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THE TIMES

Sturridge steps up but Liverpool feel Suarez's absence

Liverpool 2
 Sterling 23, Sturridge 79
 Southampton 1
 Clyne 56

Referee McClattenburg Attendance 44,736

Brendan Rodgers knew the question was coming. Liverpool's victory over Southampton had been sufficiently laboured to make it inevitable. So when asked whether his squad has enough quality to cope without Luis Suarez, he reverted to charming anecdote to dodge the issue. The time may well come when Rodgers feels emboldened enough to answer such inquiries as emphatically as he longs to, but that time is not now.

In spirit if not body, the Uruguayan loomed large at Anfield yesterday. "He sent us a lovely text this morning wishing us all the best, which was a great gesture," Rodgers revealed when quizzed about life after Suarez. The gesture was well received but, equally, Suarez's absence was felt and had Southampton displayed the required poise at either end of the pitch to accompany their superiority in other areas, Liverpool may not have secured the win that their former player had hoped for.

"Our ambitions here at Liverpool have to be bigger than one player," Rodgers said. "We are bigger than any player. We do still want another striker, but that will depend on the availability. Today was about winning and we got there." That they did owed much to Simon Mignolet, who prevented three points from being reduced to just one with an outstanding late save. Rodgers will hope that such a dramatic intervention can act as a catalyst for better days ahead.

How Southampton rued that moment. The sight of Morgan Schneiderlin's close-range half-volley crashing off the underside of the crossbar via Mignolet's fingertips was particularly cruel for a side who had coped admirably without their own departees. Worse followed when Shane Long headed the rebound wide and, with that miss, came the realisation that their last chance to secure a morale-boosting result had gone begging. It also saved Rodgers and Liverpool from the early inquest that they naturally wanted to avoid.

With some justification, the Liverpool manager put his team's lack of fluency down to early-season rust. He could also have cited the fact that only two of the signings brought in with the proceeds of Suarez's sale started the game (and both in defence) but chose not to, presumably out of respect for the achievements of the players who outperformed expectation by finishing second in the Barclays Premier League last season. It will only be when the new recruits are bedded in, though, that Liverpool's ability to thrive in the post-Suarez era will be truly put to the test.

As it is, the roles played by three of the players whom Rodgers hopes will help to fill the void will give him greatest cause for comfort. The tenacity and creativity displayed by Jordan Henderson to create the opening goal for Raheem Sterling, Liverpool's best performer, was the most eye-catching moment. Daniel Sturridge again displayed his match-winning ability with the decisive goal -- a neat finish from the edge of the six-yard box -- to take advantage of Sterling's headed assist after Southampton did not clear.

It was Sturridge's 36th goal in 50 games for the club, giving him the best record at that appearance landmark of any Liverpool player since George Allan in the 1890s. "For Dan, it was just a continuation," Rodgers said.

"Sometimes Dan will have quiet games, but he'll always look like he'll score a goal. I was pleased with that type of goal because it's a poacher's goal in the box, where you anticipate the knockdown and he guided it beautifully into the corner."

On the balance of play, Rodgers admitted that Liverpool had ground out a result. Southampton felt aggrieved that they had been able to do so, particularly after Nathaniel Clyne had cancelled out Sterling's opener with the kind of emphatic finish that Dusan Tadic's adroit back-heel flick had demanded.

Buoyed by the equaliser and inspired by the midfield dominance of Schneiderlin and Victor Wanyama, the visiting team had the chance to turn the game in their favour, only for Steven Davis to shoot too close to Mignolet after Tadic and James Ward-Prowse had combined to open up Liverpool's defence. Unfortunately for Southampton, Sturridge was not similarly profligate.

"Davis will be disappointed," Rodgers said. "To get the three points was vital." It also afforded Suarez the opportunity to send a message of congratulations. The more chances that Liverpool give him to do that this season, the sooner Rodgers will be able to lay claim to an even brighter future without him.

the guardian

Sterling work and Sturridge instincts do enough to get Liverpool smiling

The winning goal brought Brendan Rodgers bounding on to the pitch for the first time since Liverpool's victory over Manchester City during last season's title run-in. Relief, not delirium, sparked the Liverpool manager's invasion on this occasion but the over-exuberance was understandable. Here was a reminder of how that title challenge began. For Southampton at Anfield in August 2014 read Stoke City at Anfield in August 2013. Twelve months ago Liverpool laboured to three points against a team under new management courtesy of a Daniel Sturridge goal and an 89th-minute penalty save from Simon Mignolet. The script remained the same for Ronald Koeman's first day as a Premier League manager. A poacher's goal from Sturridge plus a superb 88th-minute save from Mignolet, who tipped Morgan Schneiderlin's goal-bound volley on to the bar to preserve a slender lead, left Southampton lamenting an undeserved defeat. Rodgers barely mentioned Liverpool's performance level after the match. The first day back at school was the time to accentuate the positives and the manager will not begrudge a repeat of Stoke providing Liverpool's entire campaign mirrors last season. Among the unspoken concerns must be how Schneiderlin, Victor Wanyama and Steven Davis dominated Liverpool's central midfield and restricted the home side's threat. But Koeman summed up the contest perfectly when he said: "We created two great possibilities to score a second goal but the quality of Liverpool is that they don't need a lot of opportunities to score two goals." On the first day of life without Luis Suarez, who sent Rodgers a good luck text before kick-off, it reassured Liverpool to witness another predatory finish from Sturridge. The England international was largely anonymous and, of the 22 players who started, only the Southampton goalkeeper Fraser Forster touched the ball less. But he got the one that counted. Sturridge has scored 36 goals in 50 appearances, the most prolific return of any Liverpool player since George Allan in the late 19th century, and his 79th-minute winner signalled mass relief around Anfield. This was far from a fluid, threatening performance by Liverpool and responsibility for their pedestrian start lay with Southampton. The mass, lucrative exodus from St Mary's Stadium may have caused trepidation in those supporters who made the Sunday morning journey from the south coast but the early signs under Koeman brought encouragement. Disciplined and positive, they worked tirelessly to limit space for Liverpool's front three and had a consistent outlet in the impressive James Ward-Prowse and the new signing Dusan Tadic. Yet, as most teams discovered at Anfield last season, Rodgers' players are always alert to the slightest opportunity. Southampton were looking increasingly comfortable when they fell behind after a moment of excellence from Jordan Henderson. Schneiderlin has made no secret of his desire to follow Adam Lallana, Luke Shaw, Rickie Lambert, Calum Chambers and Dejan Lovren out of St Mary's. Koeman started the France international at Anfield regardless and was repaid with an impressive display, although a half-hearted challenge on Henderson inside the Liverpool half proved costly. The England midfielder powered through a 50-50 with Schneiderlin and sent Raheem Sterling scurrying clear of Nathaniel Clyne with an exquisite left-footed pass. Sterling duly applied a measured finish into Forster's left-hand corner. The breakthrough injected overdue urgency into Liverpool's display. Sterling, Sturridge and Philippe Coutinho began to move with greater menace but Southampton's shape and composure held firm. Ward-Prowse almost levelled with a dangerous free-kick to the far corner that drew a fine save from Mignolet.

The Liverpool goalkeeper also tipped over from Schneiderlin and, though Sterling tested Forster again on the stroke of half-time, the visitors' equaliser early in the second half was thoroughly deserved and superbly executed too. Clyne broke down the right and squared inside to Tadic. The Serbian back-heeled the ball into Clyne's path and the full-back lashed an unstoppable shot into the top corner. Glen Johnson produced a perfectly timed challenge to thwart Ward-Prowse in the area as Koeman's team looked to capitalise on a pedestrian Liverpool but, as in the first half, Rodgers' team struck when Southampton were in the ascendancy. Javier Manquillo's right-wing cross was headed clear by Wanyama but his teammates switched off at the vital moment. Sterling won the second ball with an unchallenged header inside the area and Sturridge applied the faintest of touches to convert beyond Forster. There was still time for Southampton to recover and Schneiderlin looked to have secured a merited point when he crashed a volley towards the Kop goal from 12 yards out. Mignolet, however, produced a stunning stop to divert the ball on to the bar and the substitute Shane Long headed the rebound wide. Reprieved and relieved, Liverpool are off the mark.

Man of the match James Ward-Prowse (Southampton)

The new boys: Liverpool

Dejan Lovren A steady, rather than commanding, debut from the Croatian international but won several important aerial challenges

Javier Manquillo Put in an awkward position by an early booking but defended well and was involved in the winning goal

Southampton

Fraser Forster Dominated his penalty box and could do little about two fine finishes for the goals

Dusan Tadic An eye-catching debut. Produced an exquisite back-heel for the equaliser

Graziano Pelle Big physical presence but not yet in tune with his team

Ryan Bertrand A committed display and linked well with Tadic

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The Mail

WHAT A RELIEF FOR RODGERS! Late Sturridge goal downs Saints... and eases boss's nerves

BY THE time he had finished celebrating, Brendan Rodgers had encroached a good 10 yards on to the Anfield pitch. It's not like he's feeling the pressure at Liverpool this season, then. Outpourings of emotion are typically reserved for late in the season, and against stronger opposition than poor, depleted Southampton. Yet times have changed at Liverpool. Despite the loss of Luis Suarez, there is now great expectation. Serious money has been reinvested, serious strengthening work done. As last season's runners-up, Rodgers knows what is now expected and for much of the second half his team looked barely capable of delivering it. Southampton, pillaged by the Premier League elite in the close season, were the better side from the restart and were playing as if capable of collecting the most unlikely away win since, well, Swansea City's at Old Trafford on Saturday. At which point, with 11 minutes remaining, Daniel Sturridge scored the winner. Rodgers, who stands in the technical area throughout games, greeted it with such explosive jubilation that he could be seen sheepishly returning from what would be the Southampton right back's position some seconds later. He knew what was at stake. With an away match at Manchester City next, not to get off to a winning start here might have given Liverpool an acute case of the collywobbles. No manager wants a nervous start to the season.

Considering the number of new arrivals this summer, Rodgers (right) might be tempted to claim this will be a season of transition -- except nobody is expecting a lowering of standards. Just as Andre Villas-Boas and Tottenham Hotspur were predicted to ride the loss of Gareth Bale due to the quality and number of replacements last season, so Liverpool's money men will feel they have secured life after Suarez. Maybe they have -- but yesterday's opposition confirmed that nothing in the Premier League comes easy, despite the best-laid plans. Had Southampton chosen a different path, they could be dark-horse title contenders by now. Instead they contrived to lose an ambitious chairman, the manager, and then five influential players, with perhaps more to follow.

It is testament to new coach Ronald Koeman, then, that he has managed to marshal what was left, what could happily be promoted, and a few recent additions into a team that took Liverpool all the way on their first competitive outing. They might even have earned a draw afforded better luck with two minutes to go, when a powerful shot by Morgan Schneiderlin was tipped on to the bar by Simon Mignolet in Liverpool's goal. The rebound fell to substitute Shane Long, yards out, but he could not even get his header on target -- a worrying stumble, considering his PS12million price tag. Long's transfer from Hull -- his worth has increased by PS5m in a matter of seven months -- is one of the most inflationary of the summer, and the visiting fans may have looked wistfully at their former striker Rickie Lambert, now parading in the red shirt of Liverpool. Lambert couldn't make the starting line-up either, but priced at PS4m this was less of a surprise. Also, Lambert's introduction appeared to make a difference with the uncertainty he caused in Southampton's back line. Lambert did not have direct input into the winner, but he was part of the support staff, his penalty-area presence unsettling Victor Wanyama, who did not get sufficient distance on a clearance. The ball was headed back in by Raheem Sterling and clipped in by Sturridge, who had got in front of Nathaniel Clyne. Until that moment, Southampton had been in the ascendancy. Ordinary until 10 minutes before half-time when James Ward-Prowse -- arguably the best striker of a dead ball at a young age this country has produced since David Beckham -- tested Mignolet with a longrange free-kick, they had suddenly found confidence and fresh impetus. Soon after Ward-Prowse's effort, Schneiderlin had a shot tipped over the bar and when the second half began there was only one team in it. Their equaliser, after 65 minutes, was exquisite. Clyne began the move, collecting the ball from a throw-in and feeding it in to Northern Ireland international Steven Davis before going on a forward run. Davis spied his momentum and movement and responded with an astute backheel which Clyne seized upon and finished, smartly, into the roof of the net. CLYNE was excellent, certainly going forward. Did Manchester United buy the wrong full back from Southampton this summer? Given their current issues, would it be worth trying to match the pair one day soon? Just seven minutes later, Southampton should have gone ahead. Dusan Tadic, making as impressive a debut as any in the Premier League this weekend, crossed the ball to Ward-Prowse, who unselfishly decided to move it on to Davis, occupying a better position with a clear shot at goal. Sadly, Davis lacked the finishing smarts and in attempting a perfect placing, hit his shot weakly, allowing Mignolet to claim it. Ward-Prowse might be better advised to go it alone in future. He was the pick of the midfielders on display and it seemed odd that England manager Roy Hodgson was not here to witness his performance.

Hodgson's absence was a mystery considering there were eight potential England candidates in the starting line-ups -- nine including the retired Steven Gerrard, 10 with substitute Lambert. Perhaps it would be too painful for Hodgson to watch considering that, as ever, here was further evidence of the disconnect between English players in club shirts, and their form at international level. Jordan Henderson had a dismal time in Brazil, yet he was superb in the first half, his pass for Liverpool's opening goal after 23 minutes arguably the best of the game. Sterling's finish, too, was clinical and assured, exactly what England missed during the World Cup. Henderson played the eye-of-the-needle ball, Sterling drew the goalkeeper one on one. and then completed his task with gentle precision.

Maybe this is what Hodgson means when he says he sees no difference between England and Germany. English players, maybe. But England? When did they last score a goal as good as that? Sterling was the pick of it for Liverpool, and he also had a couple of good first-half shots saved, but Liverpool can -- and must -- do better than this, if they are to repeat the challenge of last season.

Rodgers claimed the distance covered in his celebration was caused by being lighter on his feet, after losing weight. Worry will do that for you, too.

By the end of the season there could be nothing left of him, poor soul.

HOW THE NEW BOYS FARED ...

LIVERPOOL

DEJAN LOVREN: Some fine crossfield passing but also some less refined moments of play. Brendan Rodgers considered him 'excellent'.

JAVIER MANQUILLO: Could have found things difficult after an early booking but the right back defended well on a satisfying debut.

RICKIE LAMBERT: Came on as a late substitute and appeared to unsettle his old club's defence in the episode that led to Liverpool's winning goal.

SOUTHAMPTON

FRASER FORSTER: Could do little about the goals. Handled with confidence.

RYAN BERTRAND: Got up and down the left flank well. Needs more games.

GRAZIANO PELLE: Found things happened a bit too quickly. Had no joy from Lovren and Martin Skrtel.

DUSAN TADIC: A creative threat, notably when his sweet backheel set up Nathaniel Clyne's leveller.

SHANE LONG: Almost became a hero on his debut but headed wide with the goal gaping.

The Daily Telegraph

Liverpool show there is life after Suarez

Liverpool 2 Sterling 23, Sturridge 79 Southampton 1 Clyne 56 Att: 44,736

Bulldozers have gathered at Anfield over the summer ahead of the much anticipated stadium redevelopment, but Daniel Sturridge and Raheem Sterling are proving that firm foundations are in place at Liverpool.

The England duo, the new SAS, secured a nervy, scruffy victory against Southampton with a start to the new campaign that felt like a replica of the last, Liverpool sneaking three points in comparable circumstances as against Stoke City a year ago. In the highly-publicised absence of Luis Suarez, Sturridge was the match winner then, too, and the similarity extended to the goalkeeper Simon Mignolet's late intervention in preserving three points. That was retrospectively acknowledged as an early turning point in a dizzying campaign.

There will be no complaints if the next eight months take them down a similar path. For Liverpool the comfort was all in the win rather than the performance. The dynamism, speed of movement and nimble footwork that defined much of last season was lacking here, but it is hardly surprising. That will come with miles in the legs. This was the most typical of open-ing-day performances, when jumping to conclusions beyond the result is hazardous. Indeed Ronald Koeman, the Southampton manager, had as much cause to be comforted in defeat as Brendan Rodgers in victory. After a summer of gloom at St Mary's, with Southampton seeing their greatest exodus since the Cunard Line was in its prime, there was much to enthuse the Dutch coach. He had four debutants effortlessly slotting in, and when right-back Nathaniel Clyne cancelled out Sterling's first-half strike with a thunderous drive into the top corner at the Kop end, Koeman's side looked more likely winners. Even after Sturridge glanced the 79th-minute winner following a Sterling header, Mignolet was called upon to push Morgan Schneiderlin's late effort onto the bar. "If we play like that, I don't think we will struggle," Koeman said, sure that the pre-season prophecies of doom are misplaced. Liverpool, despite their close second last May, also appear to have more convincing to do on the basis of losing an iconic player. For Rodgers it is a case of uncorking the bottle that took the club towards such giddy heights a few months ago, but due to the sale of Suarez there have been some surprisingly pessimistic assessments of Liverpool's chances, not only of repeating their title challenge, but even retaining a top four place. Rodgers is entitled to be a tad bewildered by how swiftly his club's prospects have been dismissed but underestimation is a risk only to his rivals. Whether by intention or design, the manager's role in gelling a side to get the best from those at his disposal has been ignored. One wonders how Liverpool languished in sixth, eighth and seventh in the Uruguayan's first three seasons if it was all about the South American. This 90 minutes offered encouragement for those both championing and doubting Liverpool without Suarez, as they ground out the win but also toiled for long periods and struggled to create the opportunities that have become a trademark in the last 18 months.

Southampton arrived as one of the two visiting clubs to win at Anfield last year, although they have undergone a revolution since. Three of their former players are at Liverpool. The Saints fans afforded Rickie Lambert a generous ovation as he faced his old club as a second-half substitute, but Dejan Lovren will have to wait to find redemption in their eyes. He was booed throughout. Koeman initially set up his side to contain, and his goalkeeper Fraser Forster was not tested until 20 minutes, Sterling and the largely nullified Philippe Coutinho combining on the edge of the box before the England winger fired tamely on goal. The breakthrough came three minutes later as Jordan Henderson's piercing

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through-ball sent Sterling scurrying clear. He kept his composure to pick his spot beyond Forster. Sterling almost added a second on the stroke of half-time, but Mignolet had as much to do at the other end and Koeman's side emerged stronger after the break. Clyne struck a brilliant equaliser on 56 minutes, benefiting from Dusan Tadic's clever back-heel. Southampton were the more accomplished at this stage and Steven Davis should have put the visitors ahead on 63 minutes, striking weakly at Mignolet with time and space to pick his spot. Just as the home side started to run out of ideas, Rodgers sent on Lambert for his debut. The stadium seemed lifted by his presence and after the first spell of sustained pressure in the second half, Sturridge nudged in the winner. It was tough on Koeman, as Liverpool held on to give their campaign early momentum, but on the basis of this admirable performance there will be some reassessments by those who perceived Southampton as relegation fodder. As for Liverpool, the demolition sites around the Main Stand are a hint that regeneration will be the buzzword as Fenway Sports Group awaits the green light for the stadium plans. Within Anfield's walls, the likes of Sturridge and Sterling offer hope that the exit of Suarez will not shake this ground as forcibly as some would have you believe.



Liverpool's new SAS strikeforce shows there is life after Suarez
 For Brendan Rodgers, yesterday began with a good-luck text from Luis Suarez. It ended, more significantly, with fresh hope for the Liverpool manager that in Raheem Sterling and Daniel Sturridge he has a new SAS ready to fill the gap left by the club's departed talisman. Liverpool have lost Suarez's inspiration, not to mention the scoring hunger that brought 31 goals during their thrilling, if thwarted, pursuit of the title last season. Replacing the striker who left for Barcelona earlier this summer will not be easy - and there was mixed evidence of Liverpool's ability to do so against Ronald Koeman's Southampton side. Yet Sterling's and Sturridge's winning contributions allowed some reason for optimism. Their goals brought the Merseysiders the points in a hard-fought victory which had looked in doubt after Nathaniel Clyne's 56th-minute equaliser for Southampton. Even after Sturridge's winning strike, Southampton should have levelled the scores late in the game when Liverpool goalkeeper Simon Mignolet touched a Morgan Schneiderlin shot on to the underside of the crossbar and Shane Long headed the rebound wide. Liverpool's performance was anything but convincing and Rodgers' relief was evident from the way he ran on to the pitch to celebrate Sturridge's goal. "The fluency will come - today was about the win and we got the win," Rodgers said. Yet Liverpool had their moments, with Sterling performing well in a left-sided attacking role. The 19-year-old has shone in pre-season, scoring a wonderful goal against Manchester City in New York, and he showed more of the same with the opening goal. Jordan Henderson was the architect as he bulldozed his way between two Southampton players and from just inside his own half directed a wonderful ball between Jose Fonte and Clyne. Sterling accelerated on to it before placing a deft finish past Fraser Forster. "Raheem's was a great goal - great pass, great speed and touch, and a wonderful finish," said Rodgers. He was equally enthused by Sturridge's 79th-minute winner. It was a goal made by a headed assist from Sterling, who out-jumped Steven Davis after Southampton midfielder Victor Wanyama had headed a cross up into the air. Sterling flicked the ball on and Sturridge touched the ball in with his left foot. If it was poor defending by Southampton, Rodgers argued that the presence of substitute Rickie Lambert - cheered by the away fans as he came on for his debut against his old team - had helped unsettle the visitors' defence. The Liverpool manager was quick to praise Sturridge's finishing. "That's 36 goals in 50 appearances which just shows the level he is at," Rodgers said. "Sometimes he will have quiet games but he will always look like he can score. It was a poacher's goal, he guided it beautifully into the corner." Sturridge pointed to the "connection" between himself and Sterling and said both were ready to rise to the challenge this term. "There is pressure on me to get the goals now with Luis out of the team. It is important for myself and the other lads to step up and Razza [Sterling] has showed today that with a cool head he can finish." They were not the only ones who impressed. The [pounds sterling]20m summer signing Dejan Lovren, scorer of Southampton's winner in this fixture last season, was a commanding figure in a Liverpool defence featuring another debutant in right-back Javier Manquillo. Southampton had the very heart torn out of their team this summer with the loss of manager Mauricio Pochettino to Tottenham and seven first-team players - three of whom, Adam Lallana, Lambert and Lovren, wound up at Anfield. Yet they actually looked the more coherent team for long spells. They competed well in midfield through the efforts of Wanyama and Schneiderlin and it was the Frenchman who came closest to an equaliser before the break. He picked up a loose ball on the left side of the box and drew a flying save from Mignolet with a curling shot. There were other encouraging performers in Saints shirts. The 19-year-old James Ward-Prowse, a home-produced talent, was lively in a drifting role behind new striker Graziano Pelle, signed from Feyenoord. Meanwhile, the [pounds sterling]11m playmaker Dusan Tadic, brought in from FC Twente, showed some classy touches, notably the backheel flick that set up Clyne's equalising goal after 56 minutes. It was a lovely goal as Clyne played the ball in to the feet of Tadic, who returned it

for Clyne to burst through and thrash the ball high into the net. "We played a great second half," said Koeman. "After the [equaliser] there was one team on the pitch playing and that was Southampton. We did everything well, minus scoring the second one." That should have come when Ward-Prowse teed up Davis, but he failed to beat Mignolet. It was not the only time their slick passing opened up the Liverpool defence but then came the sucker-punch - and with it, relief for Rodgers. Afterwards the Liverpool manager was asked for the details of his morning exchange with Suarez. "His heart is with Liverpool," he said, before adding: "I do still think we want another striker." However, at least in Sterling and Sturridge, he has two players who know the way to goal.



ALL BITE ON THE NIGHT

THE question eating away at Liverpool fans all summer has been how possibly to replace the voracious appetite of 'El Cannibal'? Answer. They cannot. No matter who they bring in before the transfer window closes, the Reds can never hope to find another Luis Suarez, who truly is a one off... and not just for his madness. Yet that is not to say Liverpool must necessarily be a lesser team without him. Just a different one. Yes, they looked lost at times against Southampton without the focal point he so often provided, yet they still found a way to win. They did so, because without their talisman, they can operate a more fluid system, which utilises the different, but equally sublime qualities of Raheem Sterling to a fuller extent than they could ever hope to with Suarez present. Make no mistake, for all their own turmoil of a frantic summer, Southampton were good value for a point here, and may even have nicked victory given the chances they had with the scores level deep into the second half. Yet to flag up that absolute fact is to ignore the resilience Liverpool showed. They possess qualities forged in the white heat of last season's title race, ones that are indelibly impressed on young minds. In particular, Sterling seems to have grown from the experience. He seems to have a little more steel now, more ice in his veins, and as teammate Daniel Sturridge said afterwards, an edge to his finishing that was maybe lacking last season. No one player alone can hope to provide the 31 goals Suarez scored last season, but on the evidence of pre-season and here, Sterling will get more, and you would not bet against Sturridge getting close to his total of 25 last time around either. His winner, a pure poacher's goal, 10 minutes from time, took his record to 36 in his first 50 appearances for the Anfield club. It is a modern record for the Reds, ahead of Ian Rush, Robbie Fowler, Roger Hunt and behind only George Allan in the 1890s. What offers hope for this season, where otherwise the home side found Saints' organisation and impressive industry rather difficult and troublesome, was the combination between the pair. Most particularly when Rickie Lambert was thrown on to sow some seeds of discomfort in the back line with his physicality, they seemed to swap roles at will, and Sterling impressed in his ability to take on a striking role. His goal after 23 minutes proved that. Before then, Sturridge had shot wide when well placed and then the little man himself had twice tripped the offside trap but shot at Saints' new keeper Fraser Forster. When the impressive Jordan Henderson won the ball from Southampton's promising debutant Dusan Tadic and then burst through a challenge from Morgan Schneiderlin to send a fine pass forward, it was Sterling who raced through to score in style. It was the finish of a goalscorer. Which is just as well, because with the visitors so determined in defence, chances were at a premium, and the game well balanced. Indeed, only a good save from Simon Mignolet on the stroke of half time kept the lead intact. The keeper was to play an even bigger role later, but even with Liverpool new boys Dejan Lovren and Javier Manquillo impressing, Saints came more and more into the game after the break, and were deservedly level with a fine goal on 56 minutes. It was after c it n k-k outrageously talented Tadic who created it with an impossible back-heel to prompt an equally brilliant finish from full-back Nathaniel Clyne. And really, Liverpool were fortunate that was the only goal when just a few minutes later, Mignolet was forced to save well when Steven Davis perhaps should really have scored. It was a let-off the home side accepted gratefully, and it was Sturridge who provided the winner with barely 10 minutes remaining. Sterling, of all people, rose highest to head towards goal after Lambert forced panic, and the forc b England striker was quickest to the loose ball. Even then, only a quite magnificent save from Mignolet in the last minute, when he somehow tipped a Schneiderlin shot onto the bar, delivered all three points. The big Belgian did the same on the opening day last season, when he saved a penalty against Stoke. Perhaps it will have the same inspiring affect...

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New season, same old Liverpool.

From well-worked goals, sloppy defending and a Daniel Sturridge winner, it was very much business as usual as Premier League football resumed at Anfield.

For Brendan Rodgers, though, the most important aspect that hasn't changed is that, one way or another, his side continue to win. It wasn't pretty, but the Reds began the new campaign with a hard-fought and, it must be said, fortuitous 2-1 victory over Southampton. Fortunate in the sense the visitors, their side torn apart during the summer, deserved something for their contribution to an entertaining encounter. Raheem Sterling's well-worked 24th-minute opener was equalised 11 minutes after the interval by Nathaniel Clyne's similarly impressive strike before Sturridge's scruffy 79th-minute finish proved decisive.

Rodgers will rightly point to the fact he wouldn't want his team peaking in the first game of the season. But the Reds boss will surely be given much to ponder by aspects of his team's performance. A win, though, is a win and, as the travails of Manchester United, Arsenal and Tottenham Hotspur proved the previous day, opening-day victory is no easy task for even top-four challengers.

While Rodgers will claim there is no hangover among his squad from last season's agonising failure to win the title, the same cannot be said for the supporters, Anfield a subdued arena for long periods. The build-up of the match inevitably centred on Liverpool's summer treble raid on Southampton for Dejan Lovren, Rickie Lambert and the currently injured Adam Lallana. While Lambert, named among the substitutes, was given a warm reception by the travelling supporters, the same could not be said for Lovren following his efforts to force through a move to Anfield. Lovren, who netted the winner in this fixture last season, made his first Liverpool appearance in a defence that included another debutant in right-back Javier Manquillo. Alberto Moreno, his transfer from Sevilla completed on Saturday evening, watched on from the directors' box.

And young German midfielder Emre Can was deemed not quite ready for his full bow, although it was Lucas Leiva and not Joe Allen given the nod alongside Steven Gerrard in central midfield. With new manager Ronald Koeman forced to piece together a new team, expectations were low for Southampton.

But the visitors made life difficult for Liverpool during the opening exchanges quarter and had no intention of parking the bus.

They were helped by the Reds struggling to find their passing range in the blustery conditions, Philippe Coutinho, so lively during pre-season, a peripheral figure.

Liverpool were not without their chances early on. Sturridge, coming deep, shot narrowly wide while Martin Skrtel glanced a weak header wide from Gerrard's left-wing corner. Southampton centre-back Maya Yoshida was fortunate not to concede a free-kick in a dangerous position when clipping Sturridge on the edge of the area, while Sterling's shot from range was straightforward for visiting debutant goalkeeper Fraser Forster. So the quality of Liverpool's 24th-minute opener wasn't in keeping with what had gone before. It owed everything to the persistence and vision of Jordan Henderson. The midfielder won the ball in his own half from Dusan Tadic and then held off the challenge of Morgan Schneiderlin before curling a delightful 30-yard ball through the centre of the Southampton defence for Sterling to race clear and roll a composed finish beyond Forster. Only moments earlier, Southampton had caused their first real moment of panic in the Liverpool defence when a flappy Simon Mignolet required two attempts to grab a hopeful punt into the area. Mignolet, though, was much more alert to palm over after James Ward-Prowse's free-kick from the left caught the wind and was destined for the top corner. And the goalkeeper was at full stretch again in first-half injury time to turn behind Schneiderlin's dipping shot while seconds later Forster was somewhat more unorthodox in repelling a Sterling drive. Liverpool further laboured in the second half, Lucas fortunate to see Victor Wanyama drive well wide after inadvertently helping the ball into the Southampton midfielder's path. But there was no reprieve for Lucas shortly afterwards when the visitors levelled on 56 minutes. The ball-watching Brazilian allowed Clyne to advance unmarked into the area on to Tadic's delicious backheeled return pass and thump into the top corner beyond a helpless Mignolet. Liverpool were then lucky not to fall even further behind as Tadic and Ward-Prowse opened up the Reds' right with the latter rolling the ball into the path of Steven Davis who, untended and 10 yards out, sidefooted a tame finish at the grateful Mignolet. Rodgers hooked the hapless Lucas for Allen, the Welshman adding energy going forward while the later introduction of Lambert gave the Reds a further dimension in attack and provided Sturridge much-needed support.

And the changes paid dividends as Liverpool regained the lead 11 minutes from time. After Wanyama could only half-clear Henderson's inviting cross from the right, Sterling rose highest to head the ball towards Sturridge who, marginally outside six yards out, prodded the ball past Forster. Relief for the Anfield faithful. But Southampton came again, and Ward-Prowse solicited a smart save from Mignolet at his near post. And the Belgian produced an even better stop on 88 minutes to turn Schneiderlin's shot from point-blank range on to the underside of the bar with Saints substitute Shane Long then heading the rebound woefully wide. It was Southampton's last chance. Liverpool had just about done enough. Their season is up and running.

LIVERPOOL (4-2-3-1): Mignolet; Manquillo, Skrtel, Lovren, Johnson; Lucas (Allen

63), Gerrard; Henderson, Coutinho (Lambert 76), Sterling; Sturridge. Subs: Jones, Toure, Sakho, Can, Ibe. BOOKING: Manquillo (foul).

SOUTHAMPTON (4-2-3-1): Forster; Clyne, Yoshida, Fonte, Bertrand; Schneiderlin, Wanyama; Davis (Isgrove 82), Ward-Prowse, Tadic (Long 74); Pelle. Subs: Davies, Taider, Cork, Hooiveld, Stephens. BOOKINGS: Schneiderlin and Davis (both fouls). REFEREE: Mark Clattenburg.

ATT: 44,736.



Saints edged out by Liverpool in Koeman opener

Saints' first game of the Ronald Koeman era ended in a narrow defeat as they were beaten 2-1 by Liverpool at Anfield.

Reds striker Daniel Sturridge shouldered the responsibility as Liverpool's new main man up front with a late winner.

With last season's 31-goal star Luis Suarez having departed to Barcelona for £75m there is a shortfall to be accounted for - but Sturridge and the Reds' other scorer Raheem Sterling showed they are up for the challenge.

Such was Suarez's brilliance it is almost forgotten Sturridge was the Premier League's second highest scorer with 24 last season - but without his world-class partner beside him there is a greater burden on him to deliver.

With the England striker having a relatively quiet 80 minutes it seemed Saints would leave Anfield with at least a point after Nathaniel Clyne's second-half equaliser, only for the 24-year-old to pounce on his first clear-cut chance.

There had been significant change for both sides over the summer. Liverpool spent upwards of £100m on eight new signings, while their opponents were still in debit having seen a raft of departures - three players to Anfield and manager Mauricio Pochettino to Tottenham.

Only five of Saints' starting line-up started their final match of last season, with four players making their debuts and new £12m striker Shane Long on the bench. The most significant absentee for Liverpool, however, was Suarez. However, a year ago Liverpool began the season without the suspended Uruguayan and took 10 points from their first four matches.

While a suitable replacement up front still remains a target for Brendan Rodgers, arguably his most important summer signing was that of Dejan Lovren - who made his debut against the club he left acrimoniously, albeit for £20m.

Liverpool are still looking for a leader in defence to fill the void left by Jamie Carragher's retirement the year before last and the manager's hope is the Croatian fits the bill as it was an area of weakness which cost them valuable points in their surprise title challenge last season.

The centre-back, incessantly booed by the visiting fans, certainly added more of a presence alongside Martin Skrtel and won headers in situations which have often caused problems in the past.

It was not all plain sailing at the back in the first half with goalkeeper Simon Mignolet getting in a tangle with Graziano Pelle at Southampton's first corner and almost presenting the visitors with an easy chance.

But Liverpool's strength remains in the final third of the field and after scoring 101 goals last season, Sterling opened their account in an incisive attack which split Southampton wide open.

Midfielder Jordan Henderson won the ball in a tackle with Morgan Schneiderlin 10 yards inside his own half and produced a great through-ball for Sterling, who rushed through and shot past Fraser Forster, making his debut following a £10m move from Celtic.

Forster got closer to Sterling's snap-shot on the stroke of half-time and parried - but it was his Liverpool counterpart who produced the better saves of the first half as he clawed away a James Ward-Prowse inswinging free-kick and tipped over a Schneiderlin effort.

However, 10 minutes after the break he could do nothing with Clyne's powerful drive after the Saints full-back continued his run off the right flank to collect a Dusan Tadic backheel which beat Lovren.

Mignolet kept out Davis minutes later with a low save after the midfielder found himself unmarked free 12 yards out as Southampton stepped up the pressure, while another surging Clyne run was halted only by a desperate Glen Johnson tackle.

England striker Rickie Lambert, another Liverpool acquisition from Southampton, came off the bench and had a chance to score with his second touch before Sturridge grabbed the winner with 10 minutes remaining.

Henderson's cross was half-cleared by Victor Wanyama and Sterling nodded it back into the danger area, where his England team-mate poked home from close range.

But Liverpool were ultimately indebted to Mignolet, who in the opening game 12 months ago saved a last-minute penalty to secure victory.

This time he brilliantly tipped Schneiderlin's shot onto the bar in the 88th minute - and watched relieved as Long headed the rebound wide from six yards out.

Date: 17 August 2014
 Opposition: Southampton
 Competition: League

Times	Telegraph	South Daily Echo
Guardian	Mirror	Echo
Independent	Mail	BBC

17 August 2014



Liverpool made an unconvincing start to life without Luis Suarez - but goals from Raheem Sterling and Daniel Sturridge edged them past a Southampton side who shone despite their summer upheaval.

Although the £75m sale of Suarez to Barcelona stripped the Reds of one of the game's most prolific strikers, Sterling and Sturridge struck either side of a Nathaniel Clyne equaliser to compensate on this occasion.

But Liverpool were left hanging on for the win and will have to improve significantly if they are to repeat or improve on their second-place finish last season.

A new-look Southampton, under new manager Ronald Koeman, were the more dangerous team for long periods and might have claimed a deserved point when Morgan Schneiderlin fired against the bar late on.

Following a turbulent few months in which the south coast club lost their manager and a host of key players, this display suggests reports of their demise could be premature.

The irony of the fixture was that three of those players - Rickie Lambert, Adam Lallana and Dejan Lovren - moved to Anfield as part of a post-Suarez rebuilding job that has seen Liverpool spend more than £100m, with the transfer window still open for another two weeks.

Lovren was the only member of that trio to start against his former employers as Lambert took a place on the bench and Lallana missed out with a knee injury - and the Croat made an instant impression.

While much focus has been placed on how Liverpool will cope without Suarez, who scored 31 league goals in 2013-14, only Manchester City (102) and Chelsea (71) managed more than their 70 when the Uruguayan's strikes are subtracted.

Perhaps of more pressing concern, therefore, was the 50 goals they conceded; 13 more than City and 23 more than Chelsea. Lovren's display suggested he may well provide the solution.

He was towering alongside Martin Skrtel at centre-back as Southampton threatened in the early stages, providing a solid platform from which his team were able to build.

On top of Lambert, Lallana and Lovren, Saints also saw Luke Shaw depart for Manchester United, Calum Chambers for Arsenal and boss Mauricio Pochettino for Tottenham.

But the exits generated almost £100m and about half of that has been reinvested to give Koeman a chance of continuing his predecessor's encouraging work.

Goalkeeper Fraser Forster, left-back Ryan Bertrand, playmaker Dusan Tadic and striker Graziano Pelle all slotted in fairly seamlessly for Saints, while Schneiderlin excelled despite his well-documented desire to leave for Tottenham.

The visitors had played the more fluent football before Henderson robbed Tadic of possession, beat Schneiderlin and sent Sterling clean through with a magnificent curling pass that split the opposition centre-backs. Sterling kept calm to slot past Forster.

Southampton could easily have fallen apart, but they responded positively as James Ward-Prowse and Schneiderlin both forced Simon Mignolet to tip efforts from distance over the bar.

The pattern of play continued after half-time and Koeman's men were rewarded when right-back Clyne found Tadic on the edge of the box, continued his run untracked and collected a sublime back-heel to lash high past Mignolet.

Steven Davis wasted a glorious chance to put the visitors ahead and their pressure mounted, drawing groans of frustration from the home supporters.

Liverpool boss Brendan Rodgers introduced former Saint Lambert to add some physical presence to the Liverpool attack, while Koeman turned to £12m acquisition Shane Long.

Southampton seemed the more likely scorers but lacked a cutting edge up front and were punished when they failed to clear a cross and Sterling found Sturridge to touch home the winner.

There was still time for Mignolet to touch Schneiderlin's drive onto the woodwork, Long heading the rebound wide, but Liverpool dug in to open their Premier League bid with three points.

Southampton manager Ronald Koeman:

"I think we played a great second half, after 1-1 I think there was one team on the pitch playing and it was Southampton.

"We had a chance to score the second one, two great opportunities but the quality of Liverpool, they don't need many opportunities to score and that makes the difference.

"The way we played I think brings us a lot of confidence."

Date: 17 August 2014
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Guardian	Mirror	Echo
Independent	Mail	BBC

17 August 2014



Full time Match ends, Liverpool 2, Southampton 1.
 90:00+4:08 Full time Second Half ends, Liverpool 2, Southampton 1.
 87:27 Attempt missed. Shane Long (Southampton header from very close range is close, but misses to the right.
 87:25 Attempt saved. Morgan Schneiderlin (Southampton left footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the top centre of the goal. Assisted by Graziano Pellè.
 86:14 Dangerous play by Joe Allen (Liverpool).
 86:14 Lloyd Isgrove (Southampton wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 85:44 Attempt saved. James Ward-Prowse (Southampton right footed shot from the left side of the box is saved in the bottom left corner. Assisted by Graziano Pellè.
 81:33 Substitution Substitution Substitution, Southampton. Lloyd Isgrove replaces Steven Davis.
 78:40 Goal scored Goal! Goal! Liverpool 2, Southampton 1. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool left footed shot from very close range to the bottom left corner. Assisted by Raheem Sterling with a headed pass.
 77:14 Booking Steven Davis (Southampton is shown the yellow card.
 77:04 Joe Allen (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
 77:04 Foul by Graziano Pellè (Southampton).
 76:48 Attempt blocked. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Raheem Sterling.
 75:48 Substitution Substitution Substitution, Liverpool. Rickie Lambert replaces Philippe Coutinho.
 75:16 Attempt missed. Jordan Henderson (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box misses to the left. Assisted by Joe Allen.
 73:21 Substitution Substitution Substitution, Southampton. Shane Long replaces Dusan Tadic.
 70:39 Offside, Liverpool. Raheem Sterling tries a through ball, but Daniel Sturridge is caught offside.
 67:33 Attempt blocked. Graziano Pellè (Southampton right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Nathaniel Clyne.
 66:35 Attempt blocked. James Ward-Prowse (Southampton right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Jose Fonte with a headed pass.
 64:47 Booking Morgan Schneiderlin (Southampton is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.
 64:43 Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
 64:43 Foul by Morgan Schneiderlin (Southampton).
 63:37 Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool wins a free kick on the right wing.
 63:37 Foul by Ryan Bertrand (Southampton).
 62:44 Substitution Substitution Substitution, Liverpool. Joe Allen replaces Lucas Leiva.
 62:03 Attempt saved. Steven Davis (Southampton right footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by James Ward-Prowse.
 59:09 Foul by Dejan Lovren (Liverpool).
 59:09 Graziano Pellè (Southampton wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 58:13 Attempt missed. Steven Davis (Southampton right footed shot from the right side of the box is high and wide to the right following a corner.
 57:35 Corner, Southampton. Conceded by Javier Manquillo.
 56:25 Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 56:25 Foul by Victor Wanyama (Southampton).
 55:18 Goal scored Goal! Goal! Liverpool 1, Southampton 1. Nathaniel Clyne (Southampton right footed shot from the centre of the box to the top right corner. Assisted by Dusan Tadic.
 54:20 Attempt missed. Victor Wanyama (Southampton right footed shot from outside the box misses to the right. Assisted by Steven Davis.
 53:01 Attempt missed. Raheem Sterling (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is too high. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.
 50:16 Corner, Southampton. Conceded by Jordan Henderson.
 48:27 Jordan Henderson (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 48:27 Foul by Morgan Schneiderlin (Southampton).
 46:43 Foul by Jordan Henderson (Liverpool).
 46:43 Ryan Bertrand (Southampton wins a free kick on the left wing.
 45:00 Second Half begins Liverpool 1, Southampton 0.
 45:00+2:34 Half time First Half ends, Liverpool 1, Southampton 0.
 45:00+2:08 Offside, Liverpool. Raheem Sterling tries a through ball, but Philippe Coutinho is caught offside.
 45:00+2:04 Attempt saved. Raheem Sterling (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the top centre of the goal. Assisted by Jordan Henderson.
 45:00+0:48 Corner, Southampton. Conceded by Simon Mignolet.
 45:00+0:43 Attempt saved. Morgan Schneiderlin (Southampton right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the top centre of the goal.
 44:47 Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing.
 44:47 Foul by Jose Fonte (Southampton).
 41:25 Offside, Southampton. Fraser Forster tries a through ball, but Dusan Tadic is caught offside.
 40:21 Corner, Southampton. Conceded by Lucas Leiva.

39:48 Foul by Glen Johnson (Liverpool).
 39:48 Steven Davis (Southampton wins a free kick on the right wing.
 39:20 Attempt saved. James Ward-Prowse (Southampton right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom left corner. Assisted by Jose Fonte.
 37:09 Javier Manquillo (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 37:09 Foul by Dusan Tadic (Southampton).
 34:00 Corner, Southampton. Conceded by Simon Mignolet.
 33:34 Booking Javier Manquillo (Liverpool is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.
 33:12 Foul by Javier Manquillo (Liverpool).
 33:12 Dusan Tadic (Southampton wins a free kick on the left wing.
 30:23 Delay over. They are ready to continue.
 29:30 Delay in match Victor Wanyama (Southampton because of an injury.
 28:41 Foul by Lucas Leiva (Liverpool).
 28:41 Steven Davis (Southampton wins a free kick in the attacking half.
 27:54 Attempt missed. Glen Johnson (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is too high following a corner.
 27:25 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Nathaniel Clyne.
 26:22 Attempt missed. Graziano Pellè (Southampton right footed shot from the left side of the six yard box is high and wide to the left. Assisted by Morgan Schneiderlin with a cross.
 25:29 Foul by Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool).
 25:29 Maya Yoshida (Southampton wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 22:47 Goal scored Goal! Goal! Liverpool 1, Southampton 0. Raheem Sterling (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box to the bottom right corner. Assisted by Jordan Henderson with a through ball.
 20:46 Corner, Southampton. Conceded by Javier Manquillo.
 20:07 Attempt saved. Raheem Sterling (Liverpool left footed shot from the left side of the box is saved in the bottom left corner. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.
 19:33 Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 19:33 Foul by Victor Wanyama (Southampton).
 16:14 Javier Manquillo (Liverpool wins a free kick on the right wing.
 16:14 Foul by Ryan Bertrand (Southampton).
 14:00 Attempt missed. Glen Johnson (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is high and wide to the left. Assisted by Lucas Leiva.
 11:47 Offside, Southampton. Ryan Bertrand tries a through ball, but Dusan Tadic is caught offside.
 8:57 Attempt saved. Lucas Leiva (Liverpool left footed shot from very close range is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Martin Skrtel with a headed pass.
 8:27 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Jose Fonte.
 8:09 Jordan Henderson (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
 8:09 Foul by Dusan Tadic (Southampton).
 6:55 Attempt missed. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is close, but misses the top left corner.
 5:01 Foul by Steven Gerrard (Liverpool).
 5:01 Victor Wanyama (Southampton wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 3:09 Foul by Ryan Bertrand (Southampton).
 3:09 Javier Manquillo (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
 2:12 Attempt blocked. Jordan Henderson (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Steven Gerrard.
 0:00 First Half begins.
 0:00 Lineups are announced and players are warming up.