he's got now, because you see when he's got that, and he's learning and developing, that he can be a really top player. It's a long way to go for him but, up to now, he's been a revelation. At the moment there are no worries about how he is responding. I talk to the players a lot about the good and the bad and just try to keep them developing.'

'Right up until now, Raheem has been brilliant. He's got a lovely way about him. He's made the transition from the academy very well, and it's brilliant for the supporters, because they love to see young players come in and do so well. We will be doing our utmost to make sure that it continues.' Sterling's crisp finish may have secured Liverpool's first home Barclays Premier League win of the season, but the biggest cheer of the afternoon went to referee Roger East's decision to award Luis Suarez a free-kick on the edge of the area in the 38th minute.

After the number of times Suarez has looked up in vain at an official after hitting the deck, it was greeted with a prolonged standing ovation.

'That was brilliant,' said Rodgers. 'I must admit I had a nice laugh and I think it lifted the players as well.'

'It was one of those funny moments you won't forget in a hurry. Was I tempted to join in? I think I probably did!'

## The Daily Telegraph

### Liverpool made to shine with Sterling stardust

Liverpool 1

Sterling 29

Reading 0

Att: 44,874

Liverpool have not yet suggested a date for the start of the reconstruction of Anfield, but nobody told Raheem Sterling. The 17-year-old winger got to work on the lengthy process of restoring the stadium's aura, sprinkling his stardust with a zesty performance and his first competitive goal.

In doing so, he became the club's second-youngest Premier League goalscorer, behind Michael Owen, and ensured Reading joined the esteemed company of Everton and Chelsea as the only visitors not to collect a league point in this arena during 2012.

There are two restoration projects now under way at Anfield. Brendan Rodgers's plans for Liverpool are much clearer than the aims of those entrusted with giving the stadium a makeover, although both facelifts will be time-consuming.

As a club, Liverpool still talk too much about the past, but in Rodgers at least they have someone who is obsessing about the future. Sterling has now become an emblem of what might be.

Publicly, Rodgers takes a paternal tone with Sterling. Privately, as the somewhat undermining behind-the-scenes documentary currently on air keeps showing us, there is some tough love going on to keep the youngster advancing at pace in a straight line.

'It doesn't matter what industry you're in, nobody in this world responds to being beaten with a stick. I will offer the players the carrot,' Rodgers said. 'Raheem likes to hear it direct and I deal with him the best way I can to make him perform to the level.'

'He has been a revelation. His mentality is really strong. Nothing fazes him and he doesn't waste his time doing stupid things.'

'He has still a long way to go. We want him to be a legend here for the next 10 years, and not to get carried away with the adulation so that by the time he is 21 everyone wants him out. We want him to maintain his hunger and then he can become a top player.'

For all the aspirational talk, both football and stadium related, there has not been enough detail to match the unrelenting statements of intent.

The polishing of Anfield's status must first begin on the pitch and even though there was again plenty to admire in a performance deserving of more than a single goal, it remains unclear if Rodgers's inaugural season will be of mid-table toil or a top-six challenge.

Liverpool are clearly capable of more than the current position suggests, but have too many imperfections lingering from previous seasons. Apart from the result, this was more of the same. Good in parts, worryingly wasteful in others, and apprehensive to the point of incapacitation in the closing stages.

There is encouragement to be found if you look closely enough, not least Sterling's rapid improvement and Luis Suarez's vivacious capacity to ensure his footprints are left at the scene of every Liverpool attack. The game's outstanding performers - teenage full-back Andre Wisdom made it a trio - combined for the only goal.

Wisdom's header, Suarez's pass and Sterling's finish secured the points in the 29th minute, although the margin should have been extended before a late Reading rally.

Sterling was the matchwinner, but Suarez continues to be the leading man in every Anfield drama. If the South American possessed the natural finishing power of a Robbie Fowler, Owen or Ian Rush, his goal ratio would match that of Lionel Messi.

It is unfortunate for Suarez that his lack of ruthlessness has coincided with an era when so few of his colleagues look capable of getting into the box, let alone scoring.

Suarez's ratio of fouls to free-kicks is equally unimpressive. There was a moment of comedy when Anfield erupted to acclaim two decisions which went in Suarez's favour. The focus on the striker's willingness to acquaint himself with the Anfield turf should not disguise the fact that it often needs a tug of the shirt, a stud on his ankle and a kick on his thigh before a referee reluctantly accepts he may have to blow his whistle.

'I must admit I had a laugh at the crowd's reaction. It was a funny moment. I think I joined in,' Rodgers said.

Brian McDermott would have had the last laugh if Brad Jones's save from Garath McCleary had not ended a recent trend where one decent chance for Liverpool's opponents usually leads to a goal. It all amounted to that rare modern occurrence - a 'routine home win' at Anfield.

Anfield's long wait

Liverpool recorded their first home league victory of the season on Saturday - at the fifth time of asking, after Brendan Rodgers's side drew twice and lost twice at Anfield. The club have endured the same fate on two other occasions, having to wait for their fifth home game before winning in the 1894-95 and 1911-12 campaigns.

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## THE INDEPENDENT

Sterling can be a legend at Liverpool if we treat him right, says Rodgers  
Already an Under-21 international, already selected for a senior England squad, now he has a Premier League goal: the Raheem Sterling whirlwind gathers momentum so fast the challenge for Brendan Rodgers, the Liverpool manager, is to keep it under control.

The 29th-minute goal that settled a contest otherwise notable - aside from Reading striker Jason Roberts making his point about the Kick It Out T-shirt campaign - for the number of chances Liverpool failed to take, made Sterling at 17 years 317 days the youngest player to score a competitive senior goal for the Anfield club after Michael Owen, who was 17 years 144 days when he netted on his debut in 1997.

It was a fine goal, one that combined the youngster's speed and energy with his seemingly innate football intelligence, coming inside from his wide position in the way that Rodgers had encouraged him to do.

Luis Suarez fed him a sublime chipped pass and Sterling eagerly outpaced Shaun Cummings, the Reading defender, along the inside right channel before timing the moment to release a firm low shot beyond the reach of goalkeeper Alex McCarthy into the bottom corner.

It came 10 years almost to the day since another precociously-talented teenager was announcing himself on the other side of Stanley Park with his first goal for Everton. Other than this coincidence of dates, there are no parallels yet that can be drawn between Sterling and Wayne Rooney, and Rodgers is keen for it to stay that way, particularly in the knowledge that, less than two years after his famous first goal against Arsenal, Rooney and Everton had parted company.

Rodgers has been asked more than once whether the Jamaica-born, London-raised Sterling has the temperament to handle a potentially meteoric rise and the question surfaced again inevitably. The answer, in a nutshell, is: so far, so good.

"At this moment, I've no worries about him keeping his feet on the ground," Rodgers said. "I talk to the players a lot about the good and the bad and up to now Raheem has been brilliant.

"He is a good kid with a lovely way about him. His mum does a terrific job with him and the people at the academy have taught him good values and good morals as well.

"Nothing fazes him, he has a good head on his shoulders and he handles everything about his situation really well. He likes people to be direct with him, he listens to his coaches, he listens to the right people. He doesn't waste his time doing stupid things.

"But he has got an awful long way to go. We want to have him here as a legend for many years. We don't want him here at 17 years of age to get carried away with all this adulation and then, at 21, he is washed up and everyone wants him out.

"The biggest thing for me is just maintaining the hunger he has at the moment. He is learning fast and he can be a really, really top player. So far, he has been a revelation."

It is already in his manager's mind that there may have to be a pause, a moment at which Sterling's development benefits from a spell away from the front line. But with much still to prove on Merseyside about his own ability, Rodgers will want that point to come later rather than sooner.

His first home Premier League win as Liverpool manager saw his side need 19 direct attempts and a good few more promising build-ups to score their solitary goal, with the otherwise exceptional Suarez particularly profligate. Leaving out someone who can finish a move is not yet a luxury open to him.

YOUNG GUNS

GO FOR IT

\* Youngest Premier League scorers

- 1 J Vaughan (Everton) 16y, 267d
- 2 J Milner (Leeds) 16y, 352d
- 3 W Rooney (Everton) 16y, 355d
- 4 D Bent (Ipswich) 17y, 78d
- 5 F Fabregas (Arsenal) 17y, 111d
- 6 M Owen (Liverpool) 17y, 144d
- 7 A Turner (Spurs) 17y, 158d
- 8 L Hodges (W Ham) 17y, 178d
- 9 F Macheda (Man U) 17y, 224d
- 10 R Sterling (Liverpool) 17y, 317d

## DAILY MIRROR

Sterling service: Raheem becomes second youngest ever Liverpool scorer as Rodgers finally wins at home

The relief was palpable from the dugout to the back row of the Kop. Liverpool had to withstand a second-half rally by visitors Reading to deliver Brendan Rodgers his first home Premier League win.

The club that dumped Rodgers after six months in charge came back to haunt him for agonising periods of a second half that highlighted his new side's shortcomings.

They had a catalogue of chances to put the match beyond Reading's reach once Raheem Sterling had become Liverpool's second youngest goalscorer after Michael Owen.

But their failure to capitalise fed Reading's self-belief and had the gallery trembling with anxiety.

Chief among the culprits was Luis Suarez, who set up Sterling's goal, playing - magnificently, but yet again proving erratic in front of goal.

His link-up play with the 17-year-old Sterling was wonderful as they threatened to demolish a side still seeking a win at home or away and Rodgers will doubtless draw optimism from that.

As for the Uruguayan striker's profligacy, Rodgers was keen to highlight his jetlag after his travels around South America and the fact he carried a slight injury into the second half.

Rodgers was also mightily relieved with the three points, saying: "You don't want it dragging on, so today was important. As for Suarez, he had a dead leg just before half-time and had treatment.

"People judge him from the outside and I was probably one of those, but he's travelled around the world and been fantastic today.

"He would want to be a bit more clinical, but his return is great and he also created opportunities. And all credit to Sterling, it was a wonderful finish. That's part of his game he's been working on."

Suarez at least had the support of his team-mates, with the marauding Glen Johnson posing a couple of early threats to the Reading defence.

Sterling also showed his willingness to back up Suarez, although the striker might have wished for a return pass when the youngster ran into traffic.

Suarez did his own thing midway through the first half, curling the ball just over the Reading bar. Nuri Sahin lofted way over and, to compound his dismay, realised he had taken the ball off Steven Gerrard's toe from Sterling's low cross.

The persistence of Suarez and Sterling eventually brought its reward. The quality of Suarez's through pass was matched by the conviction of Sterling's finish.

Suarez had the scent and almost a goal of his own when he burst forward and drilled a shot just wide of goalkeeper Alex McCarthy's right-hand post.

Reading mustered their first genuine attempt after 40 minutes of trying to stay in the contest - and then Mike Leigertwood troubled only those Liverpool fans halfway up the Kop.

The Suarez-Sterling combo had Reading dizzy again at the start of the second half, the latter warming the hands of McCarthy.

The keeper had to react smartly to repel another assault from Suarez before Reading substitute Gareth McCleary gave Brad Jones, in goal for the injured Pepe Reina, his first real work. As if lifted by that opportunity, Jobi McAnuff tested Jones again.

Suarez had the chance to ease any Liverpool nerves but couldn't keep down his close range effort.

The livewire striker then turned provider for substitute Jonjo Shelvey, with no better result.

McCarthy saved from Johnson before Suarez, yet again, wasted another opening as Liverpool toiled in vain for the mercy of a second goal.

Reading manager Brian McDermott said: "I thought we'd get at least one point out of the game.

"We can still take a lot of positives from it, but we've got to start playing at three o'clock."

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Brendan Rodgers off the mark at Anfield - but it's still too close for comfort

THE sense of relief around Anfield at the final whistle was palpable. For the first time since May, Liverpool had taken maximum points on home turf but this was far too close for comfort.

The fact that supporters were left to endure such a nervy and tension-wracked finale was crazy.

The Reds should have been out of sight having comprehensively outclassed struggling Reading.

However, the script was all too familiar as a host of chances went begging and dominance went unrewarded.

That profligacy in front of goal ensured that rather than being preoccupied merely with damage limitation, the Royals were able to launch an ultimately futile late push for a share of the spoils.

A narrow victory against a winless newly-promoted side felt decidedly underwhelming but it was significant nevertheless.

Having already allowed Manchester City, Manchester United and Stoke to depart with points they didn't deserve and failed to perform against Arsenal, this was the day when Liverpool finally stopped giving away gifts in L4.

For too long, the Reds have been a soft touch at Anfield. It's an issue Brendan Rodgers inherited and so many setbacks have drained confidence and created a psychological barrier.

A first home league win of his reign – secured at the end of the week when Liverpool announced plans to spend £150million on redeveloping the stadium – was an important milestone.

Rodgers is a long way short of his stated ambition to make a trip to Anfield “the longest 90 minutes of an opponent's life” but this is a start.

The fact that his side avoided another hard luck story was thanks to the brilliance of Raheem Sterling.

The 17-year-old winger made the match-winning contribution as he took his place behind Michael Owen as the second youngest goalscorer in the club's history.

Latching on to Luis Suarez's pass just before the half hour mark, Sterling showed great technique and composure as he took a touch to steady himself and fired past Alex McCarthy into the bottom corner.

The teenager's delight at opening his account for the Reds was clear and it was a special moment he will cherish forever.

Sterling has been a revelation this season. He's still learning his trade and Rodgers is desperate not to burden him with expectation but the way he has adapted to the demands of Premier League football has been remarkable.

Signed from QPR by Rafa Benitez, nurtured by the Reds' Academy staff and handed his first team bow by Kenny Dalglish, the credit for his emergence at Anfield must be shared.

However, it's under the guidance of Rodgers that Sterling's development has been rapid. Since being given his full debut in August, he's been ever present in the league with the manager's faith in him richly rewarded.

His pace and trickery down the flanks have lit up previous matches but on Saturday he also showcased an end product to his efforts.

It was the kind of clinical finish birthday boy Ian Rush, watching on from the directors box, would have been proud to call his own.

Sterling's work ethic and positional sense when Liverpool didn't have the ball was equally as impressive as his movement and link-up play with Suarez. The youngster ensured it was a torrid afternoon for right-back Shaun Cummings.

The margin of victory would have been considerably greater had Suarez not squandered a succession of opportunities.

The Uruguayan showed no signs of fatigue on his return from a gruelling World Cup qualifying double-header in South America as he tormented Reading's overworked back four and ran himself into the ground.

The support he got from Suso, Sterling and runners from midfield was much improved but rather than walking off with the matchball, Suarez only had a dead leg as a memento.

Fears that the dive he took against Stoke a fortnight earlier and the subsequent avalanche of criticism would further damage his chances of getting decisions off officials were realised.

When Roger East finally awarded him a free-kick late in the first half, there was an ironic standing ovation for the referee.

By half-time those cheers had turned to jeers with East having ignored Kaspars Gorkks' reckless challenge which left Suarez needing treatment on the pitch as both teams headed for the dressing room.

The opening 45 minutes had been one-way traffic as Reading sat back and challenged the Reds to break them down.

Suarez saw his chip narrowly clear the bar and Nuri Sahin blazed over after being picked out by Sterling before the breakthrough finally arrived in the 29th minute.

Glen Johnson is enjoying the best form of his Liverpool career and once again he was outstanding at left-back. Solid defensively and a menacing attacking threat, the England international stung McCarthy's palms after Suarez's 25-yarder had whistled just past the post.

Early in the second half the points should have been wrapped up but Sterling and then Suarez saw shots beaten away by the keeper.

Brad Jones, who was making his first Premier League start for Liverpool in place of the injured Pepe Reina, had been a spectator. But the Australian international came to the Reds' rescue with a vital save after substitute Gareth McCleary had burst on to Danny Guthrie's pass.

Reina is likely to be fit and earn a recall for next Sunday's derby at Goodison but there is now genuine competition for that jersey.

Jones didn't put a foot wrong and expertly kept out Jobi McAnuff's piledriver as Reading belatedly started to show some ambition.

Defensively, Liverpool were impressive en route to recording back to back league clean sheets for the first time since February.

The costly individual errors which blighted their early season progress appear to have been eradicated.

With the Reds finding goals so hard to come by, it's paramount that Rodgers' side are miserly at the back.

The contribution of Sterling and Suso may have been more eye-catching but the side's third teenager, Andre Wisdom, also shone.

The young right-back is growing in stature with every appearance.

The floodgates should have opened in the final half hour but some wasteful finishing in front of the Kop coupled with the heroics of McCarthy kept Reading interested.

Frustration in the stands transmitted to the players and it became predictably edgy.

There was a lack of control in the closing stages and as it got increasingly scrappy the end couldn't come soon enough.

Liverpool held on to experience some long overdue home comfort. With seven points out of the last nine on offer, Rodgers' side are on the rise, but how far they can climb over the coming months depends largely on their ability to develop a ruthless streak.



RAHEEM Sterling's first Premier League goal condemned Reading FC to defeat at Anfield on Saturday.

The 17-year-old struck in the 28th minute of a largely one-sided encounter to secure a welcome three points for Liverpool and leave Royals still winless.

It was little more than the home side deserved after dominating the majority of the match and spurning a host of opportunities on goal.

Sterling and Luis Suarez tormented the Royals defence all afternoon and combined for the only goal of the game in the first half.

Suarez's neat first-time flick over the defence set Sterling away and he fired across Alex McCarthy to become Reds' second youngest scorer after Michael Owen.

Reading threatened to snatch an equaliser late on as the home fans became nervy but neither Garath McCleary nor Jobi McAnuff could beat stand-in goalkeeper Brad Jones.

Brian McDermott's men will look to notch up their first Premier League win when they host Fulham next Saturday (3pm ko).

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# THE INDEPENDENT

ON SUNDAY

## Sterling performance gives Liverpool wings

Brendan Rodgers promised that Liverpool "would fly" once they had a first home Premier League win under their belts, but if this was the moment their season became airborne it was a somewhat erratic take-off.

The moment was a special one for Raheem Sterling, who scored the goal that mattered. At 17 years and 317 days he is the youngest player after Michael Owen to score in a competitive senior match for Liverpool and the wide smile across his face as he celebrated spoke not only of the joy he was feeling but of the promise he holds for the future in a career that has already taken him to the verge of a senior England cap. The Anfield crowd have already taken him to their hearts. Yet setting that detail aside there was an overwhelming feeling of frustration to go with only the third home Premier League win those spectators have witnessed in the whole of 2012.

The cause of that feeling stemmed from the extraordinary number of chances Liverpool failed to turn into goals. The home side's dominance of possession was such that Reading must have spent 75 per cent of the game in their own half.

Never more than four or five minutes went by without a Liverpool chance to score.

"We created many chances, some 19 shots at goal, and we need to improve our finishing, for sure," Rodgers said. "That is an ongoing theme. But the most important thing was to keep a clean sheet and get the three points.

"It has been a long time coming. We should have had three points here long before today but given that it came off the back of an international break, with players travelling all round the world, I thought it was a terrific performance.

"I was always comfortable with the mindset and the ability of the players, but you don't want it to keep dragging on," the Liverpool manager added

Of all those occasions on which they might have scored, there were a good many on which they should. No one was more profligate in that respect than Luis Suarez, who seldom comes up short in goal attempts but converts surprisingly few, in relative terms. If the 14,000 miles of travel he undertook to play for Uruguay against Argentina and Bolivia in World Cup qualifiers had taken its toll it did not show, and therefore could not be taken as an excuse. The striker even managed to overcome a dead leg, suffered just before half time, after treatment during the interval.

Granted, Suarez set up Sterling's goal, sending the youngster scampering away with an exquisitely lobbed through-ball.

From there, Sterling outpaced Shaun Cummings, who is not the slowest full-back, and drilled the ball across goalkeeper Alex McCarthy into the left-hand corner.

Late in the game, still full of ideas and energy, he set up substitute Jonjo Shelvey who should have put the result beyond any doubt.

What happened in between reinforced the feeling that Suarez is a fine player who might be seen as exceptional if he could only score more goals. Half a dozen of Liverpool's chances, at least, fell to him - often, to give him credit, of his own invention - but only once did he draw McCarthy into a save.

"He's not perfect," Rodgers said, although he disputed the suggestion that he should score more. "He makes a lot of chances but he also scores a lot of goals. If you look at the statistics, he has a great record.

"What we need to do going forward is get more players around him, to take some of the workload off him."

Sterling looks one who could fulfil that requirement. Rodgers has encouraged him to come inside from wide positions and he showed promise doing so, working well with Glen Johnson on the flank but also working himself into positions behind Suarez in the middle.

"He is a wonderful talent," Rodgers said. "He has a good head on young shoulders and I'm really pleased for him. It was a terrific goal that he finished really well." If only a few others - and there were opportunities, too, for Johnson, Daniel Agger and Nuri Sahin - could have followed his example, Liverpool's lift-off might have been a little more smooth.

Liverpool (4-2-3-1): Jones; Johnson, Agger, Skrtel; Wisdom; Sahin (Shelvey, 63), Allen; Sterling (Henderson, 84), Gerrard, Suso (Jose Enrique, 74); Suarez.

Reading (4-4-2): McCarthy; Shorey, Mariappa, Gorkks, Cummings; Kebe, Karacan (McCleary, 25), Leigertwood, McAnuff; Guthrie (Roberts, 81), Pogrebnyak (Le Fondre, 74).

Referee: Roger East.

Man of the match: Sterling (Liverpool)

Match rating: 6/10

# The Sunday Telegraph

Sterling strike gives Liverpool hope of home run

Liverpool 1

Sterling 29

Reading 0

Att: 44,874

Stop the clocks, turn off the phone, organise the street party and prepare the open top bus parade on Merseyside. Liverpool have finally won at home.

Victory over Reading secured their first Premier League win at Anfield this season, and only their third league victory this year.

Brendan Rodgers has broken his league duck on home soil.

Teenager Raheem Sterling, who became the second youngest Liverpool player to score in the Premier League (behind Michael Owen) began what Rodgers hopes will be the reconstruction of Anfield back into a fortress. Sterling underlined why he's been so rapidly promoted to starting duties at just 17 years of age.

His 29th-minute winner enabled the Kop to enjoy a home fixture again, although there were plenty of familiar flaws as chances were frequently wasted. Brian McDermott's side threatened to score what would, in fairness, have been an undeserved equaliser during an edgy finale.

Rodgers must hope this represents the end of what was becoming an Anfield curse. You would think with owners who run a baseball franchise that Liverpool would know how to secure a magical home run.

Even Reading's arrival offered a reminder of home discomfort, McDermott's last trip here three years ago - an FA Cup third-round victory - was the catalyst for him to go from a caretaker to full-time manager.

Luis Suarez was in full flow yesterday but failed to convert chances, the Uruguayan coming closest when he forced Reading goalkeeper Alex McCarthy to scurry backwards as a delicate chip dipped just over the bar. He missed numerous sitters, but he made amends by creating the winner.

Andre Wisdom's powerful header found Suarez in centre-field, the South American nudged the ball onto Sterling, and the England winger showed composure to fire right-footed beyond McCarthy.

The applause was of relief as much as acclaim, and a greater ovation followed, not for a goal, but for the award of a free-kick for the battered and bruised Suarez.

Referee Roger East continued the tradition of viewing Suarez's constant appeals for protection unsympathetically - often with justification - but he also ignored blatant free-kicks.

Indeed, Suarez needed treatment at half-time for a dead leg following what seemed an obvious trip, leaving his teammates enraged that no free-kick was given.

He showed no ill effects in the second half, creating and missing chances with a regularity that thrill in their construction but often infuriate in their execution.

Liverpool's lack of ruthlessness was almost costly when Brad Jones -- deputising for Pepe Reina who has a tight hamstring - was finally called into action. Garath McCleary had only the Aussie to beat but shot unconvincingly at the keeper's legs, but the chances were frequent at The Kop end.

"I honestly thought we were going to get a point in the second half," said McDermott. "We had some chances, so we will move on with positives. We just need to start at 3pm rather than so slowly."

Suarez, Jonjo Shelvey and Daniel Agger all wasted chances to ease Liverpool's nerves, the anxiety towards full-time tangible in a stadium which was finally reacquainted with that winning feeling in the league.

"It's been a long time coming," said Rodgers.

"We should have had three points long before today. "We need to improve our finishing, which is an ongoing theme, but the win is the most important thing."

Liverpool (4-3-3): Jones; Johnson, Skrtel, Agger, Wisdom; Allen, Gerard, Sahin (Shelvey 63); Sterling (Henderson 85), Suso (Enrique 75), Suarez. Booked: Agger. Subs: Gulacsi, Carragher, Downing, Shelvey, Assaidi. Reading (4-5-1): McCarthy; Cummings, Shorey, Mariappa, Gorkks; McAnuff, Leigertwood, Karacan (McCleary 25), Guthrie (Roberts 81), Kebe; Pogrebnyak (Le Fondre 75). Booked: Gorkks, Mariappa. Subs: Taylor, Gunter, Pearce, Robson-Kanu. Referee: R East (Wilts).

Date: 20 October 2012

Opposition: Reading

Competition: League

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



20 October  
2012

### Sterling breaks Anfield drought

THE BRAND motto of Warrior, the American sportswear company who manufacture Liverpool's kit, is "We Come Not To Play".

It's hardly the mantra Brendan Rodgers, the Liverpool manager, would prefer about how he wants his team play but in US corporate talk it seems to mean: We're not here to mess about.

Despite finally achieving their first home win of the season in the Premier League, this Liverpool team is hardly on message. Indeed, the slogan might just as well read: We Come Not To Score, such was their wastefulness in front of goal.

Raheem Sterling's 29th-minute winner was Liverpool's fourth goal in five Premier League games at Anfield. The failure to secure at least one striker after selling Dirk Kuyt and farming out Andy Carroll to West Ham on loan continues to look naive.

Luis Suarez is a gifted forward but he is not cut out to lead the line alone. The Uruguay international had an impressive game but he was embarrassingly profligate when chances came his way.

"He'll be disappointed he off the Reading back four. The Uruguayan let the ball run across his body then clipped a subtle pass into the path of Sterling.

The 17-year-old's lack of experience and confidence on his left foot means he cuts inside too predictably from his starting point on the left flank, but having drifted inside he latched on to Suarez's pass with ease. One touch took him past the last line of the Reading defence then without hesitation he rasped a right foot shot from the edge of the area that whizzed into the bottom corner of the net.

It was Sterling's first goal for the club and he became Liverpool's second youngest goal scorer behind Michael Owen. And how Liverpool could have done with the former England striker in his prime.

Jones: able deputy Without overwhelming Reading, Liverpool proceeded to carve out a succession of chances -- Sterling and Suarez linked well at times -- but the final ball and the finishing was poor and didn't score," said Rodgers. "But overall his stats on goals are good. Looking forward we need to get more players around him." The manager continues to maintain he has his tactics right to play Suarez "up top" but the player would surely operate better as a second striker feeding off a more conventional centreforward.

Confirmation of where Suarez is best deployed, hovering in the pocket between midfield and the front line, came in the 29th minute when, after a painful start, Liverpool took the lead.

Andre Wisdom, the right back, intelligently found Suarez who had dropped deep Suarez, for all his intelligent touches and movement, wasted at least four good chances, although the worst miss came mid-way through the second half when he superbly picked out an unmarked Jonjo Shelvey 15 yards out, but a terrible first touch amounted to a back pass from the midfielder.

Reading worked hard and had some good possession as the game wore on but Pavel Pogrebnyak, their striker, was left too isolated and only a late swerving drive by Jobi McAnuff really tested Brad Jones, who looked impressive in place of the injured goalkeeper, Pepe Reina.

The Royals are struggling on their return to the Premier League but Brian McDermott, their manager, said: "We were much better in the second half and could have got a point. I take a lot of positives from this performance."

Star man: Raheem Sterling (Liverpool)

Yellow cards: Liverpool: Agger

Reading: Mariappa

Referee: R East

Attendance: 44,874

Liverpool: Jones 7, Wisdom 7, Skrtel 6, Agger 6, Johnson 7, Gerrard 7, Allen 6, Sahin 6 (Shelvey 63min), Suso 6 Enrique 75min), Suarez 7, Sterling 8 (Henderson 84min) Reading: McCarthy 7, Cummings 7, Gorkss 6, Mariappa 6, Shore 7, Kebe 6, Guthrie 6 (Roberts 80min), Leigertwood 6, Karacan 6 (McCleary 25min, 6), McAnuff 7, Pogrebnyak 6 (Le Fonder 73min) LIVERPOOL Sterling 29 1 READING 0

### Sterling and Liverpool finally off the mark

Brendan Rodgers cited faith in young talent as one of the reasons his Reading tenure ended in dismissal after 23 games. Three years and one transformation later, vindication arrived in front of the man who fired him, Royals' chairman John Madejski, as 17-year-old Raheem Sterling gave Liverpool their first home league win of the season.

The England prospect became the second-youngest goalscorer in Liverpool's history with a finish that bore the hallmarks of the youngest in his prime. Had Liverpool another Michael Owen in their ranks, the win would have been secure long before Brian McDermott's side stirred to generate a nervous finale.

"It has been a long time coming," said Rodgers. "We should have had three points here long before now, but it was an excellent goal and a terrific performance, especially on the back of an international break. We created so many chances, we had 19 shots on goal, and we need to improve our finishing for sure."

The otherwise excellent Luis Suarez, Nuri Sahin and substitute Jonjo Shelvey all squandered clear chances to add to Sterling's first competitive goal for Liverpool. Reading almost capitalised and the introduction of Jason Roberts, who refused to wear a Kick It Out campaign T-shirt before kick off just as he had promised, unsettled the home defence. But Liverpool, for all their profligacy, were thoroughly deserving victors.

Rodgers' team took control from the start. Reading offered nothing more than resistance initially and that was frequently stretched by the runs of Sterling and Suso, plus the imagination of Suarez. "We need to start games at three o'clock," said McDermott, still without a win since Reading's return to the Premier League. "We needed to get on the front foot and we did that in the second half. I thought we were going to get a point."

With Fabio Borini out for three months with a fractured foot and Andy Carroll resident at West Ham, even greater responsibility has fallen on Suarez to provide the cutting edge that Liverpool often lack. But it needs to be shared throughout the side irrespective of problems in attack and, mercifully for Rodgers, Sterling was inclined to agree.

The teenager and Glen Johnson were a constant threat down the left and, with better delivery and luck, Sterling could have scored or engineered the breakthrough long before it came. The Liverpool winger had one effort blocked by Shaun Cummings - and the better-placed Suarez made his displeasure known - then hesitated too long over one break down the left and delivered another into Sahin, who blazed over.

Suarez went close with an audacious chip and as the home crowd began to fear another trying afternoon, the Uruguay international unlocked the Reading rearguard with a first-time flick on of Andre Wisdom's long ball. The pass enabled Sterling to beat Cummings for pace and he finished expertly, across keeper Alex McCarthy and into the far bottom corner.

Rodgers said: "I am very pleased for him. That is a part of his game we have been working on in training and it was a wonderful finish. He is a terrific talent, with a good head on young shoulders."

The reception for Sterling's goal was matched only by the crowd's amusing reaction to a free-kick awarded in favour of Suarez. Initially there were ironic cheers as the referee, Roger East, punished Kaspars Gorkss's challenge, but they developed loudly, complete with standing ovation, for a rare call in Suarez's favour. And it wasn't even a foul.

Reading did not have an attempt on goal until the 41st minute, a woeful shot over by Mikele Leigertwood. Brad Jones was given a comfortable first Premier League start in Liverpool's goal in the absence of Jose Reina. The second half, however, provided a sterner test of the Australia international and the substitute Gareth McCleary should have equalised, but shot straight at Jones's legs. Jobi McAnuff and Jimmy Kebe also caused Liverpool problems, but Reading might have been caught out on the counter-attack. They were spared as Shelvey miscued horribly in front of goal and Suarez wasted two good chances. "He is not perfect," Rodgers said.

LIVERPOOL Jones; Wisdom, Skrtel, Agger&#9632;; Johnson; Gerrard, Allen; Suso (Jose Enrique 74), Sahin (Shelvey 63), Sterling (Henderson 84), Suarez Subs not used Gulacsi, Downing, Assaidi, Carragher

READING McCarthy; Cummings, Mariappa&#9632;; Gorkss, Shore; Kebe, Karacan (McCleary 25), Leigertwood, McAnuff; Guthrie (Roberts 81); Pogrebnyak (Le Fondre 74) Subs not used Gunter, Pearce, Robson-Kanu, Taylor Anfield 44,874

Game rating Referee Roger East

Date: 20 October 2012

Opposition: Reading

Competition: League

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



20 October  
2012



93:08 Full time The referee ends the match.

90:00+1:44 Unfair challenge on Shaun Cummings by Glen Johnson results in a free kick. Nicky Shorey delivers the ball from the free kick left-footed from right wing, Brad Jones makes a save.

90:00+0:51 Sanchez Jose Enrique produces a cross, save by Alex McCarthy.

90:00+0:26 Booking Adrian Mariappa receives a yellow card.

89:56 Luis Suarez fouled by Adrian Mariappa, the ref awards a free kick. Steven Gerrard restarts play with the free kick.

88:52 Garath McCleary produces a cross.

88:03 Unfair challenge on Shaun Cummings by Joe Allen results in a free kick. Free kick taken by Alex McCarthy.

87:37 Corner taken short by Jonjo Shelvey.

86:26 Martin Skrtel concedes a free kick for a foul on Jason Roberts. Nicky Shorey has a direct shot on goal from the free kick, save made by Brad Jones.

85:48 Martin Skrtel challenges Jason Roberts unfairly and gives away a free kick. Free kick crossed left-footed by Nicky Shorey, save by Brad Jones.

83:34 Shaun Cummings takes the direct free kick.

83:34 Substitution Substitution Jordan Henderson is brought on as a substitute for Raheem Sterling.

83:34 Joe Allen challenges Jimmy Kebe unfairly and gives away a free kick.

83:20 Sanchez Jose Enrique produces a cross, save by Alex McCarthy.

80:13 Substitution Substitution Jason Roberts joins the action as a substitute, replacing Danny Guthrie.

79:51 Effort from the edge of the box by Garath McCleary goes wide of the left-hand upright.

79:35 Danny Guthrie sends in a cross, Martin Skrtel manages to make a clearance.

78:26 Effort from 20 yards by Garath McCleary. Blocked by Glen Johnson.

77:44 Sanchez Jose Enrique crosses the ball, save made by Alex McCarthy.

76:51 Effort from the edge of the box by Luis Suarez goes wide of the left-hand post.

76:06 Effort on goal by Luis Suarez from just inside the penalty area goes harmlessly over the target.

73:38 Substitution Substitution Sanchez Jose Enrique on for Jesus Fernandez Saez.

73:38 Substitution Substitution Adam Le Fondre comes on in place of Pavel Pogrebnyak.

72:52 A cross is delivered by Mikele Leigertwood.

72:14 Inswinging corner taken by Danny Guthrie from the left by-line, save by Brad Jones.

71:25 Outswinging corner taken left-footed by Nicky Shorey from the left by-line, Daniel Agger makes a clearance.

69:47 Glen Johnson takes a shot. Alex McCarthy makes a save. Corner taken by Steven Gerrard from the left by-line, clearance made by Kaspars Gorkss.

68:51 Unfair challenge on Raheem Sterling by Shaun Cummings results in a free kick.

Free kick crossed right-footed by Steven Gerrard, clearance made by Pavel Pogrebnyak.

68:03 Luis Suarez produces a right-footed shot from outside the box and misses left.

67:19 Raheem Sterling is ruled offside. Adrian Mariappa takes the direct free kick.

66:36 Jesus Fernandez Saez takes the outswinging corner, clearance made by Kaspars Gorkss.

66:16 Steven Gerrard takes a shot. Save by Alex McCarthy.

63:13 Corner taken right-footed by Steven Gerrard from the left by-line to the near post, Header from deep inside the area by Martin Skrtel goes over the bar.

62:51 Luis Suarez takes a shot. Adrian Mariappa gets a block in.

62:01 Pavel Pogrebnyak is ruled offside. Brad Jones takes the direct free kick.

62:01 Substitution Substitution Jonjo Shelvey replaces Nuri Sahin.

60:16 Effort on goal by Mikele Leigertwood from 20 yards. Martin Skrtel gets a block in.

58:56 Effort from inside the area by Luis Suarez misses to the left of the target.

57:37 Garath McCleary takes a shot. Save by Brad Jones.

57:07 The assistant referee flags for offside against Jobi McAnuff. Direct free kick taken by Brad Jones.

56:02 Free kick crossed left-footed by Nicky Shorey, save by Brad Jones.

56:02 Booking Daniel Agger shown a yellow card.

55:48 Foul by Daniel Agger on Pavel Pogrebnyak, free kick awarded.

52:42 Garath McCleary takes a shot. Brad Jones makes a save. Inswinging corner taken from the left by-line by Danny Guthrie, Headed effort on goal by Kaspars Gorkss from inside the penalty box misses to the right of the goal.

52:21 Luis Suarez takes a shot. Save made by Alex McCarthy.

50:44 Luis Suarez challenges Kaspars Gorkss unfairly and gives away a free kick. Adrian Mariappa takes the free kick.

49:24 Glen Johnson takes a shot. Adrian Mariappa gets a block in. Shot from just outside the box by Glen Johnson misses to the right of the target.

47:59 Jimmy Kebe is ruled offside. Daniel Agger restarts play with the free kick.

46:32 Andre Wisdom concedes a free kick for a foul on Jobi McAnuff. The free kick is delivered right-footed by Danny Guthrie from left wing.

45:47 Shot by Raheem Sterling. Save by Alex McCarthy.

45:01 The match restarts for the second half.

45:00+2:26 Half time It is the end of the first-half.

45:00+1:19 Steven Gerrard takes the outswinging corner, Mikele Leigertwood manages to make a clearance.

45:00+0:58 Short corner taken by Jesus Fernandez Saez from the right by-line.

45:00+0:45 Glen Johnson takes a shot. Blocked by Shaun Cummings.

44:33 Glen Johnson has an effort at goal from 18 yards. Save by Alex McCarthy.

42:27 Daniel Agger concedes a free kick for a foul on Pavel Pogrebnyak. Direct free kick taken by Danny Guthrie.

41:37 Glen Johnson concedes a free kick for a foul on Jimmy Kebe. Shaun Cummings takes the direct free kick.

40:29 Shot from just outside the area by Mikele Leigertwood goes over the bar.

39:17 Nicky Shorey challenges Jesus Fernandez Saez unfairly and gives away a free kick. Martin Skrtel takes the free kick.

38:32 Raheem Sterling concedes a free kick for a foul on Jimmy Kebe. Danny Guthrie crosses the ball in from the free kick, clearance by Nuri Sahin.

36:50 Kaspars Gorkss concedes a free kick for a foul on Luis Suarez. Luis Suarez shoots direct from the free kick.

34:44 The ball is delivered by Garath McCleary, Glen Johnson makes a clearance.

34:59 Inswinging corner taken left-footed by Nicky Shorey played to the near post, clearance by Steven Gerrard.

34:44 Nicky Shorey sends in a cross, clearance by Glen Johnson.

33:51 Effort from outside the penalty box by Luis Suarez goes wide left of the target.

32:50 Foul by Nuri Sahin on Pavel Pogrebnyak, free kick awarded. Direct free kick taken by Mikele Leigertwood.

28:28 The assist for the goal came from Luis Suarez.

28:28 Goal scored Goal - Raheem Sterling - Liverpool 1 - 0 Reading A goal is scored by Raheem Sterling from just inside the area to the bottom left corner of the goal.

Liverpool 1-0 Reading.

25:21 Nuri Sahin takes a shot from just inside the penalty box which clears the crossbar.

24:18 Substitution Substitution Jem Karacan goes off and Garath McCleary comes on.

23:56 Effort on goal by Luis Suarez from just outside the penalty area goes harmlessly over the target.

20:28 Jimmy Kebe delivers the ball, save made by Brad Jones.

19:50 Foul by Pavel Pogrebnyak on Daniel Agger, free kick awarded. Direct free kick taken by Daniel Agger.

18:38 The assistant referee signals for offside against Luis Suarez. Adrian Mariappa restarts play with the free kick.

18:02 Raheem Sterling takes a shot from 25 yards. Comfortable save by Alex McCarthy.

15:15 Pavel Pogrebnyak concedes a free kick for a foul on Daniel Agger. Free kick taken by Daniel Agger.

14:40 A cross is delivered by Nuri Sahin.

14:19 Raheem Sterling takes a shot. Adrian Mariappa gets a block in.

12:26 Foul by Joe Allen on Jimmy Kebe, free kick awarded. The free kick is delivered left-footed by Nicky Shorey from right channel, Daniel Agger manages to make a clearance.

11:10 Glen Johnson produces a cross, clearance by Adrian Mariappa.

10:18 Shot from just outside the box by Jesus Fernandez Saez misses to the right of the goal.

9:44 Glen Johnson takes a shot from 25 yards. Blocked by Adrian Mariappa.

8:44 The ball is delivered by Glen Johnson, Nicky Shorey makes a clearance.

4:40 The assistant referee signals for offside against Nuri Sahin. Alex McCarthy takes the free kick.

3:29 Centre by Glen Johnson, save by Alex McCarthy.

1:48 Inswinging corner taken left-footed by Nicky Shorey, clearance made by Andre Wisdom.

1:48 Corner taken left-footed by Adrian Mariappa from the right by-line, Andre Wisdom makes a clearance.

1:39 Centre by Jobi McAnuff, Glen Johnson manages to make a clearance.

0:00 The ref blows the whistle to begin the match.