

Date: 17 February 2013
 Opposition: Swansea City
 Competition: League

Times	Telegraph	Echo
Guardian	Mirror	Evening Post
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17 February
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THE TIMES

Laudrup holds up his hands after Anfield mauling

Liverpool Gerrard 34 (pen), Coutinho 46, Enrique 50, Suarez 56, Sturridge 71 (pen) Swansea City Referee H Webb Attendance 44,832 0 5 Swansea City were supposed to be the worst possible opponents that Liverpool could face after the most testing week of Brendan Rodgers's tenure. In the event, his former club could not have been more accommodating as they meekly succumbed to their heaviest Premier League defeat in a manner befitting a team with their mind on other things. If Swansea go on to lift the Capital One Cup against Bradford City on Sunday, the five-goal mauling they suffered at the hands of a Liverpool side that took full advantage of Michael Laudrup's much-weakened side will be forgiven and forgotten. Whether the seven changes that he made to his team a week before a game against League Two opposition can be justified, or indeed were necessary, is another matter. "It was a nightmare," the Swansea manager said. "We got slaughtered. All we can do is say sorry to the fans who travelled and I'm the one responsible because I picked the team. I wanted to leave a couple of players out but that's not an excuse. "We've made changes before and still been competitive but today we could have lost 10-0. It wasn't what we wanted in the week before the cup final but it's what we got and it's all of our fault. Now we have to move on. I don't think it will affect our preparations for the final. It will affect us for a couple of days but from Wednesday onwards I'm sure we will be focusing only on the next game." What Phil Parkinson learnt from the occasion is open to question. The Bradford manager left after Liverpool's fifth goal, having undertaken a scouting mission that was rendered almost meaningless from the moment Laudrup handed in his team-sheet. In terms of personnel, desire and incentive, he knows that Swansea will be an entirely different proposition at Wembley with their first leading honour at stake.

Liverpool could only beat what was in front of them, of course, and the style of their victory was impressive, particularly coming after back-to-back defeats against West Bromwich Albion and Zenit St Petersburg that had threatened to derail their season altogether. This was a chance to boost flagging confidence levels and they took it emphatically, despite the strangely subdued atmosphere that the game was played in. The win also meant Liverpool had managed to rid themselves of the statistic of having failed to beat a team in the top half of the Premier League this season, with the three points lifting them to seventh place, their highest position of the campaign. Although such performance indicators may illustrate how far Liverpool still have to go to become genuinely competitive, at least they are steps in the right direction.

They dominated possession from the outset, with only their propensity for missing chances preventing them from establishing a dominant lead within the first half hour. In the opening 20 minutes alone, Liverpool had 11 shots but only one of them was on target. The tone had been set, though, with Swansea looking disjointed and distracted, their lack of anything resembling cohesive teamwork inviting the heavy defeat that Liverpool eventually administered.

Liverpool took the lead after 33 minutes with a penalty by Steven Gerrard, awarded when Luis Suarez was brought down by Kemy Agustien, even though the forward was in a non-threatening position. Swansea complained that the award by Howard Webb was soft, although their protests appeared to be inspired more by the referee having pointed to the spot only after the intervention of Mike Mullarkey, the assistant referee, than they were by a sense of injustice.

The visiting team also knew that they had been fortunate not to concede an earlier penalty when Daniel Sturridge was felled by Kyle Bartley. The former Chelsea forward came close to doubling Liverpool's lead before half-time, when he raced on to Suarez's threaded pass and lifted the ball over the advancing Michel Vorm, only to be denied by Bartley again, this time by fair means, as the defender cleared from his goaline. Any relief that Laudrup felt at conceding only one goal during a remarkably one-sided first half evaporated within 16 seconds of the restart, when Philippe Coutinho scored his first goal for Liverpool. Again Suarez was instrumental, finding the Brazilian in space on the left before Coutinho evaded Garry Monk's half-hearted challenge and beat Vorm with a right-foot shot. Four minutes later, Liverpool scored a picture-book goal, as eye-catching interplay between Jose Enrique, Suarez and Sturridge culminated in the left back firing high into Vorm's net. Whatever the misgivings about Swansea's performance, this was a moment for Liverpool to savour. A more perfect demonstration of the kind of effective pass-and-move football that Rodgers wants to instil is difficult to imagine. The only remaining question was how many more Liverpool would score. The answer was two, as Suarez got in the act with a typically impudent individual effort before Sturridge completed the scoring with a penalty after Wayne Routledge, the substitute, was adjudged to have handled Enrique's long ball. Shoulder injury likely to end Borini's season tony barrett Brendan Rodgers fears Fabio Borini could miss the rest of the season after the Italy forward dislocated his left shoulder in the latter stages of Liverpool's win. Borini, who was introduced as a substitute in the 78th minute, collapsed in agony under a seemingly innocuous challenge and, after receiving treatment on the pitch, headed straight down the tunnel to be examined by Liverpool's medical staff. "He will probably be out for the season," Rodgers said. "It looks like he's dislocated his shoulder. It's unfortunate. It's actually the other shoulder to a similar injury he had when he was at Chelsea." Borini only recently returned to fitness after a three-month absence caused by a fractured foot, and his latest injury took at least some of the gloss off Liverpool's emphatic victory against

Rodgers's former side. The Liverpool manager admitted that the win, their first in six games, was crucial after back-to-back defeats by West Bromwich Albion and Zenit St Petersburg and he praised his players for showing the necessary "mental toughness" to respond so positively. "It was a brilliant performance and big applause to the players," Rodgers said. "Their attitude was fantastic throughout the game. We have shown mental toughness and it was important that we kept a clean sheet because we have not been at the best defensively in our last four games. "Our main focus was about being defensively solid and compact against a Swansea team and players that I know very well. It is an important three points because it has been a bumpy road for us of late.

"We dominated the first half, created loads of chances and started the second half really well. The second goal [by Coutinho] gave us extra confidence and flow in our game. Coutinho is a very talented player and only 20. He has already played at a high level, but will take time to adapt to the pace here."

Rodgers accepted that the Capital One Cup final had been a distraction for Swansea, but he felt that Liverpool's performance offered a hope that they could yet mount a challenge to finish in the top four of the Premier League.

"I am an optimist but I am not getting too carried away because we have put in some outstanding performances and not got the results," he said. "Their cup final obviously played a part in it, but they still had a strong side out. Michu on the bench showed they are thinking about next week."

ratings Liverpool (4-4 -1-1): J M Reina 6 - G Johnson 7, J Carragher 7, D Agger 7, J Enrique 7 - S Downing 6, Lucas 7 (sub: J Allen, 72min), S Gerrard 7, P Coutinho 7 (sub: J Henderson, 60 6) - L Suarez 8 (sub: F Borini, 78) - D Sturridge 7. Substitutes not used: Gulacsi, M Skrtel, R Sterling, J Shelvey. Swansea City (4-2-3-1): M Vorm 5 - D Tiendalli 4, K Bartley 4, G Monk 4, B Davies 6 - L Britton 5, K Agustien 5 - J De Guzman 5, R Lamah 4 (sub: W Routledge, 64 5), P Hernandez 5 (sub: N Dyer, 77) - I Shechter 4 (sub: A Rangel, 82). Substitutes not used: G Tremmel, A Williams, Michu, L Moore. Booked: Hernandez

the guardian

Suarez and Liverpool beat Swansea lying down

The past week had been "a bumpy road" in the Liverpool reign of Brendan Rodgers but respite was waiting at the end in the form of a compliant old friend. Swansea City would only have looked more in cup final mode had they played at Anfield in new suits and broken off to record a song. Liverpool capitalised ruthlessly to leave Michael Laudrup fearing the impact at Wembley on Sunday. Rodgers, the former Swansea manager, denied harbouring any pre-match worry over the reaction to a sixth game without a win for Liverpool. Recent performances, however, littered with wasteful finishing and weak defending, have undermined not only the club's aspirations for the season but faith in the manager's ability to realise them. The rout, Liverpool's first win since the 5-0 defeat of Norwich City on 19 January, was therefore timed to perfection. The mitigating factor of Swansea's weakened team before their Wembley date with Bradford was of no concern to Rodgers.

Luis Suarez inspired the performance, aided and abetted by the January recruits Daniel Sturridge and Philippe Coutinho. The new signings are ineligible for Thursday's Europa League second leg against Zenit St Petersburg but Liverpool have at least trained their sights as they attempt to overturn a 2-0 deficit.

Rodgers said: "It has been a bumpy road this week but it was important we showed mental toughness and kept a clean sheet. We have not been at our best defensively in the last four games." The one downside was the dislocated shoulder that is expected to end Fabio Borini's season.

The question of how much a distraction the League Cup final would be to Swansea was answered with the arrival of the team sheets. Laudrup made seven changes to the side who beat QPR in their last Premier League outing, when they lost Chico Flores to an ankle ligament injury, and the no-risk policy meant a place on the bench for their captain, Ashley Williams, and their leading goalscorer Michu. The visitors' threat disappeared with him. His replacement, Itay Shechter, lacked support and strength on the ball to seriously trouble the Liverpool defence. With Swansea minds elsewhere and Liverpool playing on the back of successive 2-0 defeats, the game had a subdued, end-of-season air. It had a restorative effect on Liverpool's confidence in front of goal, however.

After an initial flurry when Jamie Carragher prevented Shechter reaching Roland Lamah's pass to the near post and Lamah, making his first league start, had an optimistic penalty appeal against Glen Johnson rightly refused, the visitors created nothing. Liverpool peppered Michel Vorm's goal with shots, although it was only after Kemy Agustien committed a needless foul on Suarez in the area on 34 minutes that they convinced in attack. Rodgers' team had 11 shots in the opening 20 minutes, with one on target.

Johnson headed wide from Stewart Downing's inviting cross, Suarez shot over, Sturridge went close from another Downing delivery and Anfield lambasted the referee Howard Webb for denying Sturridge a penalty when the striker stumbled over Kyle Bartley's leg. Webb played a good advantage instead, but the full debutant Coutinho shot wide from six yards. The young Brazilian otherwise enjoyed a productive and promising afternoon.

Then came Agustien's challenge on Suarez as the Liverpool striker retrieved a Steven Gerrard corner at the back of the area and cut to the byline. The contest

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changed irrevocably. The ball was almost out of play when the Swansea midfielder tripped Suarez and, with Webb unsighted, the assistant referee Mike Mullarkey signalled for a spot-kick. Gerrard made amends for his penalty miss against West Bromwich Albion last Monday by beating Vorm low to the goalkeeper's right. Only 20 seconds had gone in the second half when Suarez released Coutinho with a fine pass. The pounds 8.5m acquisition advanced on Garry Monk, twisted him inside and out, and shot through Vorm's weak guard. A flowing move down the Liverpool left ended with Jose Enrique converting Sturridge's ball across the box, Suarez scored a fine goal when he collected Gerrard's pass, beat two defenders and found the bottom corner and Sturridge scored Liverpool's second penalty following a handball by Wayne Routledge. The watching Bradford City manager, Phil Parkinson, had seen enough and left his seat. He can only hope the rout will prey on Swansea minds on Sunday.

Man of the match Luis Suarez (Liverpool)
 Score five to win:
 Yesterday's win was Liverpool's first victory in six matches. Their last one, nearly a month ago, was also a 5-0 victory - against Norwich
 Liverpool 5 Swansea 0 Feb 17
 Zenit St P'burg 2 Liverpool 0 Feb 14
 Liverpool 0 WBA 2 Feb 11
 Man City 2 Liverpool 2 Feb 3
 Arsenal 2 Liverpool 2 Jan 30
 Oldham 3 Liverpool 2 Jan 27
 Liverpool 5 Norwich 0 Jan 19

The Mail

FIVE GOALS, BUT IT FEELS SO EMPTY ON THE KOP

THE statistics were impressive, the result even more so, but rarely has Anfield witnessed a victory that felt so hollow.

Liverpool, in the words of Michael Laudrup, 'slaughtered' Swansea, scoring five goals and producing the highest number of shots -- 35 -- in a single game by a Barclays Premier League team this season.

The win moved the Reds up to seventh place, their highest position of the campaign.

At the final whistle, though, there were as many empty seats as there have been at the end of some defeats here and a sense of ambivalence. Liverpool were impressive, but what lessons could be gleaned from knocking over Swansea's reserves? Even by recent standards, this has been an extraordinary season for Liverpool. Emotions, mirroring form, have swung wildly from one extreme to another. 'It was an important three points,' said Liverpool manager Brendan Rodgers after goals from Steven Gerrard, Philippe Coutinho, Jose Enrique, Luis Suarez and Daniel Sturridge inflicted the biggest defeat on Swansea since they returned to the top flight.

'It has been a bumpy road for us. We have shown mental toughness and it was important we kept a clean sheet because we have not been at the best defensively in the last four games. We dominated the first half, created loads of chances. 'I am an optimist, but I am not getting too carried away as we have put in some outstanding performances and not got the results. 'I liken us to a marathon runner who gets in a good position in the group and is ready to make the run -- but then we trip ourselves up.' That is a fitting analogy. What must be pointed out, though, is how different a team Liverpool look when Suarez and Sturridge are working in tandem. They cut Swansea to ribbons and better defenders than Garry Monk and Kyle Bartley would have had trouble containing them. Two defeats in four days meant the hosts had to restore confidence levels. It helped that Laudrup, with a big day in London looming, made seven changes to the side that beat QPR. Liverpool made the most of their advantage, mounting wave after wave of attacks during a one-sided game. After defeats by West Brom and Zenit St Petersburg, it was just what they needed.

Stewart Downing, Sturridge (twice), Glen Johnson and Suarez all peppered Michel Vorm's goal, as Swansea were not allowed out of their own half.

But, given what has happened too often this season, there was a fear good play would go unrewarded. Those fears evaporated in the 34th minute. Kemy Agustien chopped down Suarez, who appeared to be running down a blind alley. Assistant referee Mike Mullarkey signalled there had been an infringement, Howard Webb pointed to the spot and Gerrard did the rest.

Having missed from 12 yards against West Brom, Gerrard's relief at dispatching the spot-kick was evident and it gave his team an advantage that was never in danger. Liverpool ran amok in the second half and the outcome was put beyond any doubt 17 seconds after the restart when Suarez played Coutinho in and the Brazilian marked his full debut by cracking a right-footed shot that squirmed beyond Vorm. Quickly two became three. Enrique surged forward, exchanged passes with the outstanding Sturridge and finished confidently, his shot racing high into the net. Then, on 56 minutes, Suarez waltzed round two flimsy challenges from Monk and Bartley before sweeping his drive past Vorm.

'I want to see this as an accident because of something that will happen in seven days' time,' said Laudrup, trying to fathom why Swansea collapsed. 'Was it a lack of concentration? I would hope not.' Such was the ease with which Liverpool sliced through Swansea, it was a question of when they would score again and how many they would finish with. So it was something of a surprise that they did not move their total past five.

Sturridge confidently dispatched the last, cracking a penalty beyond Vorm after substitute Wayne Routledge had handled Enrique's long ball. It was the least he and his team deserved for their vibrancy and endeavour. The only down side was a serious shoulder injury to Fabio Borini.

'They have some outstanding players so I don't think you can take anything away from the Liverpool players,' said Rodgers, enjoying his first victory over Swansea in three attempts since leaving the Liberty Stadium.

'We were hungry for the three points.' Meanwhile, Liverpool defender Jack Robinson, 19, is set to join Wolves on loan.

The Daily Telegraph

LIVERPOOL find easy prey in feeble Swans

Liverpool 5
 Gerrard 34 pen, Coutinho 46, Enrique 50, Suarez 56, Sturridge 71 pen
 Swansea City 0 Att: 44,832

In seven typically erratic days, Liverpool have sent supporters to their knees in despair and now pulled them skyward in celebration. This club deal only in extremes. A vivacious attacking performance dismantled Swansea City, whose minds - and, it must be said, their best players - were elsewhere ahead of next Sunday's Capital One Cup final.

Swansea manager Michael Laudrup said his side could have conceded 10 goals. Brendan Rodgers might have been tempted to describe the performance as "near perfect", were he not so careful about the nuance to his every comment.

Certainly they improved hugely on the embarrassing defeat at home to West Brom. "I won't say we've still got a chance of being top four because every time I do I get slaughtered," he said. After eight months in the job, that remark showed Rodgers now understands the peculiarities of this curious club.

Liverpool stretch emotions to the limit. They falter when least expected yet, on afternoons of sheer brilliance such as this one, toy with challenging for the top four.

That Rodgers inherited such inconsistency should be remembered. He is still shaping a team. The destructive forward partnership of Luis Suarez and Daniel Sturridge could become a formidable trio with the addition of Philippe Coutinho, who marked an encouraging first start with a goal.

Liverpool's 35 shots, which included converted penalties from Sturridge and Steven Gerrard, and goals for Jose Enrique and Suarez, were more than any side have managed in a game this season.

The statistic underlined the view that Rodgers is creating an exciting, attacking unit. If results matched performances, they would have con-siderably more points. To assess the potential of this team by number-crunching is dangerous, however. Trotting out favourable or unfavourable statistics has become a sport of its own on Merseyside, usually slanted to support an opinion.

It was pointed out before the game that Liverpool were three points worse off than they were after 26 games last season. This win means they have the same number after 27. They collected 13 points in their last 11 league games a year ago. Shall we update weekly for the rest of the season?

These evaluations establish nothing. If you support Rodgers, you see and sense the progression. If you do not, only the return of Rafael Benitez or Kenny Dalglish, or the appointment of the next flavour of the month - who would still get ditched in 12 months' time for not producing magic - will suffice. The reasons behind Liverpool's decline have been chronicled so often that not even Dad's Army is repeated as much. Boardroom intransigence during the glory years, paralysis in the David Moores era, deception under Tom Hicks and George Gillett, ceaseless promise and not much else yet under Fenway Sports Group, shocking transfers and occasional cup glory punctuated by megalomania from those who rose and fell in the manager's office. Now the young, emerging manager is accused of naivety and hammered when he speaks with honesty and a dash of imagination. Rodgers needs time. Performances such as this suggest he could succeed soon; seven days ago it seemed that it might have taken years, several million more pounds and another overhaul. We will not know the truth for a while, but Rodgers deserves to stay for a long time yet.

This was the ideal moment for Rodgers to meet his former club, with Ashley Williams and Michu among the senior players left on the bench. A second penalty for Liverpool in consecutive home games arrived after 34 minutes when Leon Britton was adjudged to have tripped Suarez. Gerrard banished the memory of his miss last Monday, placing to Michel Vorm's right.

Rampancy ensued. Coutinho took Suarez's pass, dropped a shoulder, and ramed past Vorm. Enrique toepoked a third, Suarez's dribble and finish in the 56th minute made it four and Wayne Routledge's handball gifted Sturridge the fifth from the spot. Bradford manager Phil Parkinson watched on, preparing Wembley notes. He would have learned little other than to expect a much stronger Swansea side that this. Laudrup said: "We all take the blame for this, me included."

Aside from the dislocated shoulder that could end Fabio Borini's season, Rodgers had reason to be upbeat. Instead he was measured.

"We need to find more consistency," he said. "We have to try and take that forward now into the rest of the season and the start of the next season."

For the optimists, Liverpool are three points closer to European qualification. Results and statistics may not always be sympathetic, but only the most shrieking extremist will argue there are no encouraging signs under this manager.

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THE INDEPENDENT

Laudrup 'nightmare' as Swans pay for dreaming of Wembley

When Phil Parkinson rose from his seat yesterday, two thoughts would have accompanied the Bradford City manager back to his car.

The first would have been that, if Swansea City approach the Capital One Cup final with anything like this level of incompetence, he has every chance of becoming the first fourth-tier manager to lift a major trophy. The second is that he is unlikely to be facing this Swansea team on Sunday.

You could accuse Michael Laudrup of being utterly professional or you could wonder why, when preparing for a final against a League Two side that cost less than [pounds sterling]10,000 to assemble, the Swansea manager felt it necessary to rest half-a-dozen first choice players.

Liverpool are not the kind of side to take liberties against. Lately, they have perfected the art of crushing mediocre opposition and those with their minds elsewhere. Kenny Dalglish's last game as Liverpool manager at Anfield had seen a Chelsea side who were mentally already in Munich, preparing for the European Cup final, brushed aside 4-1. Swansea's last defeat here had been an 8-0 humbling in 1990. Laudrup thought they might have conceded 10 yesterday.

"It was a nightmare," he reflected afterwards. "We were slaughtered in the first half and we were still in the game at half-time. Then, in the second half we gave away three goals in 10 minutes. It was awful.

"We have to say sorry to the fans who travelled from Wales. We rested Michu and, after the injury to Chico Flores, we rested Ashley Williams. We still should have been competitive and yet we could have lost 10-0.

"Their heads were somewhere else and it was horrible to watch. It was not what we wanted but what we got and we have to get back on our horse and prepare for the final." It had been thought Swansea would travel to Wembley by coach. Only the dislocated shoulder that saw Fabio Borini writhing by the touchline in agony and which will cost the striker the rest of the season cast a shadow over Anfield. In the wake of defeats in three competitions to Oldham, West Bromwich Albion and Zenit St Petersburg, Brendan Rodgers required an emphatic show of strength if all the sneers about Barcelona on the Mersey were not to grow ever more spiteful. This was it.

Just before kick-off the statisticians from Opta noted that this season Liverpool averaged 11 attempts per goal. This was slightly better. There were 35 shots aimed at Michel Vorm's net and five were successful.

Liverpool had skimmed the crossbar, peppered the Kop with shots and, in Stewart Downing's case, threatened the corner flag before, finally, Swansea gave way.

Laudrup thought they had come through the worst when Daniel Sturridge headed over from close range and Philippe Coutinho somehow shot wide with Vorm on the turf and the goal gaping. However, having survived the shotgun blasts, Swansea drew a revolver and calmly aimed for the middle of their own foot.

Luis Suarez was in the area but the ball was going out of play and the Uruguayan was not an obvious threat when Dutch midfielder Kemy Agustien struck out a leg and tripped him. The linesman, rather than the referee, Howard Webb, awarded the penalty and Steven Gerrard (left) who had missed from the spot against West Brom, stepped up to take it. This time, Liverpool's captain did not miss. It was driven into the right corner of Vorm's net, although the Dutchman was inches from it and slapped his gloves against the ground in fury. It was Liverpool's 15th shot of the afternoon.

Within 10 minutes of the restart, the game had become a rout. Coutinho, the slight, highly technical Brazilian midfielder for whom Rodgers paid Internazionale [pounds sterling]8.5m, was given a standing ovation on his debut. Not just for the run that brought Liverpool's second but for the back-heel that might have brought a third, and much else besides.

Jose Enrique's anticipation of Sturridge's pass, which was wonderfully instinctive for a left-back, brought a third, and a slaloming run from Suarez created the fourth.

Vorm had just saved brilliantly with his feet from Sturridge when Swansea gave away a second, equally needless penalty as Wayne Routledge, for reasons best known to himself, stuck up a hand to meet Enrique's cross.

Gerrard was going to take it but Sturridge had unquestionably deserved a goal and the ball was passed to him. His penalty was not as good as his captain's but it produced the same result.

"Can we make the top four?" Rodgers reflected. "Every time I mention it, you guys in the press slaughter me for saying it. But I am a manager and therefore I am an optimist." So for the moment is Phil Parkinson.

LIVERPOOL
 SWANSEA CITY

Booked: Swansea Hernandez. Man of the match Sturridge. Match rating 6/10.

Possession: Liverpool 56%. Swansea 44%. Attempts on target: Liverpool 18.

Swansea 3. Referee H Webb (South Yorks). Attendance 44,832.

DAILY MIRROR

35 SHOTS, 5 GOALS.. liverpool 5 swansea 0 the DEMOLITION FROM ANFIELD Okay, Swansea didn't show up, but why can't infuriating Reds find this winning formula EVERY week?

IT SEEMS churlish to be angry with Liverpool after such an impressively complete performance as this.

Yet their imperious manner in dismissing an understrength, barely motivated Swansea side begs the question: Why can't they produce this sort of form on a more regular basis? It is not enough to explain away the dominance and class of the home side by the paucity of opponents with BOTH eyes on next weekend's Capital One Cup final, nor their infuriating inconsistency or the relative youth of their side.

Look at the team that lost so maddeningly to West Brom and Zenit in the past week and then produced this display with five brilliant goals, and they are not that young.

Yes, they introduced Philippe Coutinho - a 20-year-old Brazilian with a touch of samba in his skills. But they also fielded World Cup veterans Reina, Gerrard, Carragher, Suarez, Johnson and Agger.

They broke a Premier League record for this season with 35 shots, the most in a single game, and have by mid-February, got more points and more goals at Anfield than they did in the whole of last season.

Yet in the previous two games, a combination of missed opportunities and defensive frailty reduced them to the levels of this time last season, when a relegation form run of 18 points from the final 19 matches got Kenny Dalglish the sack. The question of why will be taxing boss Brendan Rodgers far beyond the time when the warm glow of this victory wears off, and he will no doubt concentrate his thoughts on those defensive weaknesses that make it so important for Liverpool to score first.

When they do, they look a different team. And for now, after this quite stunning performance, we should allow the manager the satisfaction at least of rejoicing in a display from his side was as good as anything seen on this ground for a number of years.

Led by Luis Suarez, the Reds were simply devastating. AsSwans boss Michael Laudrup pointed out, the score could so easily have been 10, with Daniel Sturridge (below) being denied brilliantly so many times by the outstanding Michel Vorm, he could have had two hat-tricks.

As it was, the new striker had to settle for one, but his pace and threat was a significant factor inLiverpool's confidence going forward, and with him in the side they do look, largely, a different team.

Not that it seemed as such for the opening half-hour or so, as the Reds looked tentative in front of goal, with Vorm appearing so commanding.

It took a slice of fortune to change the direction of the game, after Liverpool had missed six or seven good opportunities.

Sturridge had been denied a blatant penalty when he was fouled by Kyle Bartley, and it seemed referee Howard Webb would repeat that error when Suarez was bundled to the ground after a stupid challenge from Kemy Agustien.

But assistant ref Mike Mullarkey intervened, the penalty was given and Steven Gerrard made up for his costly miss against West Brom by smashing the ball into the net.

Suarez found Coutinho, and as the defenders backed off, he showed great technique to deceive Vorm with a fine shot.

Sturridge showed his party tricks in setting up Jose Enrique, before Suarez produced a similarly brilliant turn to find the corner of the net with a curling shot. Sturridge was rewarded for his brilliance when the generous Gerrard allowed his team-mate to take the spot-kick, after sub Wayne Routledge handled Enrique's deep cross.

The final few minutes had Laudrup cringing in his seat, and for all the Swansea manager's defiance in insisting he did the right thing in making seven changes, he must be careful this crushing defeat doesn't deflate them.

As for Liverpool, Rodgers must find a formula to allow the confidence of this win to be taken into the Europa League return with Zenit on Thursday.

He has struggled to do that all season, but if there is any consistency to be had from this squad of players, then they still yet could become a very good team.

LIVERPOOL: Reina 6, Johnson 6, Carragher 6, Agger 7, Enrique 6, Lucas 7 (Allen 72), Gerrard 7, Coutinho 8 (Henderson 60, 6), Suarez 9 (Borini 82), Downing 7, Sturridge 8. SWANSEA: Vorm 7, Tiendalli 4, Bartley 4, Monk 4, Davies 5, Britton 5, Agustien 4, Lamah 4 (Routledge 64, 5), Hernandez 6 (Dyer 76), Shechter 4 (Rangel 82), De Guzman 5. REF: Howard Webb 7 ATT: 44,832

Led by Luis Suarez, Liverpool were simply devastating. As Michael Laudrup pointed out, the final score could easily have been 10-0LIVERPOOL v SWANSEA MAN OF THE MATCH SUAREZUnstoppable in this sort of form BALL POSSESSION 45.1% B 54.3% SHOTS ON TARGET 2 10 SHOTS OFF TARGET 0 SHS 16 SHOTS BLOCKED 19 CORNERS 1 10 FOULS 9 7 OFFSIDE 31 CARDS 10 0

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LIVERPOOL FC returned to winning ways in emphatic fashion as they thrashed Swansea City 5-0 in the Premier League at Anfield.

It was the perfect afternoon for boss Brendan Rodgers against his former club as the Reds bounced back following the damaging defeats to West Brom and Zenit St Petersburg.

Skipper Steven Gerrard put the hosts on track when he fired home the opener from the penalty spot before the break.

In the second half Liverpool ran riot with £8.5million Brazilian Philippe Coutinho marking his full debut with a goal before Jose Enrique added a third.

Luis Suarez grabbed his 23rd goal of the campaign and Daniel Sturridge completed the scoring with another spot-kick as the Reds climbed back up to seventh in the Premier League.

Rodgers made four changes following the trip to Zenit St Petersburg in the Europa League on Thursday night.

New boy Coutinho was handed a start, while the Reds welcomed back Sturridge after a thigh injury, along with Daniel Agger and Lucas Leiva.

Jordan Henderson, Joe Allen, Raheem Sterling and Martin Skrtel all dropped to the bench.

Swansea boss Michael Laudrup clearly had one eye on next weekend's Capital One Cup final against Bradford City as he rested a number of first team regulars, including top scorer Michu and skipper Ashley Williams.

Liverpool dominated from the start with Stewart Downing volleying wide early on before Suarez fired straight at Michel Vorm after a neat lay-off from Sturridge.

The hosts looked a lot more potent with Sturridge back in the side with Suarez wreaking havoc just behind him.

After Gerrard's 20-yard free-kick was blocked by the wall, the rebound dropped kindly to Suarez but he lashed it over the bar.

Swansea remained firmly on the back foot but it was a familiar story for the Reds as they struggled to make it count.

Midway through the first half Sturridge nodded wastefully over from Downing's cross and then the £12million striker had appeals for a penalty waved away after being upended by Kyle Bartley.

The loose ball should have been converted by Coutinho but he dragged his shot wide of the upright.

Ten minutes finally the interval the breakthrough finally arrived. Gerrard's deep corner found its way to Suarez at the far post and he burst past Kemy Agustien towards the byline.

The midfielder cynically tripped him and this time Howard Webb pointed to the spot. Having seen a penalty saved in the defeat to West Brom six days earlier, this time Gerrard made no mistake as he drilled it into the bottom corner.

Relief engulfed Anfield and buoyed by the goal, Liverpool pressed forward in search of greater reward.

Just 16 seconds into the second half the points were ruthlessly wrapped up.

Coutinho raced on to Suarez's pass and as Garry Monk backed off, the Brazilian cashed in. Vorm got a leg to his right-footed strike but couldn't keep it out.

Liverpool were rampant and in the 50th minute a stunning team move brought a third goal.

Sturridge, Enrique, Coutinho and Suarez were all involved. It was slick and incisive and ended with Enrique meeting Sturridge's pass with a clinical first-time finish into the roof of the net.

Six minutes later it was 4-0. Downing picked out Suarez and he skipped away from Bartley and Monk before planting a shot into the bottom corner.

Coutinho departed on the hour to a standing ovation but with substitute Jordan Henderson instantly impressing there was no let-up for the ragged Swans.

Suarez and Sturridge both went close to extending Liverpool's advantage before the hosts grabbed a fifth with 18 minutes to go.

It came from another penalty after substitute Wayne Routledge senselessly handled Enrique's cross into the area.

Gerrard gave Sturridge the opportunity to get on the scoresheet and he grasped it – beating Vorm comfortably from 12 yards.

Liverpool could have had more joy late on with Sturridge hitting the bar and Johnson firing just wide with Swansea just glad when the final whistle brought an end to the punishment.



SWANSEA City warmed up for one of the biggest days in a century with their worst defeat in more than a decade.

Not since Nick Cusack's class of 2002 were beaten 7-1 at Hartlepool United have Swansea suffered such a thumping loss.

Michael Laudrup shuffled his pack with a trip to Wembley around the corner and a somewhat patched-up Swansea side were thrashed.

With hindsight, perhaps one or two more regulars should have been included on what turned into a dreadful day for the visiting contingent.

Laudrup's predecessor, Brendan Rodgers, must have enjoyed it, for anything less than a home win here would have left the locals grumbling.

Rodgers's men came into the game off the back of a difficult week, but they did not have a difficult afternoon.

Swansea, by contrast, had prepared for this game by relaxing in the Dubai sunshine.

In truth it seemed one or two minds were still on the beach, and Laudrup will expect much more focus next weekend.

Phil Parkinson will be in the opposite dugout in North London next Sunday.

He was in the directors' box here, although how much he might have learned from this uncharacteristic Swansea effort is questionable.

Laudrup's team were awful, but the Dane will expect a transformation next time out.

"We just hope this was one bad accident caused in part by the huge game we have next weekend," the Swansea manager said.

There was a time not so long ago that Swansea would not — could not — have dreamed of leaving out their big hitters at Anfield.

But this is a club with, er, bigger fish to fry right now in the shape of Bradford City.

Laudrup made no fewer than seven changes to the side which had started against Queens Park Rangers in Swansea's last outing just over a fortnight ago.

A couple were enforced, with Chico Flores injured and Ki Sung-Yueng suffering with a throat infection, but Laudrup did not have to leave out heavyweights like Ashley Williams and Michu.

Perhaps Swansea have earned the right to rest the big guns ahead of the Capital One Cup final thanks to their terrific efforts so far this season.

And Laudrup has made changes before this term, and his understudies have nearly always delivered strong performances.

But they were under the cosh right from the outset here, with Luis Suarez rifling a shot straight at Michel Vorm in the first few minutes.

Nuisance

The tone was set for what turned into a torrid 90 minutes for the visiting fans. Swansea countered briefly, Itay Shechter making a nuisance of himself to earn a corner which Jonathan de Guzman sent deep towards full debutant Roland Lamah.

The Belgian struck a volley towards goal but Glen Johnson blocked and Liverpool were very quickly back on the front foot.

Suarez was everywhere, the Uruguayan running at Swansea's rejigged back four at every opportunity and regularly ending up flat out on the turf.

One free-kick he earned saw Steven Gerrard crash the ball into an elongated wall. Suarez flashed the rebound over, then did likewise with a set-piece of his own.

Johnson headed well wide from Stewart Downing's corner, then the ubiquitous Suarez sent a long-range half-volley dipping over the crossbar.

Downing was busy on the Liverpool right, and he twisted and turned beyond Ben Davies before crossing for Daniel Sturridge to head over from point-blank range.

Liverpool's heavyweight champion David Price made an appearance on the pitch at half-time, but Swansea were on the ropes long before the break.

The home side ought to have had a penalty on 25 minutes when Suarez fed Sturridge and the £12 million January signing cut in from the right.

Garry Monk did well to slow Sturridge's progress, but Howard Webb ought to have pointed to the spot when Kyle Bartley followed up with a challenge and did not get any of the ball.

Webb ignored the home appeals, though, and Philippe Coutinho fired wastefully wide at the far post.

Liverpool screamed again for a penalty eight minutes later and this time, in more questionable circumstances, they got their wish.

Penalty

Kemy Agustien stuck out a leg, Suarez went flying and assistant referee Mike Mullarkey made the decision.

Gerrard missed a penalty in Liverpool's last league game, but he fired low into the bottom corner, giving Vorm no chance even though he went the right way.

Liverpool might have been further in front before the turnaround, Bartley rescuing Swansea with a goal-line clearance after Sturridge got in behind and lifted the ball over the advancing Vorm.

Swansea had offered virtually nothing and, when a rare shooting chance came, de Guzman scuffed a weak effort into Pepe Reina's arms.

Laudrup's men needed a significant improvement in the second period, but what they got was anything but.

Date: 17 February 2013
 Opposition: Swansea City
 Competition: League

Times	Telegraph	Echo
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Only 15 seconds after the restart, Rodgers's side were 2-0 up, full debutant Philippe Coutinho collecting possession from Suarez and drilling home from the edge of the area.
 Swansea, the team who boasted the best away defensive record in the top flight before this, were now starting to crumble.
 Liverpool's third goal was superb, Jose Enrique exchanging passes first with Suarez and then Sturridge before prodding the ball over Vorm and into the roof of the net.
 Liverpool's next attack brought their next goal, Downing feeding Suarez and the £23 million former Ajax man doing the rest.
 Suarez turned away from Bartley and then beyond Monk before steering a left-foot shot into the bottom corner.
 After a couple of painful defeats, Rodgers must have been savouring a chance to relax on the touchline.
 There was nothing for his old club to smile about, though, as Liverpool came forward again and again.
 Sturridge twice found himself one on one with Vorm, and twice the Swansea goalkeeper saved well with his legs.
 But the Dutch international was left helpless again after Enrique's cross was handled by substitute Wayne Routledge.
 Gerrard allowed Sturridge to take the spot-kick this time, and once again Vorm was beaten despite diving the right way.
 The ex-Chelsea frontman might have grabbed his second of the day a couple of minutes later, but his 25-yard drive kissed the bar and flew into the crowd.
 There was a late chance for a Swansea consolation, but Routledge's effort was repelled smartly by Reina.
 A Swansea goal would not have made any difference on what was a miserable afternoon for Laudrup's team.
 Yes the Dane made changes and yes Liverpool are a top club, but nobody enjoys getting demolished like this.
 "It was awful," Laudrup reflected.
 There were no arguments there.



Liverpool ended a five-match winless run in style with a dominant display over a weakened Swansea City.
 Steven Gerrard's penalty set Liverpool on their way when Kemy Agustien was ruled to have brought down Luis Suarez.
 Suarez then released Philippe Coutinho for his first Liverpool goal, before Jose Enrique finished a flowing move.
 Liverpool's superiority was rubbed in by Suarez's stylish solo score and a Daniel Sturridge penalty after Wayne Routledge handled in the area.
 Ex-Swansea manager Brendan Rodgers, who left south Wales for Merseyside in May, recalled Sturridge, cup-tied for Liverpool's midweek 2-0 Europa League defeat at Zenit St Petersburg, to his starting line-up.
 Daniel Agger and Lucas Leiva also returned, while midfielder Coutinho - an £8.5m signing from Inter Milan - made his Anfield debut.
 With one eye on next Sunday's Capital One Cup final against Bradford City, Michael Laudrup made seven changes from his side that humbled Queen's Park Rangers 4-1.
 Top scorer Michu was left on the bench, along with regular starters Ashley Williams, Angel Rangel, Routledge and Nathan Dyer.
 That saw winger Roland Lamah make his first league start for the Welsh side, while Israel striker Itay Shechter was asked to lead the line.
 Suarez tested Michel Vorm, firing straight at the Swans goalkeeper, while Stewart Downing and Glen Johnson also missed chances as the Reds retained a firm grip on the game.
 Suarez was twice brought down on the edge of the area, but first Gerrard and then Suarez were unable to find the target with free-kicks.
 Sturridge wasted a golden chance, getting under his header six yards out after Downing had beaten Ben Davies down the Liverpool right.
 Coutinho then missed the chance to open his account in front of the Kop, picking up a loose ball after Sturridge had driven into the Swans area but putting the ball just wide.
 The breakthrough came after Agustien appeared to clip Suarez's ankle in the area, referee Howard Webb pointing to the penalty spot after assistant Mike Mullarkey flagged for the offence.
 Gerrard, who had missed a penalty in the home loss to West Bromwich Albion, held his nerve and just beat the plunging Vorm low to the keeper's right.
 That was the first goal Swansea had conceded to Liverpool in their three previous Premier League encounters, but a second, third and fourth followed in the opening 11 minutes of the second half.
 First Suarez released Coutinho and the Brazilian surged past two defenders before beating Vorm with a cool finish.
 Coutinho was then just wide with another attempt before Sturridge, Suarez and Enrique combined with a mesmerising move down the left.
 The ball was pinged between bemused Swansea defenders to set up Enrique, drifting inside, to power his shot into the roof of the net from close range.
 Swansea's early resolve and discipline had dissolved under the flurry of goals and Suarez was able to jink past Kyle Bartley and Garry Monk before picking his spot for Liverpool's fourth.
 Routledge had come off the bench for Swansea but unfortunately for the visitors the winger conceded a penalty for handball when he challenged Suarez for a lofted pass.
 Gerrard generously gave the spot-kick to Sturridge, but the result was the same as the former Chelsea man slammed the ball past Vorm.
 The result saw Liverpool climb above Swansea into seventh place and the Swans must regroup for their Wembley encounter with Bradford next Sunday as they bid to claim their first major trophy and a place in next season's Europa League.

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90:00+3:01 Full time The referee ends the match.
 88:01 Wayne Routledge challenges Glen Johnson unfairly and gives away a free kick. Direct free kick taken by Steven Gerrard.
 83:10 Effort from 18 yards by Wayne Routledge. Save made by Jose Reina.
 81:27 Substitution Substitution Angel Rangel is brought on as a substitute for Itay Shechter.
 81:27 Glen Johnson has an effort at goal from just inside the box that misses to the left of the target.
 80:31 Short corner worked by Stewart Downing.
 80:22 The ball is swung over by Sanchez Jose Enrique, Dwight Tiendalli gets a block in.
 78:03 Steven Gerrard takes a outswinging corner.
 77:48 Outswinging corner taken by Steven Gerrard, clearance made by Garry Monk.
 77:04 Substitution Substitution Fabio Borini comes on in place of Luis Suarez.
 75:20 Joe Allen takes the direct free kick.
 75:20 Substitution Substitution Pablo Hernandez goes off and Nathan Dyer comes on.
 75:20 Booking Pablo Hernandez booked for unsporting behaviour.
 75:17 Unfair challenge on Daniel Agger by Pablo Hernandez results in a free kick.
 74:12 A cross is delivered by Jordan Henderson.
 73:20 Wayne Routledge fouled by Glen Johnson, the ref awards a free kick. Jonathan de Guzman crosses the ball from the free kick right-footed from left channel, comfortable save by Jose Reina.
 72:41 Shot on goal by Daniel Sturridge from just inside the area clears the crossbar.
 71:54 Substitution Substitution Leiva Lucas leaves the field to be replaced by Joe Allen.
 70:52 Sanchez Jose Enrique provided the assist for the goal.
 70:52 Goal scored Goal - Daniel Sturridge - Liverpool 5 - 0 Swansea Penalty taken left-footed by Daniel Sturridge and scored. Liverpool 5-0 Swansea.
 69:59 Wayne Routledge is penalised for handball and concedes a .
 67:37 The ball is sent over by Luis Suarez.
 67:00 Corner taken right-footed by Luis Suarez, Effort from 20 yards by Steven Gerrard. Blocked by Kyle Bartley.
 66:43 Effort on goal by Daniel Sturridge from 18 yards. Save made by Michel Vorm.
 64:50 Glen Johnson has an effort at goal from long distance that misses to the right of the goal.
 63:31 Substitution Substitution Roland Lamah leaves the field to be replaced by Wayne Routledge.
 62:55 Daniel Sturridge takes a shot. Save by Michel Vorm. Shot by Luis Suarez from 20 yards. Blocked by Kyle Bartley.
 62:14 Free kick awarded for an unfair challenge on Glen Johnson by Ben Davies. Glen Johnson takes the direct free kick.
 59:25 Substitution Substitution Jordan Henderson is brought on as a substitute for Phillippe Coutinho.
 55:55 Stewart Downing provided the assist for the goal.
 55:55 Goal scored Goal - Luis Suarez - Liverpool 4 - 0 Swansea Luis Suarez gets on the score sheet with a goal from just inside the area to the bottom left corner of the goal. Liverpool 4-0 Swansea.
 54:48 A cross is delivered by Dwight Tiendalli, Daniel Agger manages to make a clearance.
 53:44 Corner taken by Steven Gerrard, Headed effort from inside the area by Daniel Agger misses to the right of the target.
 53:35 The ball is swung over by Luis Suarez, Ben Davies gets a block in.
 52:44 The assistant referee flags for offside against Daniel Sturridge. Dwight Tiendalli restarts play with the free kick.
 51:06 Free kick awarded for an unfair challenge on Itay Shechter by Daniel Agger. The free kick is delivered left-footed by Roland Lamah from right wing, save by Jose Reina.
 49:44 The assist for the goal came from Daniel Sturridge.
 49:44 Goal scored Goal - Sanchez Jose Enrique - Liverpool 3 - 0 Swansea Sanchez Jose Enrique gets on the score sheet with a goal from inside the box high into the middle of the goal. Liverpool 3-0 Swansea.
 47:56 Foul by Jonathan de Guzman on Leiva Lucas, free kick awarded. Free kick taken by Sanchez Jose Enrique.
 46:54 Luis Suarez produces a cross, Phillippe Coutinho produces a right-footed shot from deep inside the penalty box which goes wide of the left-hand post.
 45:15 Luis Suarez provided the assist for the goal.
 45:15 Goal scored Goal - Phillippe Coutinho - Liverpool 2 - 0 Swansea Phillippe Coutinho finds the net with a goal from just inside the area low into the middle of the goal. Liverpool 2-0 Swansea.
 45:01 The referee gets the second half underway.
 43:20 Sanchez Jose Enrique challenges Itay Shechter unfairly and gives away a free kick. Jonathan de Guzman sends in a cross, Garry Monk takes a shot. Glen Johnson makes a clearance.
 45:00+1:15 Half time The ref blows to end the first period.
 45:00+0:40 Garry Monk challenges Luis Suarez unfairly and gives away a free kick. Free kick taken by Jose Reina.
 43:20 Sanchez Jose Enrique challenges Itay Shechter unfairly and gives away a free kick. Jonathan de Guzman crosses the ball, Garry Monk takes a shot. Glen Johnson makes a clearance.
 41:14 Jonathan de Guzman takes a shot. Save by Jose Reina.
 39:27 The ball is sent over by Daniel Sturridge, save by Michel Vorm.
 38:59 Daniel Sturridge takes a shot from 12 yards. Kyle Bartley makes a clearance.
 38:33 Phillippe Coutinho has a drilled shot. Kyle Bartley gets a block in.
 38:04 Stewart Downing takes a shot. Ben Davies gets a block in.
 36:34 The ball is delivered by Glen Johnson.
 35:56 Shot by Steven Gerrard. Garry Monk gets a block in.
 35:31 Shot by Leiva Lucas from 18 yards. Kyle Bartley gets a block in.
 33:55 The assist for the goal came from Luis Suarez.

33:55 Goal scored Goal - Steven Gerrard - Liverpool 1 - 0 Swansea Steven Gerrard scores a placed penalty. Liverpool 1-0 Swansea.
 32:36 Kemy Agustien concedes a Penalty for a foul on Luis Suarez.
 31:52 Effort from 18 yards by Steven Gerrard. Blocked by Leon Britton. Corner taken by Steven Gerrard from the left by-line, Ben Davies makes a clearance.
 30:06 The ball is crossed by Pablo Hernandez, save by Jose Reina.
 28:57 Leiva Lucas has an effort at goal from 30 yards. Save by Michel Vorm.
 27:27 Itay Shechter is caught offside. Free kick taken by Sanchez Jose Enrique.
 25:28 Daniel Sturridge takes a shot. Save made by Michel Vorm.
 24:41 Leiva Lucas concedes a free kick for a foul on Jonathan de Guzman. Leon Britton takes the free kick.
 24:01 Shot by Phillippe Coutinho from deep inside the penalty area misses to the left of the goal.
 22:34 The assistant referee signals for offside against Itay Shechter. Indirect free kick taken by Leiva Lucas.
 22:02 The ball is swung over by Stewart Downing, Daniel Sturridge has a header from deep inside the six-yard box and clears the crossbar.
 21:32 Centre by Pablo Hernandez, Jamie Carragher makes a clearance.
 19:20 Luis Suarez produces a right-footed shot from just outside the penalty area that goes harmlessly over the target.
 16:53 Dwight Tiendalli challenges Luis Suarez unfairly and gives away a free kick. Luis Suarez has an effort direct from the free kick.
 14:41 Free kick awarded for an unfair challenge on Luis Suarez by Leon Britton. Steven Gerrard produces a strike on goal direct from the free kick. Luis Suarez takes a shot from just inside the penalty box which clears the bar.
 13:44 Shot from 18 yards by Stewart Downing.
 13:17 Steven Gerrard takes a inswinging corner to the near post, clearance made by Itay Shechter.
 13:03 Daniel Sturridge takes a shot. Kyle Bartley gets a block in.
 12:04 Inswinging corner taken by Stewart Downing from the right by-line, Headed effort from inside the area by Glen Johnson misses to the left of the target.
 11:55 The ball is crossed by Glen Johnson, clearance made by Garry Monk.
 10:39 Stewart Downing produces a left-footed shot from just outside the box that misses to the right of the goal.
 9:41 Glen Johnson fouled by Itay Shechter, the ref awards a free kick. Leiva Lucas takes the free kick.
 7:53 Corner taken by Jonathan de Guzman from the right by-line, Roland Lamah takes a shot. Glen Johnson gets a block in.
 7:02 Leiva Lucas gives away a free kick for an unfair challenge on Kemy Agustien. Kyle Bartley takes the free kick.
 5:26 Shot by Luis Suarez from 18 yards. Michel Vorm makes a save.
 3:03 Unfair challenge on Dwight Tiendalli by Phillippe Coutinho results in a free kick. Free kick taken by Michel Vorm.
 1:41 Inswinging corner taken from the left by-line by Steven Gerrard, Effort from inside the area by Stewart Downing misses to the right of the target.
 1:26 Shot by Phillippe Coutinho. Kyle Bartley gets a block in.
 1:02 Corner taken short by Steven Gerrard.
 0:00 The game gets underway.