

Date: 20 September 2014 Opposition: West Ham United Competition: League	BBC	Mail	Sunday Times	Sun Telegraph	Independent	West Ham United
	Echo	Observer	Times	Telegraph		
	Standard	Sun Independent	Guardian	Mirror		

THE TIMES

Emotional time at Anfield plays into Allardyce's hands

West Ham United 3
 Reid 2, Sakho 7, Amalfitano 88
 Liverpool 1
 Sterling 26

Referee C Pawson Attendance 34,977

It was a chastening defeat and one that could have been written off as a casualty of last season's success: Liverpool are back in the Champions League; Liverpool are back in the hurly-burly of fixture congestion. However, while Brendan Rodgers was unsure how far to accept the relationship between the demands of European competition and Premier League fatigue, Sam Allardyce had no such qualms. The West Ham United manager expected the opposition to be distracted and tired and went for the jugular.

While Anfield was giddy with the delight last week at hosting Champions League football for the first time in almost five years, there was a subclause. For Allardyce it was not particularly relevant that Liverpool won a delicately balanced game at home against Ludogorets, what mattered was that they would be in some way weakened by the experience. Rodgers's side were in the ideal state, from West Ham's perspective, to be given a taste of their own high octane medicine.

"We did a high press [based] on the fact it's the first time Liverpool have been in the Champions League for four years," Allardyce said. "That's such a big game for Liverpool to be back there, with the atmosphere at Anfield. It's not only physically, but emotionally [so] and I think that most of the team that played in that game played here today so we thought they would want to control the tempo and get it quite slow to begin with and feel their way into the game."

There was no time for Liverpool to exert any control whatsoever with their defence crumbling at a set-piece after 78 seconds. A second goal soon followed and West Ham were all smiles while Rodgers rejigged his formation and attempted to instil some sense of superiority.

"It was part of the game plan, in that Liverpool will always try to play out from the back," Allardyce said. "Let them play out but go and press them, it's not about shutting them from the keeper. It's about allowing the space to let them think they can play out and then pressing them and they had been renowned for doing that over the last year or so but we obviously did it much better than them, particularly in the first half."

There was another tactic too, that Aston Villa had proved would be effective, namely to man-mark Steven Gerrard. This was one of many jobs handed to Stewart Downing who delivered the sort of performance that made it seem illogical for Rodgers to have sold him last year.

There are plenty of West Ham fans who believe Allardyce to be a nonsense, long-ball devotee lacking in subtlety but he has found a way for Downing to shine in a central role.

"Moving him inside has meant his talent and ability has come through," Allardyce said. "He gets more touches in there. Hopefully when we need him we can play him in there more often. He was enjoying it."

There was little room for fun in the Liverpool camp. Raheem Sterling, pelted about as if skiing over a mogul run, scored midway through the first half. The West Ham players visibly tensed when he ran at them but, Sterling aside, Liverpool lacked bounce.

It underlined why so many observers believed their capitulation at the end of the previous campaign represented the best chance missed rather than a step along a wondrous journey.

A busy schedule and the loss of Luis Suarez have turned the team from freespirted agitators into a brow-furrowing football puzzle. Rodgers took off Javier Manquillo to allow for a three-man defence once Diafra Sakho had floated the ball over the head of Simon Mignolet but West Ham refused to be intimidated and really ought to have done more with a dominant spell at the end of the first half.

Rodgers did not want to blame the players -- perhaps he realised that his public criticism of Mignolet had backfired -- but he was also wary of blaming the schedule.

"There is a great history for the club in the [Champions League] competition, to be back at that level after so many years is great, but now the first game has gone we have to concentrate on the football," Rodgers said. "There is a big emotion with the competition but, for us, we have to focus on our next game."

"It's a tiring competition, one that is mentally draining, but we've earned the right to be in the competition and we have to also do well in the Premier League."

RATINGS

West Ham United (4-3-1-2): Adrian 5 -- G Demel 6 (sub: C Jenkinson, 61 min 6), J Tomkins 7, W Reid 7, A Cresswell 6 -- M Noble 6, A Song 7 (sub: M Amalfitano, 69 7), C Kouyate 7 -- S Downing 8 -- D Sakho 7, E Valencia 7 (sub: J Collins, 76).

Substitutes not used: J Jaaskelainen, M Zarate, R Vaz Te, C Cole. Booked: Adrian, Jenkinson, Reid, Kouyate. Liverpool (4-3-3): S Mignolet 5 -- J Manquillo 5 (sub: M Sakho 22 4), D Lovren 5, M Skrtel 5, A Moreno 5 -- Lucas Leiva 5 (sub: A Lallana, 46 5), S Gerrard 5, J Henderson 5 -- F Borini 5 (sub: R Lambert, 75), R Sterling 7, M Balotelli 5. Substitutes not used: B Jones, J Enrique, K Toure, L Markovic. Booked: Balotelli.

the guardian

Rodgers not looking for excuses but says Europe is disrupting his team
 It was at 7.34pm on Saturday, precisely eight minutes after the match had ended, that an email landed from a well-known bookmakers offering odds of 9-1 on Liverpool's manager, Brendan Rodgers, being sacked before the end of the season. The email's heading was: 'Could Rodgers Be On His Way?' and the obvious answer from anyone exasperated with football's thirst for knee-jerk reactions has to be 'No, don't be so ridiculous'.

Liverpool were undoubtedly poor against West Ham and three defeats in five fixtures is a disappointing start for a club with title-winning aspirations. But these remain early days and Rodgers remains the man who led them to second place last campaign on the back of consistently thrilling, goal-laden displays. If his position really is under threat, then heaven help practically every other manager working in this country.

The focus instead needs to be on how Rodgers plans to get his team out of their rut and he was honest enough to admit they had "no excuses" for their showing in east London, which, coming on the back of the 1-0 home defeat by Aston Villa, means Liverpool have lost consecutive league matches for the first time since December. And given those fixtures came before and after Liverpool's first Champions League contest in five years - last Tuesday's 2-1 win against Ludogorets - there is a wider concern, specifically that coping with a return to Europe's elite competition is directly affecting the club's domestic campaign. When this was put to Rodgers he was again in no mood to look for excuses, making the point that Liverpool were revelling in being back "at the leading edge of the game". He did, however, concede that being in the Champions League is likely to prove "mentally draining" for his squad and, for coaches and players alike, has already forced a huge disruption of the routine which served them so well last season.

"You've got a lot less time working," he said. "If you play on the Saturday, you've got Sunday/Monday for recovery. You've then got the Tuesday game and then the players who play are recovering Wednesday/Thursday. So you're doing your first tactical preparation on the Friday and then you're travelling straight down to the [next] game. It's a tiring competition."

These are not wholly uncharted waters for Rodgers, given he had to cope with the demands of the Europa League during the 2012-13 season, his first in charge at Anfield. Worryingly for Liverpool supporters, the team won only three of the 11 Premier League fixtures which followed European ties in that campaign. There are key differences between then and now, of course, namely that Liverpool are a far-improved side. Once the summer signings have firmly bedded in, and Daniel Sturridge has returned from injury, they should have a squad more capable of coping with playing games home and abroad in quick succession.

Patience is required, then, but given Liverpool's start to the season, and with a Merseyside derby on Saturday, Rodgers's men simply cannot afford an instant repeat of their display against West Ham, when they found themselves 2-0 down inside seven minutes through Winston Reid's close-range header and a superb chip from Diafra Sakho. Liverpool were slow, sloppy and out of sorts and even after regaining their composure after an excellent goal from Raheem Sterling, they rarely looked like getting back on level terms. All hopes of a comeback were truly snuffed out when Morgan Amalfitano, on as a substitute, struck two minutes from the end.

The biggest worry for Rodgers with regard to juggling domestic and European commitments is that West Ham saw them coming.

"We did a high press based on knowing Liverpool had been in the Champions League and it was such a big game for them, emotionally and physically," said their manager, Sam Allardyce. "Most of the team that played in that game played here so we thought they would want to control the tempo, get it slow to begin with and feel their way into the game."

"Maybe they were a little jaded and when you get into the game as quick as we did it clearly caught them by surprise."

There was also a lack of defensive organisation, something that has hampered the team for some time. The record shows one clean sheet for Liverpool in their last 12 games.

For Liverpool the aim is not to become victims of their own success.
 Man of the match Stewart Downing (West Ham)

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The Mail

WE ARE NOT TIRED; Rodgers: Europe not to blame for form
WEST HAM 3 LIVERPOOL 1
 LIVERPOOL manager Brendan Rodgers has urged his side to prove they can cope with the pressure of being back among Europe's elite.

The Anfield club's first Champions League week since 2009 did not go quite to plan. Defeat last weekend by Aston Villa was followed by a narrow victory over Euro rookies Ludogorets.

And Saturday's power-puff display in the 3-1 defeat by West Ham only reinforced the view that Rodgers' side will struggle to replicate last season's title challenge. 'It would be easy to stand here and say, "It was our first game, the emotion of the Champions League", and all of that,' said Rodgers. 'We can't complain about it. We're glad to be here. This is what we have to get used to.'

'We expect to be better. There is a great history for the club in the European Cup. To be back at that level after so many years is great. But our priority is the Premier League, make no mistake.'

Jose Mourinho, Rodgers' mentor, flagged up last February the difficulties Liverpool would face if they reclaimed their Champions League status. As Liverpool's title challenge gathered pace, the Chelsea boss said: 'Liverpool have a big advantage because they don't play in the Champions League.'

'If Brendan has a chihuahua, it is one that trains a lot and rests a lot. The other dogs, they don't train a lot because they play a lot and they don't rest because they play every three days.'

'And when the Barclays Premier League goes to the crucial point, we all have to play Champions League at the same time.'

'Brendan's chihuahua doesn't do that. His chihuahua is privileged. Next season he will see what it is like to play in four competitions.'

It is early days, but Mourinho's theory looks to have substance. And Rodgers admits the dynamic of Liverpool's working week has changed as he deals with a bigger workload.

'It's a tiring competition, the Champions League, but we've earned the right to be in it and we also have to do well in the Premier League. There's the preparation time, the travel time, and then you need your players to recover after games in order to get ready for the next one.'

Raheem Sterling, who scored Liverpool's goal at Upton Park, agreed with his manager, saying: 'It's more than we're used to and the games are coming thick and fast. But that's what we want -- to be competing at the top end of the Premier League and in the Champions League.'

Rodgers started here with eight of the players that lined up against Ludogorets. And West Ham boss Sam Allardyce, who has experience of juggling domestic and European commitments with Bolton, admitted he was surprised there weren't more changes.

He said: 'It's the first time Liverpool have been in the Champions League for a while. It's not only physically but emotionally draining, so we thought they would want to control the tempo and keep it quite slow and feel their way into the game.'

'When I saw so many of the same names on the Liverpool teamsheet, I told our players there would be some fatigue in the Liverpool players.'

'We wouldn't play the same player on a Thursday night as we did on a Sunday at Bolton. That was the research we did. When you speak to the top man, Sir Alex Ferguson, (he says) you've got to have two teams, one for Europe and one for the Premier League.'

SUPER STAT: Raheem Sterling has been involved in nine goals (six goals, three assists) in his last 10 Premier League games.

WEST HAM (4-3-3): Adrian 6.5; Demel 6.5 (Jenkinson 6.1, 6), Tomkins 7, Reid 7.5, Cresswell 7.5; Noble 7.5, Kouyate 8, Song 7.5 (Amalfitano 6.9, 6.5); Sakho 7, Downing 7, Valencia 7 (Collins 7.6). Subs not used: Zarate, Vaz Te, Jaaskelainen, Cole. Booked: Reid, Adrian, Kouyate, Jenkinson.

LIVERPOOL (4-3-2-1): Mignolet 5; Manquillo 4 (Sakho 2.2, 5), Skrtel 5, Lovren 5, Moreno 5.5; Gerrard 5, Lucas 5 (Lallana 4.6, 7), Henderson 6; Sterling 7, Borini 5.5 (Lambert 7.5, 5); Balotelli 6. Subs not used: Jones, Jose Enrique, Toure, Markovic. Booked: Balotelli.

Referee: Craig Pawson 6.5.

SHOWING YOUR AGE, STEVIE?
STEVEN GERRARD was poor against West Ham, as his stats from the game show. Is age finally catching up with Liverpool's 34-year-old captain?
 14 GERRARD lost the ball 14 times. Only Raheem Sterling (20) lost it more for Liverpool.
 11 HE misplaced 11 passes in the opposition half, more than any Liverpool player.
 25% GERRARD won just 25 per cent of his duels, the worst percentage of any Liverpool player. Only six players in last year's top six squads are older than Gerrard, and most now play bit-part roles.

SUPER STEWART
 PART of Gerrard's problem was the superb form of Stewart Downing. Playing through the middle, Downing was influential all over as his pitch map (below) shows.
 3 IN just five games, Downing has three assists. In the whole of the 2013-14 season, he made two.
 3 NO player made more key passes than Downing.

The Daily Telegraph

Allardyce gives Rodgers lesson in resilience
 West Ham United 3
 Reid 2, Sakho 7, Amalfitano 88
 Liverpool 1
 Sterling 26 Att: 34,977

The worst fears of many Liverpool fans were substantiated here as a reborn West Ham United picked apart a team clearly missing the match-winning capabilities of Luis Suarez and Daniel Sturridge -; and hungover from the elation and exertion of their Champions League return.

Brendan Rodgers worked wonders to push Liverpool ahead of Chelsea, Arsenal and Manchester United last season, but the Reds had no European football to disrupt their domestic programme and also had one of world football's few genuine gamechangers in Suarez. With the Uruguayan in Barcelona, and Sturridge sidelined by injury, Liverpool do not have the same goal threat, so they can hardly afford to gift the opposition a two-goal lead inside seven minutes, as they did here.

Their terrible start was down to a combination of Sam Allardyce's smart tactics and post-Champions League fatigue, after Liverpool laboured to beat Ludogorets at an emotion-filled Anfield on Tuesday. Seeing a teamsheet containing eight of the players who had completed 90 minutes four days earlier, Allardyce sent out a side to press and harry just high enough up the pitch to seize on any Liverpool mistake and counter-attack at speed. His plan worked to perfection as West Ham raced into a two-goal lead, and by the time Rodgers reshaped his team, they had a mountain to climb.

It was no fluke. West Ham were worthy winners, and Allardyce knew what to expect, based on his own experiences in Europe with Bolton Wanderers and also the teachings of his friend Sir Alex Ferguson, who had to learn how to cope with the rigours of a Champions League campaign.

"When I spoke to Sir Alex, who is the master and the first man to start rotation 20 years ago, he said you need two teams, one for Europe and one for the Premier League, particularly the game after," Allardyce said. Rodgers refused to use it as an excuse, but outlined the difficulty of preparing for West Ham last week.

"You've got a lot less time working with the team; if you play on the Saturday, you've got Sunday/Monday for recovering, you've got the Tuesday game, and then the players who play are recovering Wednesday/Thursday.

"So you're doing your first tactical preparation on the Friday, and then you're travelling straight down to the game. But you can't complain about it, we're glad to be here, this is what we have to get used to. We have no excuses today, we just weren't at our level. We haven't been playing well enough, it's as simple as that."

Liverpool were particularly poor in the opening quarter before Rodgers effected a reshuffle, changing from 4-4-2 to a three-man defence, but West Ham were already 2-0 ahead. Winston Reid scored from close range following a Stewart Downing freekick, before Diafra Sakho chipped the ball past Simon Mignolet. Although Raheem Sterling made it 2-1 with a stunning strike for the Reds in the 26th minute, West Ham withstood Liverpool's attempts at a comeback and completed the rout when Downing played in substitute Morgan Amalfitano to make it 3-1 in the closing stages. Downing was again superb in a more central role, and combined his own attacking instincts with the key role of keeping Steven Gerrard under lock and key.

"He was fantastic," Allardyce said.

"Our tactic today was to close down Gerrard, which was Stewart's job and not only did he do that but he was creative as well. Moving him inside has meant his talent and ability has come through and he gets more touches in there."

Downing also got the better of his former captain. "My job was to keep him quiet," Downing said. "You've got to get tight to him and stop him playing. That was the key today."

And so to the Suarez question. Like Tottenham Hotspur last summer, Liverpool have tried to replace their top scorer and talisman with a raft of new players, but Downing does not expect to see instant success at his former club.

"Luis and his 30 to 35 goals a season is a massive thing for them to lose," Downing said. "At times he carried Liverpool, there's no hiding from that. He's a big loss. Brendan's brought in a lot of people and it will take time for them to settle. I am sure they will be all right."

Red's unlucky numbers
 2 Liverpool conceded two goals in the opening 10 minutes of a Premier League game for the first time since February 1994.
 3 Liverpool have lost three of their first five Premier League games. The only other time this happened, in 2012-13, they finished seventh.
 18 different players have started for Liverpool in their first five matches of the season -; the same total as in the whole of last season.

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Rodgers: we are nowhere near as good as last season
 Brendan Rodgers was as blunt as his team were bland: Liverpool, he said, were "nowhere near" the standard they set last season.
 A 3-1 defeat at West Ham United on Saturday leaves them with three defeats from the opening five Premier League games and, though the sale of Luis Suarez is the most obvious difference on the pitch, some of the concerns go beyond that. It is not just that Liverpool are missing the Uruguayan's brilliance up front; they are also missing the fluency and rampant attacking that characterised their surge to a second-place finish last season. There has been a marked drop-off in overall performance and they need to rediscover lost verve.
 That was most conspicuous in the second half on Saturday when Liverpool created hardly anything up front. The goalscorer, Raheem Sterling, was the only attacker anywhere close to last season's best - and until the team start winning doubts will persist about the quality of the new signings. Rickie Lambert and Adam Lallana started on the bench, and there were not many players on the field to give West Ham real cause to worry.
 The parallels with Tottenham Hotspur's expenditure following the sale of Gareth Bale have already been raised, and there remains the question whether Liverpool should have used more of the Suarez money to go for one [pounds sterling]40m player rather than a collection of cheaper options. Rodgers offered another explanation for their slump, citing the extra demands of competing in the Champions League.
 "It's a tiring competition, one that's mentally draining, but we've earned the right to be in the competition and we have to also do well in the Premier League," the manager said. "You've got a lot less time working with the team. If you play on the Saturday, you've got Sunday, Monday for recovering, you've got the Tuesday game, and then the players who play are recovering Wednesday, Thursday. So you're doing your first tactical preparation on the Friday, and then you're travelling straight down to the game. But you can't complain about it, we're glad to be here, this is what we have to get used to. We just want and expect to be better."
 Sam Allardyce said he had specifically directed his West Ham side to take advantage of the visitors' fatigue. It was all the more pointed because his side did to Liverpool what Liverpool have recently done to so many: they caught them by surprise from kick-off, scoring the key goals crushingly early. Winston Reid and Diafra Sakho both struck within the first seven minutes.
 "We did a high press [based] on the fact it's the first time Liverpool have been in the Champions League for [five] years and that's such a big game for Liverpool to be back there, the atmosphere at Anfield," Allardyce said.
 "It's not only physically, but emotionally [draining] and I think most of the team that played in that game played here. We thought they would want to control the tempo and get it quite slow to begin with and feel their way into the game. [Their tiredness] was part of the game plan, in that Liverpool will always try to play out from the back."
 West Ham 3
 Liverpool 1
 Goals: West Ham Reid 2, Sakho 7, Amalfitano 88; Liverpool Sterling 26.



DON'T LET OUR BUBBLE BURST; Sterling battle cry after Hammers dent Reds
WEST HAM 3
 Reid 2, Sakho 7, Amalfitano 88
LIVERPOOL 1
 Sterling 26
RAHEEM STERLING insists there can be "no excuse" for Liverpool's Champions League hangover.
 Sterling was the exception to the rule for Liverpool who otherwise looked flat and jaded as they suffered a third defeat in four Premier League games. The trip to West Ham was always going to be a test as to how they would react after their first Champions League game and whether they would be able to juggle both competitions.
 But it looked as if it will be a difficult campaign for Brendan Rodgers compared to last season's wonderful roller-coaster ride.
 They miss Luis Suarez so much and it is questionable whether the squad will be able to handle the demands and expectations having set such high standards. Liverpool struggled to beat Bulgarian minnows Ludogorets in midweek, but Sterling denied fatigue after the European game was the reason they lost at Upton Park.
 He said: "I wouldn't say it was a factor. It's more than we're used to and the games are coming thick and fast. But that's what we want - to be competing at the top end of the Premier League and in the Champions League. It's down to us to get things right and get back to winning games.
 "What it means now is that after the second recovery day after a game we're straight back into another game.
 "They come really quick now and that's something we need to get used to. We can't use that as an excuse because there are other teams in the Premier League doing exactly the same as us who are winning games.
 "It will definitely be a test of character but I think there is a lot of character in this group."
 They will need it as they face Everton in the Merseyside derby on Saturday following a Capital One Cup tie with Middlesbrough tomorrow. Another defeat against Everton will really turn up the heat.
 Life does not get any easier but Sterling says the return from injury of Daniel Sturridge and Joe Allen will be a huge lift and claims they can finish in the top four.
 Sterling said: "We should be winning with the players we have. But having Daniel and Joe to come back will be a big boost.
 "We definitely have the quality to make the top four. We've got Dan to come back and give us more goals. That should add another dimension.
 "I thought we began the game slowly and we were really sloppy. It's concerning but we have to put g p it behind us, get back on the training field and go again.
 "Our focus has to turn to the next game on Tuesday night and we need to get back to winning ways. We need to bounce back."
 West Ham, by contrast, were terrific. They were quick out of the blocks, Winston Reid and Diafra Sakho putting them two up in the first seven minutes.
 Liverpool looked vulnerable in defence, sluggish in midfield and Mario Balotelli did not work hard enough in attack, while there is a reason why it was Fabio Borini's first league start for the Reds in two years.
 West Ham showed energy, looked strong and Mark Noble and Alex Song had way too much for Liverpool's midfield.
 Steven Gerrard, who had seemed to be defying age, looked like a 34-year-old playing his third game in a week. He was overrun.
 Sterling, lively and a menace throughout, scored a blockbuster to get Liverpool back in it but even Rodgers' tactical switch to bring on Mamadou Sakho and go Mthree at the back backfired, with the France international gifting the ball to Stewart Downing whose pass released Morgan Amalfitano to fire home West Ham's third. It was no more than they deserved.
 As disappointing as Liverpool were, West Ham have a new resolve and determination about them. Captain Mark Noble insists much of it is down to the dressingroom spirit and him giving the new arrivals English lessons.
 Noble said: "I have a laugh with them. A lot of them have come in and don't speak any English so I'm always on at them to speak English. It helps to speak our language on the pitch and in training.
 "But you can see they work their socks off for the team and bring quality. We have a laugh in training because they're slowly picking up English. The better English they speak the better players they will be.
 "I speak a lot of slang, a bit Cockney and I have to slow myself down because they find it hard to understand me.
 "But they're good lads and have settled in really well."
 38% Possession 62% 7 Shots on target 5 3 Shots off target 3 7 Corners 5 1 Offside 0 16 Fouls 11 Referee: C Pawson Att: 34,977

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The bubble well and truly burst at Upton Park. The growing fear for Kopites is that history is repeating itself. On the two previous occasions Liverpool finished as runners-up in the Premier League era they didn't just fail to push on, they regressed. Rather than being a stepping stone to glory, the summers of 2002 and 2009 proved to be painful false dawns.

Twelve months after coming second to Arsenal, Gerard Houllier's Liverpool limped home fifth with the manager left counting the cost of his mistakes in the transfer market. Bruno Cheyrou, El Hadji Diouf and Salif Diao didn't help take the club to the next level, they dragged it down. Having come within four points of wresting the title from Manchester United's grasp, Rafa Benitez's tenure quickly unravelled as Liverpool slumped to seventh and the Spaniard was shown the door. The toxic environment created by the debt-ridden reign of owners Tom Hicks and George Gillett didn't help matters but neither did selling Xabi Alonso and replacing him with sicknote Alberto Aquilani.

Fast forward to the present day and once again the alarming bells are ringing. Brendan Rodgers has a fight on his hands to stop this season going the same way as 2002/03 and 2009/10 and completing an unwanted hat-trick.

The optimism and positivity generated by last term's gutsy title challenge is quickly evaporating. A chasm currently exists between expectation levels and what this Liverpool side is delivering. Yes, there are mitigating circumstances behind the Reds' wretched start to the campaign.

Summer signings are still adjusting to their new surroundings and Rodgers' options have been depleted by injuries to the likes of Daniel Sturridge, Joe Allen, Emre Can, Glen Johnson and Jon Flanagan. Yet there are no excuses for the kind of error-strewn display Liverpool served up in the capital on Saturday night. Blaming the increased demands of Champions League football would be convenient but wrong. Fatigue wasn't responsible for what the travelling Kop had to endure at Upton Park. Shambolic defensively, lifeless in midfield and toothless up front, Liverpool got exactly what they deserved.

The only other occasion in the past 77 years that the Reds have lost three of their opening five top-flight matches was in the Northern Irishman's first campaign at Anfield. The difference then was that both the fans and the owners had accepted a season of transition was inevitable as Rodgers put his plans in place. This term that's not the case. The biggest spending spree in Anfield history – an outlay of £116million on nine players – was designed to ensure the departure of Luis Suarez didn't derail the club's resurgence.

The net spend of around £33million may have been dwarfed by some of their rivals, but Rodgers doesn't need telling that having led Liverpool back into the Champions League ahead of schedule, he's expected to keep them there.

Without the awe-inspiring brilliance of Suarez, the Reds were never going to notch a century of league goals this time around. Addressing the defensive frailties which ultimately cost them the title last season was always going to be vital. Dejan Lovren was supposed to be the £20million leader the backline had been lacking with his arrival followed by the acquisition of Spanish full-backs Alberto Moreno and Javier Manquillo. But rather than solve the problem, Liverpool's Achilles heel is worse than ever. The Reds aren't being carved apart by attacking brilliance, they are handing out gifts because uncertainty and indecision reign. Even the basics seem beyond them as every set-piece swung into the box sparks panic. Winston Reid capitalised on some shoddy marking inside 80 seconds and when Diafra Sakho punished Moreno's hesitation and chipped Simon Mignolet soon after the Hammers were in dreamland.

The lack of communication was typified by the mix-up which saw Mamadou Sakho clumsily clatter into Lovren, who needed extensive treatment for a head wound. Exacerbating the issue is the fact that behind the back four is a goalkeeper who appears to be suffering from a crisis in confidence.

Mignolet's shot-stopping skills have never been in question but his ability to command his penalty box is an area of worrying weakness.

After his rush of blood which assisted Ludogorets' equaliser in midweek, Mignolet was rooted to the spot for both of West Ham's early strikes. With Liverpool interested in free agent Victor Valdes, who is only a month away from fitness after a cruciate injury, the Belgian must lift his game or lose his status at Anfield No 1. Rodgers insisted in pre-season that even without Suarez the Reds' style wouldn't change. But they aren't moving the ball as quickly and they certainly aren't pressing opponents with the same kind of intensity.

Liverpool's midfield diamond was so comprehensively over-run early on that Rodgers hauled off Manquillo, brought on Sakho and went 3-5-2.

Rather than grasp his chance, Lucas Leiva simply showed why he's fallen down the Anfield pecking order and the Brazilian didn't emerge for the second half.

A third match in seven days proved a step too far for Steven Gerrard, who wasn't able to impose himself on proceedings. The argument that the skipper is a spent force is ridiculous. He had to contend with the same talk in the early stages of last season and responded by netting 13 league goals and providing as many assists.

Gerrard still has a great deal to offer but it's only natural that at 34 his game-time will need to be managed. Raheem Sterling, one of the few who could hold his head high, handed Liverpool a lifeline with his sweetly struck piledriver and for a period in the second half they threatened to restore parity.

Adam Lallana, who replaced Lucas, improved Rodgers' side but there was no punch in the final third. A frontline of Mario Balotelli and Fabio Borini is a pale imitation of the Suarez and Sturridge double act. Borini, starting for the first time since the FA Cup debacle at Oldham in January 2013, squandered their best chance when he fired over. Liverpool always looked vulnerable to a breakaway and so it proved as Morgan Amalfitano killed them off after Sakho's awful header was pounced on by the impressive Stewart Downing. For the first time in nine months the Reds have suffered back to back league defeats. With a Merseyside derby on the horizon, it's a habit they need to kick. Unless standards quickly rise there will be another false dawn for Liverpool's collection.



Sam Allardyce's punchy Hammers outclass Reds at Upton Park

An exquisite lob from Diafra Sakho earned West Ham just a second Premier League win of the season as Liverpool were outplayed in a 3-1 result at Upton Park. West Ham were 2-0 up after seven minutes as Winston Reid headed in before Diafra Sakho exposed the Reds' defensive inadequacies once more with a stunning chip. Mario Balotelli and Adrian were booked following an altercation after the Liverpool striker's late tackle on the West Ham goalkeeper, who reacted angrily. Balotelli showed his better side when bringing down the cross which led to Raheem Sterling pulling a goal back for the visitors, but West Ham were by far superior throughout. Liverpool improved in the second half but, in pressing for an equaliser, were vulnerable at the back and Morgan Amalfitano struck a late third. Alexandre Song, on his first start following his loan move from Barcelona, Cheikhou Kouyate, striker Enner Valencia and goalscorer Diafra Sakho were influential for Sam Allardyce's men, who inflicted Liverpool's second away loss this calendar year. The Reds' first came at Manchester City a month ago, but now Brendan Rodgers' men have lost successive Premier League games for the first time since December following last week's defeat to Aston Villa.

Liverpool are now six points behind leaders Chelsea in the table, having played a game more, while the pressure on Allardyce, in front of his own fans at least, has lessened with a second home win in six matches.

Liverpool needed a last-gasp penalty to beat Ludogorets on their Champions League return in midweek, but face a test of their top four credentials this season. The Reds, runners-up last term, were expected to add to West Ham's misery and inflict a third home loss of the season after Tottenham and Southampton won last month. Liverpool had Martin Skrtel restored following a three-match absence with a knee injury, but a defensive reshuffle was required after 22 minutes, by which time the visitors were already two down.

The source of the first goal was former Reds winger Stewart Downing, whose inswinging free-kick found James Tomkins at the back post.

Tomkins' header back across the six-yard box was turned goalwards by Reid, whose header went in off Dejan Lovren.

Downing seemed determined to impress and danced around Steven Gerrard before Mark Noble darted from left to right and fed Diafra Sakho.

The Senegal forward, a summer recruit from Metz, burst into the area and had the audacity to lob the ball over Simon Mignolet into the far corner for his third goal in three games.

Aaron Cresswell then tried his luck from 25 yards and Mignolet turned the ball round the post.

The closest Liverpool came to the Hammers goal in the opening 20 minutes was when Balotelli attempted to block an Adrian clearance and tangled with the goalkeeper, who kicked out before facing off with the striker. Both men were booked.

A frustrated Rodgers hauled off Javier Manquillo for Mamadou Sakho and switched to a back three in an attempt to wrest some of the initiative from Kouyate and Song in midfield.

Liverpool struck back when Balotelli pulled down a Jordan Henderson cross from the left and saw his shot blocked by Cresswell. The ball ricocheted to Sterling, who drilled a low first-time volley into the far corner.

West Ham continued to press forward and Mignolet turned a Valencia free-kick round the post.

Lovren required lengthy treatment after colliding with his team-mate Mamadou Sakho. He initially appeared groggy but returned following a change of shirt, with a heavily bandaged head and after a consultation with the tunnel doctor in compliance with Premier League concussion rules.

Mignolet saved from Valencia as the Hammers' bombardment continued.

Adam Lallana replaced Lucas at half-time and tried to tee up Sterling, who dragged his shot wide.

Liverpool exerted some more pressure, with Fabio Borini and Balotelli each twice finding shooting space without really testing Adrian.

As the visitors pushed forwards gaps in their defence became evident.

Diafra Sakho was unable to punish a Skrtel lapse as he lifted the ball over, but a third West Ham goal came when they broke and Downing threaded the ball through for substitute Amalfitano to score.

Date: 20 September 2014 Opposition: West Ham United Competition: League	BBC	Mail	Sunday Times	Sun Telegraph	Independent	West Ham United
	Echo	Observer	Times	Telegraph		
	Standard	Sun Independent	Guardian	Mirror		



Reds are caught cold by hot Hammers

A brilliant start from West Ham at the Boleyn Ground continued Liverpool's own poor start to this season. The home side's opening rally of two goals in the first seven minutes were the source of this impressive 3-1 victory, but also a lot of questions for Brendan Rodgers. Liverpool have now lost three of their opening five matches, and their manager was already being asked whether they can replicate last season's title challenge. Rodgers acknowledged that "it's not quite happening" for Liverpool right now and they were "nowhere near the standard" expected, but admitted last season may have represented a premature peak. "I've always said we're a work in progress," he stated. "We probably arrived early to where we were last year. People look at Chelsea and Man City as the two squads set up for that, but there are no limits to what we want to achieve at Liverpool. We just want to keep moving forward.

"We've lost three of our last five, so we can't even entertain talk of [a title challenge] until we get some sort of consistency. But we showed the potential in the Tottenham game [a 3-0 Liverpool win]. We have to get back to that."

West Ham did not allow Liverpool even to try and get anywhere close to it yesterday as they imposed their game on Rodgers' side immediately and quickly went 2-0 up. That kind of start was more reminiscent of the visitors last season than this West Ham but, if it was unfamiliar, the manner of the opening goal was anything but. An Allardyce side scored from a set-piece, exposing a frequent flaw in a Rodgers team. Former Liverpool player Stewart Downing curled in a free-kick, with James Tomkins then heading back for Winston Reid to nod in. Rodgers bemoaned the concession of yet another goal through a set-piece, but insisted that the main problem was elsewhere. "There's definitely work to be done on that," he said. "It was never a problem for us last season. It's important to stay calm in that situation. We needed to defend better, but it all stemmed from the intensity of our start." West Ham did not let up. With the stadium rocking following the opening goal, Mark Noble cut through the centre of the pitch to tee up Diafra Sakho. The Senegalese looked up, saw Simon Mignolet off his line and gloriously chipped the goalkeeper. Although Enner Valencia's run made it seem as if it might have been an attempted cross, Sakho's eyes indicated otherwise. His manager said it was intentional. It was certainly a statement of intent from Sam Allardyce's team, and the manager praised the intensity of his side.

"Our high pressing game today was the reason we dominated Liverpool so much in the first half," he said. "To score twice in that early period really stunned the Liverpool players. We carried that right the way through to the end of the first half, taking them to task and playing outstandingly well. We didn't let Liverpool play at all. We deserved everything we got today."

They also threw everything at Liverpool. Allardyce persisted with his new diamond midfield, allowing Downing to revel in the centre and also completely stifle Steven Gerrard. The formation worked so well that it forced Rodgers into a 22nd-minute substitution as he hauled off Javier Manquillo for Mamadou Sakho to go three at the back. There was an immediate effect as Raheem Sterling powered the ball past Adrian to make it 2-1 shortly afterwards, but it did not force West Ham back in the manner that might have been expected. Instead, they kept going at Liverpool. Rodgers also kept Dejan Lovren on despite the defender seeming to suffer a head injury, but Lucas Leiva was not spared. He was taken off in favour of Adam Lallana as Liverpool desperately attempted to introduce some creativity. It didn't have much effect, as West Ham stayed solid, not least their goalkeeper Adrian. He was involved in two flashpoints, first with Mario Balotelli and then Fabio Borini. Neither of the forwards could really make an impact on the game. Liverpool were just so flat. "I've got to look at my own team and we were nowhere near the standard," Rodgers said. "We made a slow start, were 2-0 down before we knew it. Lots of elements of our game have been very good in the last few seasons, but it's not quite happening for us at the moment.

"We have a lot of work to do, but today was disappointing. It's a number of things. We've shown the potential in the Tottenham game [when they won 3-0], when we have key players fit. We showed in that game the quality and intensity of the team. For ourselves, with those guys unavailable, it hurts us. But we should still be better than we were today. We have to go back to the training ground and work. "We've set a new expectancy at the club and we have to deal with that now," he added. "It's a club people want to beat, but we're even more so now with the Champions League. It's something we need to deal with, and we will." They could not deal with West Ham. As Liverpool chased the game, the home side finally caught them on the break. Substitute Morgan Amalfitano was slipped through on 88 minutes and slotted the ball past Mignolet. It was the perfect finish to go with the perfect start - at least for West Ham. Liverpool, by contrast, must start again.

West Ham (4-4-2): Adrian; Demel (Jenkinson 61), Tomkins, Reid, Cresswell; Kouyate, Downing, Noble, Song (Amalfitano 69); Sakho, Valencia (Collins 76).
Liverpool (4-3-3): Mignolet; Manquillo (Sakho 22), Skrtel, Lovren, Moreno; Lucas (Lallana 45), Gerrard, Henderson; Balotelli, Borini (Lambert 75), Sterling.
Referee: Craig Pawson
Man of the match: Stewart Downing (West Ham) Match rating: 8/10

The Sunday Telegraph

West Ham tear Liverpool apart

West Ham Utd 3
Reid 2, D Sakho 7, Amalfitano 88
Liverpool 1

Sterling 26 Att: 34,997

Outfought and out-thought, Liverpool emerged from Upton Park with no points and precious few answers. West Ham's metamorphosis under Sam Allardyce continues to take shape, with a performance that was by turns resilient and brilliant. For Liverpool manager Brendan Rodgers, a litany of problems, beginning with the manner in which his side subsided so dramatically and so soon within the opening minutes of this game.

This is a side still searching for its post-Suarez identity, neither busy enough in attack nor secure enough in defence. Mario Balotelli is still too selective with his workrate, the full-backs leave far too much space in behind them and Steven Gerrard's role in this side appears to be largely ceremonial.

Rodgers has urged patience; meanwhile, Chelsea have the chance to pull nine points clear of them at the top this afternoon.

If Liverpool remain in chrysalis for now, then this was a match that burst into the world fullyformed and breathing fire. By half-time, we had seen 14 fouls, four bookings and a change of formation, and those still lucid were either gasping for air or reaching for their hip flasks.

But there was a rational basis for West Ham's heist. From the first whistle, Liverpool were stunned by their intensity, their Weetabix-crunch in the tackle, the way they pursued like contract killers. These were the same qualities that marked Liverpool out last season, but here, they were strangely absent. Not until the second half did they approach their former vigour, and by that stage, they were chasing the game.

Winston Reid's goal after 75 seconds set the tone, West Ham capitalising on Simon Mignolet's strange passivity under the high cross. Reid took the plaudits after nodding in James Tomkins's knock-back, but the real credit should go to Stewart Downing, whose wonderful free-kick created the opportunity.

If you want some idea of how strange the first half was, then here it is: for half an hour, Downing played like Pele. He pillaged, he ransacked: planted at the attacking tip of West Ham's diamond midfield, he beat players, began attacks and occasionally tried to finish them too. We can even forgive him his run and illjudged shot from 25 yards when Diafra Sakho was better placed, for by this stage Downing was simply admiring himself, like a Greek goddess who had become beguiled by her own beauty.

By this stage, Diafra Sakho too had made his mark on the game, doubling West Ham's lead with a delightful chip from the righthand edge of the penalty area after gathering Mark Noble's pass.

Mignolet, mindful of the cross, could perhaps be forgiven. No such courtesy should be afforded to Liverpool's defence, whose slapdash shape allowed Diafra Sakho the freedom of east London to line up his effort.

Nothing was going right for Liverpool. A Fabio Borini pass came off the referee and rolled to a West Ham player. Gerrard slipped over.

Left-back Aaron Cresswell tried an 'elastic chop' - a sort of fancy stepover - and pulled it off.

Mignolet saved a savage effort from Enner Valencia.

At the other end, Balotelli was passing time the way all surly street-kids do, by wandering around aimlessly and picking needless fights. He tangled with goalkeeper Adrian, the pair squaring up.

Both earned yellow cards, but Balotelli's might well have been red had Borini not dragged him away. Another reminder that for all his myriad gifts, Liverpool have spent PS16million on a striker with all the emotional intelligence of a large saucepan.

With only a quarter of the game gone, Rodgers had to act. He replaced right-back Javier Manquillo with centre-back Mamadou Sakho, switched to a 3-5-2, had a long chat with Borini on the sidelines. The new system allowed the midfield to get further forward, and it paid immediate dividends when Raheem Sterling scored. Balotelli's sublime trap, turn and shot was blocked by Cresswell, but the ball sat up pleasingly for Sterling, who smashed the ball in from 18 yards.

You know the way these games are supposed to go. The stronger team slowly ratchets up the pressure, and the closing stages turn into a siege. In fact, it was West Ham who continued to attack more incisively, not just after the Liverpool goal but into the second half. Tomkins missed a header. Valencia had a couple of shots blocked.

And although Liverpool came into the game a little more over the final half-hour, rarely did they enjoy anything approaching dominance. The replacement of Valencia by centre-half James Collins with 15 minutes left heralded another change of formation - this time West Ham to 5-5-0 - as Allardyce recalibrated his team's phasers to "hoof". As Liverpool ran themselves into a lather, West Ham applied the finish.

Downing, still in superhero mode, broke out of defence and played the ball into the path of substitute Morgan Amalfitano, who placed the ball past Mignolet. They were dancing in the aisles.

A Sam Allardyce team had just given Liverpool a footballing lesson. Work that one out.

Date: 20 September 2014 Opposition: West Ham United Competition: League	BBC	Mail	Sunday Times	Sun Telegraph	Independent	West Ham United
	Echo	Observer	Times	Telegraph		
	Standard	Sun Independent	Guardian	Mirror		



THE SUNDAY TIMES

Hammers blitz Liverpool

SAMALLARDYCE has made significant changes to his team this season and after encouraging efforts at Crystal Palace and Hull, they needed to perform before their own fans. And how well they played against last season's runners-up, earning a deserved victory.

West Ham's performance came in two acts. Energetic and creative in the first half, they were two goals up before Liverpool had settled into the match and were worth more than the 2-1 advantage they enjoyed at the interval. The second half told a very different story as Allardyce's side were hanging on for long periods.

Not desperate defence, just gritty, and when it seemed Liverpool weren't getting that second goal, West Ham broke and sealed their victory. Their third goal came three minutes from the end. Stewart Downing made one last burst through the heart of the Liverpool defence and played Morgan Amalfitano through.

He finished well and Liverpool were done for. That's three defeats in five games for Brendan Rodgers' team and while it would be foolish to speak of a crisis, the team will not easily make up this early deficit. They fought hard but still looked like a team who had played a tough Champions League game in midweek.

At first Liverpool did not seem to understand how difficult their evening was destined to be. Barely a minute had passed when they conceded a free kick wide on the right and casually took up their defensive positions. Downing knew what he wished to do deep cross beyond the far post. James Tomkins soared above Javier Manquillo, guided a header across goal, and Winston Reid tapped in.

If that goal came from the training ground, the second six minutes later was down to a moment of pure brilliance from Diafra Sakho. Reid's firm tackle on Mario Balotelli created the opportunity for a West Ham counterattack and Mark Noble surged forward before playing the ball to Sakho. Moving towards goal and faced by a back-peddalling Alberto Moreno, Sakho looked up and saw Simon Mignolet off his goalline. The chip was perfectly executed: 2-0 and just eight minutes gone.

Rodgers stood with his arms folded, his mind spinning. Sakho and Enner Valencia were frightening Liverpool. Just behind them Downing was terrorising his old club. Midway through the half, Rodgers changed things round. He replaced right back Manquillo with Mamadou Sakho, switched to three at the back, five in midfield, and thereafter Liverpool were better.

Balotelli was having a typical day. Dispossessed for the second goal, then a needless yellow card for a silly foul on Adrian, followed by a moment of brilliance that got Liverpool back in the game. He jumped with Reid for Jordan Henderson's deep cross, somehow hooked the ball back to himself, then struck a shot that Reid courageously blocked. The ball broke to Raheem Sterling, who struck the sweetest shot into the corner of the net.

Sterling had been Liverpool's best player but West Ham continued to be the more dangerous side. Mignolet pushed away shots from Aaron Cresswell and Valencia. Tomkins headed wide from a corner and Liverpool couldn't work out what to do with Downing.

Liverpool played with greater purpose in the second half. Adam Lallana came on for Lucas and for the first time in the game, Liverpool began to control the game. Moreno curled a shot over and as Liverpool pressed for an equalising goal, Balotelli looked ever more dangerous.

West Ham tired. Valencia trooped off wearily, replaced by central defender James Connolly, for by then the home team were merely trying to hold on. But their heart was never in doubt and they deserved the victory that was confirmed by Amalfitano.

West Ham Utd: Adrian 6, Demel 6 (Jenkinson 61min), Reid 7, Tomkins 7, Cresswell 6, Noble 7, Song 6 (Amalfitano 59min 7), Kouyate 7, E Valencia 7 (Collins 75min), Downing 8, Sakho 7 Liverpool: Mignolet 6, Moreno 7, Lovren 6, Manquillo 5 (M Sakho 22min 6), Skrtel 6, Lucas 5 (Lallana ht 6), Gerrard 5, Henderson 5, Borini 4 (Lambert 75min), Sterling 7, Balotelli 7

The Observer

Liverpool are left dazed and confused

Liverpool always knew they would face a period of adjustment this term, though they could not have envisaged it proving quite this painful. A third league defeat in four games has left them stewing well off the early pace, this game surrendered in its frenetic first seven minutes when West Ham were rampant and the visitors merely dazed and confused.

The blur of tactical tweaks and substitutions thereafter hinted at a riposte for a while but Liverpool never struck upon the correct blend. In truth, if this revamped squad are still becoming accustomed to each other's foibles then the actual team's constant shape-shifting even within games can leave them looking dizzied at times. A troubling injury list, the raised expectations from last term, a more onerous schedule incorporating Champions League football and the disruption caused by Luis Suarez's departure are all mitigating circumstances of sorts, but here they were eclipsed by West Ham's energy.

It had been at its most devastating in the opening seven minutes, but it was retained to the final exchanges on the counterattack. The final whistle was beckoning when Mamadou Sakho stretched and misdirected a header back in-field for the excellent Stewart Downing to collect. His pass inside Steven Gerrard's lunge and out of reach of Martin Skrtel was perfect for Morgan Amalfitano, whose crisp first-time finish across Simon Mignolet confirmed the hosts' deserved success. It was December before Brendan Rodgers' side lost a third league game last term. Life is proving far more sobering this time.

There is uncertainty in virtually all their play at present, with the forward line still seeking to tap in to Mario Balotelli's qualities in the absence of both Suarez and the injured Daniel Sturridge, their midfield too often overrun and the defence still rather makeshift in its composition. Goals are even being shipped at set pieces, a reflection that the clear physical presence they possess across their back line is not providing authority in the air. The manner in which James Tomkins was able to amble away from the ponderous Skrtel and above Jordan Henderson to nod Downing's free-kick back across goal 80 seconds in summed that up, with Winston Reid bundling the loose ball through Dejan Lovren on the line.

That was the first reward of a frantic start, a goal to settle the home side's nerves given they have choked regularly in this arena in recent times with only two previous victories since February, and West Ham duly threatened to run riot. Their ascendancy was established in the centre, where Alex Song and Cheikhou Kouyate provided the muscle to complement Mark Noble's busy industry.

Downing operated at the tip of their diamond, looking every bit the player Liverpool had once considered worth pounds 20m when prising him from Aston Villa, while Enner Valencia and Diafra Sakho split, galloped into the channels and stretched frazzled opponents. The latter's second was glorious, a delicate and deliberate chip arcing over Mignolet after Alberto Moreno had failed to summon a challenge.

Early indications are that West Ham have struck gold in the market this summer, with Allardyce even suggesting this team are "capable of going as far" as his Bolton side who regularly competed for European football. "Diafra's come in a bit under the radar because Enner Valencia had such a fantastic World Cup," he said. "But he scored 20 goals to help Metz win the French second division last year. The energy they've got, in and out of possession, terrorised their back four today. Kouyate loves life, loves football, loves being in every day and he looks like being a fine players for us. We have nine new players, it's early in the season, and yet they've hit the ground running and are performing very well at this level."

Adaptation is proving more problematic for Liverpool's numerous new personnel, with the team's early lethargy in the face of such urgent West Ham pressing costing them dear. There was to be no prolonged recovery. The menacing Raheem Sterling, the only visiting forward to offer a display worthy of his reputation, had thrashed in from the edge of the area after Aaron Cresswell blocked Balotelli's attempt. But, having reverted to a back three and then introduced Adam Lallana at the interval to flood midfield, Liverpool could find no way through.

The nearest they came were a Balotelli snapshot and a close-range Mamadou Sakho header but West Ham would not wilt. Amalfitano's late reward confirmed only the London club's third win in 23 league meetings with Liverpool. "We know we weren't at our level," said Rodgers. "We know we have to do better."

"We were brilliant last season. But I would say that, at this point last season, we weren't playing to the level we were in the last three or four months of the campaign. People were asking me whether we'd score enough and we finished with 101 goals. We've got a bit of work to do. We know we have to be better." Middlesbrough await in the Capital One Cup on Tuesday before Saturday's Merseyside derby offers another daunting test. There is no time for Liverpool to catch their breath at present. They can add that, too, to their list of problems.

WEST HAM Adrian-; Demel (Jenkinson- 61), Reid-, Tomkins, Cresswell; Noble, Kouyate-, Song (Amalfitano 69); Downing; D Sakho, Valencia (Collins 76)

Subs not used Zarate, Vaz Te, Jaaskelainen, Cole

LIVERPOOL Mignolet; Manquillo (M Sakho 22), Skrtel, Lovren, Moreno; Gerrard; Lucas (Lallana ht), Henderson; Sterling; Balotelli-, Borini (Lambert 75)

Subs not used Jones, Jose Enrique, Toure, Markovic

Upton Park 34,977

Date: 20 September 2014 Opposition: West Ham United Competition: League	BBC	Mail	Sunday Times	Sun Telegraph	Independent	West Ham United
	Echo	Observer	Times	Telegraph		
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Liverpool suffered their third defeat in five Premier League games this season as West Ham emerged victorious at Upton Park.

Early goals from Winston Reid and Diafra Sakho proved too much for the visitors, who pulled one back through Raheem Sterling before the break.

Liverpool pressed hard after half-time.

However, Hammers keeper Adrian made a succession of saves and Morgan Amalfitano wrapped up a first home win for West Ham in the 88th minute.

Sam Allardyce's men had lost both previous home games this season and taken just four points from their last eight games against these opponents.

But they could not have started much better against Liverpool.

Reid's first goal since October 2013 was a close-range effort after James Tomkins had headed Stewart Downing's free-kick into the six-yard box.

West Ham's second was more speculative as Sakho floated the ball over Simon Mignolet from the right, the ball dropping into the corner before Enner Valencia could reach it.

A difficult start for the visitors also included a yellow card for Mario Balotelli, who had a head-to-head confrontation with Hammers goalkeeper Adrian, and the exit of the injured Javi Manquillo, who was replaced by Mamadou Sakho.

Liverpool were trying to shrug off the exertions of their successful midweek return to the Champions League .

And they did have hope through their remarkable scoring record away from Anfield.

When Sterling lashed home the rebound for his third goal of the campaign after Balotelli's shot had initially been blocked, it was their 34th goals in the last 12 away games and created a club record of scoring in 17 successive top-flight matches on the road.

Valencia forced Mignolet into a good save just after Dejan Lovren had been patched up to play on following a heavy collision with his own team-mate, Sakho.

The introduction of Adam Lallana at half-time for Lucas - and the consequent tactical switch - suggested Brendan Rodgers was unhappy with his team's efforts.

On his first Liverpool start for almost two years, Fabio Borini made little impact until a low shot at the start of the second half brought a low save from Adrian.

The Italian curled a shot narrowly over as Liverpool continued to press forward in search of an equaliser.

Then Balotelli, who has now scored just one goal in his last 19 Premier League appearances, was thwarted by Adrian.

Rickie Lambert was introduced for the last push forward.

However, Liverpool were vulnerable on the counter-attack and as time ticked down, Downing's pass released Amalfitano, who applied the clinical finish.

It was the first time the visitors had lost successive league games since last December.

West Ham manager Sam Allardyce:

"That performance today just shows what level and what capabilities we might be able to achieve this season.

"To score two goals in that early period really stunned the Liverpool players. We really took them to task. We played outstandingly well and really didn't let Liverpool play at all."

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90:00+4:04 Full time Second Half ends, West Ham United 3, Liverpool 1.
90:00+2:45 Raheem Sterling (Liverpool wins a free kick on the right wing.
90:00+2:45 Foul by Mark Noble (West Ham United).
90:00+1:49 Foul by Adam Lallana (Liverpool).
90:00+1:49 Aaron Cresswell (West Ham United wins a free kick in the defensive half.
87:18 Goal scored Goal! Goal! West Ham United 3, Liverpool 1. Morgan Amalfitano (West Ham United right footed shot from the centre of the box to the bottom right corner. Assisted by Stewart Downing with a through ball.
86:15 Attempt missed. Martin Skrtel (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box misses to the right.
84:13 Raheem Sterling (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
84:13 Foul by Aaron Cresswell (West Ham United).
79:59 Delay over. They are ready to continue.
79:13 Delay in match Cheikhou Kouyaté (West Ham United because of an injury.
75:30 Substitution Substitution, West Ham United. James Collins replaces Enner Valencia.
74:57 Substitution Substitution, Liverpool. Rickie Lambert replaces Fabio Borini.
74:09 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Carl Jenkinson.
71:01 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Aaron Cresswell.
69:05 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Adrián.
69:04 Attempt saved. Mario Balotelli (Liverpool right footed shot from a difficult angle and long range on the left is saved in the bottom left corner. Assisted by Mamadou Sakho.
68:35 Attempt missed. Diafra Sakho (West Ham United right footed shot from outside the box is too high.
68:11 Substitution Substitution, West Ham United. Morgan Amalfitano replaces Alexandre Song.
67:30 Foul by Mario Balotelli (Liverpool).
67:30 Aaron Cresswell (West Ham United wins a free kick in the defensive half.
66:29 Fabio Borini (Liverpool wins a free kick on the right wing.
66:29 Foul by Winston Reid (West Ham United).
65:42 Booking Carl Jenkinson (West Ham United is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.
65:34 Alberto Moreno (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing.
65:34 Foul by Carl Jenkinson (West Ham United).
63:38 Attempt saved. Fabio Borini (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom right corner. Assisted by Jordan Henderson.
61:46 Fabio Borini (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
61:46 Foul by James Tomkins (West Ham United).
60:52 Substitution Substitution, West Ham United. Carl Jenkinson replaces Guy Demel.
60:27 Attempt missed. Fabio Borini (Liverpool right footed shot from the left side of the box is too high. Assisted by Alberto Moreno.
59:11 Corner, West Ham United. Conceded by Dejan Lovren.
58:31 Attempt saved. Mario Balotelli (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the top right corner. Assisted by Alberto Moreno.
56:15 Offside, West Ham United. James Tomkins tries a through ball, but Enner Valencia is caught offside.
55:58 Foul by Alberto Moreno (Liverpool).
55:58 Cheikhou Kouyaté (West Ham United wins a free kick in the defensive half.
55:16 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Aaron Cresswell.
54:44 Attempt blocked. Enner Valencia (West Ham United right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Mark Noble.
53:16 Attempt saved. Fabio Borini (Liverpool right footed shot from the right side of the box is saved in the bottom right corner. Assisted by Mario Balotelli.
52:35 Hand ball by Mario Balotelli (Liverpool).
52:15 Alberto Moreno (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
52:15 Foul by Cheikhou Kouyaté (West Ham United).
50:57 Adam Lallana (Liverpool wins a free kick on the right wing.
50:57 Foul by Aaron Cresswell (West Ham United).
50:38 Attempt blocked. Raheem Sterling (Liverpool right footed shot from the right side of the box is blocked.
47:25 Attempt missed. Raheem Sterling (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box misses to the right. Assisted by Adam Lallana.
47:02 Adam Lallana (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
47:02 Foul by Cheikhou Kouyaté (West Ham United).
46:24 Foul by Fabio Borini (Liverpool).
46:24 Guy Demel (West Ham United wins a free kick in the defensive half.
45:00 Second Half begins West Ham United 2, Liverpool 1.
45:00 Substitution Substitution, Liverpool. Adam Lallana replaces Lucas Leiva.
45:00+6:10 Half time First Half ends, West Ham United 2, Liverpool 1.
45:00+5:39 Corner, West Ham United. Conceded by Mamadou Sakho.
45:00+5:30 Attempt blocked. Enner Valencia (West Ham United right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by James Tomkins.
45:00+4:14 Corner, West Ham United. Conceded by Mario Balotelli.
45:00+4:12 Attempt blocked. Enner Valencia (West Ham United right footed shot from outside the box is blocked.
45:00+3:04 Hand ball by Mamadou Sakho (Liverpool).
45:00+2:17 Foul by Fabio Borini (Liverpool).
45:00+2:17 Cheikhou Kouyaté (West Ham United wins a free kick in the defensive half.
45:00+0:48 Raheem Sterling (Liverpool wins a free kick on the right wing.
45:00+0:48 Foul by Alexandre Song (West Ham United).
43:35 Alberto Moreno (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing.
43:35 Foul by Guy Demel (West Ham United).

42:56 Attempt missed. James Tomkins (West Ham United header from the centre of the box misses to the left. Assisted by Mark Noble with a cross following a corner.
42:27 Corner, West Ham United. Conceded by Dejan Lovren.
40:51 Attempt saved. Enner Valencia (West Ham United left footed shot from the left side of the box is saved in the bottom left corner. Assisted by Stewart Downing.
40:02 Alberto Moreno (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
40:02 Foul by Diafra Sakho (West Ham United).
38:28 Delay over. They are ready to continue.
34:41 Delay in match Dejan Lovren (Liverpool because of an injury.
33:04 Raheem Sterling (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
33:04 Foul by Enner Valencia (West Ham United).
32:36 Corner, West Ham United. Conceded by Simon Mignolet.
32:32 Attempt missed. Enner Valencia (West Ham United right footed shot from outside the box is close, but misses to the right from a direct free kick.
31:39 Foul by Raheem Sterling (Liverpool).
31:39 Stewart Downing (West Ham United wins a free kick in the attacking half.
30:54 Delay over. They are ready to continue.
29:26 Delay in match Cheikhou Kouyaté (West Ham United because of an injury.
27:03 Booking Cheikhou Kouyaté (West Ham United is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.
26:58 Alberto Moreno (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
26:58 Foul by Cheikhou Kouyaté (West Ham United).
25:51 Goal scored Goal! Goal! West Ham United 2, Liverpool 1. Raheem Sterling (Liverpool right footed shot from the right side of the box to the bottom left corner.
25:47 Attempt blocked. Mario Balotelli (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Jordan Henderson with a cross.
25:04 Delay over. They are ready to continue.
24:02 Delay in match Enner Valencia (West Ham United because of an injury.
21:27 Substitution Substitution, Liverpool. Mamadou Sakho replaces Javier Manquillo.
20:01 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Mark Noble.
19:58 Attempt blocked. Raheem Sterling (Liverpool right footed shot from the left side of the box is blocked. Assisted by Fabio Borini.
18:23 Corner, West Ham United. Conceded by Javier Manquillo.
16:50 Booking Adrián (West Ham United is shown the yellow card.
16:45 Booking Mario Balotelli (Liverpool is shown the yellow card.
16:08 Foul by Mario Balotelli (Liverpool).
16:08 Adrián (West Ham United wins a free kick in the defensive half.
15:33 Attempt saved. Stewart Downing (West Ham United left footed shot from outside the box is saved in the top centre of the goal. Assisted by Alexandre Song.
15:23 Foul by Lucas Leiva (Liverpool).
15:23 Alexandre Song (West Ham United wins a free kick in the defensive half.
12:32 Attempt saved. Enner Valencia (West Ham United header from a difficult angle on the left is saved in the bottom left corner. Assisted by Aaron Cresswell.
11:53 Corner, West Ham United. Conceded by Simon Mignolet.
11:50 Attempt saved. Aaron Cresswell (West Ham United left footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom right corner. Assisted by Stewart Downing.
10:28 Mario Balotelli (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
10:28 Foul by James Tomkins (West Ham United).
8:57 Foul by Diafra Sakho (West Ham United).
8:57 Alberto Moreno (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
6:41 Goal scored Goal! Goal! West Ham United 2, Liverpool 0. Diafra Sakho (West Ham United right footed shot from the right side of the box to the bottom left corner. Assisted by Mark Noble.
3:14 Booking Winston Reid (West Ham United is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.
3:00 Foul by Winston Reid (West Ham United).
3:00 Fabio Borini (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
1:17 Goal scored Goal! Goal! West Ham United 1, Liverpool 0. Winston Reid (West Ham United header from very close range to the centre of the goal. Assisted by James Tomkins with a headed pass following a set piece situation.
0:46 Stewart Downing (West Ham United wins a free kick on the right wing.
0:46 Foul by Alberto Moreno (Liverpool).
0:00 First Half begins.
0:00 Lineups are announced and players are warming up.