

Date: 29 December 2014
 Opposition: Swansea City
 Competition: League

Times	Telegraph	Echo
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THE TIMES

No striker, no problem as Liverpool hit goal trail
 Liverpool 4 Moreno 33, Lallana 51, 61, Shelvey (og) 69
 Swansea City 1 Sigurdsson 52

A fortnight ago, with Liverpool in the midst of a malaise that threatened their season, Brendan Rodgers claimed that a return to the standards set in the past 12 months was not far off. At the time, it might have seemed fanciful, but last night his team made good on his prediction with a resounding victory over Swansea City, their biggest for eight months, which suggested a long overdue recovery could be under way. The green shoots were not just restricted to the Anfield pitch, treated over the past week after Rodgers criticised its state after the 2-2 draw with Arsenal, with Adam Lallana at the heart of an improved performance, albeit one that came against a Swansea side who wilted in the second half. Lallana scored twice in between a goal from Alberto Moreno and Jonjo Shelvey's own goal as Liverpool rediscovered some of the attacking style that had deserted them. They remain less than solid defensively, as shown by Gylfi Sigurdsson's consolation, but in terms of their style of play, this was much more in keeping with what we have come to expect of a Rodgers side.

The manager used the visit of his former club as a chance to rest three of those he has relied on most often with Steven Gerrard, Kolo Toure and Lazar Markovic replaced by Javier Manquillo, Emre Can and Moreno.

Swansea were on the back foot straightaway as Liverpool, prompted by Jordan Henderson in central midfield, took the game to them from the outset.

Martin Skrtel was the first to test Lukasz Fabianski with a towering header from Henderson's corner that the Swansea goalkeeper did well to hold, and his handling was once again evident when Philippe Coutinho tried his luck from the edge of the area. In between, Fabianski excelled with a sharp save to deny Raheem Sterling. With Swansea sitting deep, Garry Monk ordered his players to push up despite the risk of leaving space for Sterling to run into, and in doing so their midfield became more competitive, Jonjo Shelvey, the former Liverpool player, and Leon Britton at least restricting Henderson's influence. In turn, that brought Swansea into the game with their two wide players, Nathan Dyer and Wayne Routledge, starting to pose problems.

After a promising start, Liverpool, who had scored nine goals in their past nine games at Anfield, had gone back into their shell but despite having grown into the game, Swansea were also struggling to assert themselves in the final third. The stalemate made for poor fare on a bitter December night.

That changed just past the half-hour mark, when Liverpool rediscovered their sense of adventure and in found a way past the defence. The move started by Mignolet culminated ten seconds later with Moreno scoring his second goal for the club, as the wing back smuggled the ball in from close range.

It was what happened in between, though, that will have pleased Rodgers most as Liverpool opened Swansea up with clever passing involving Mamadou Sakho, Moreno and Adam Lallana, before Henderson picked the Spaniard out inside the six-yard box. After Coutinho had another shot saved by Fabianski, Shelvey attempted to add some drive at the other end, only for his slalom run to be ended by Can and Henderson. Shelvey, who had been taken to task by Monk beforehand for picking up bookings through laziness, then put himself even more in his manager's line of fire with an elbow on Can that was missed by Andre Marriner, the referee, but could attract the attention of the FA. It required another smart save from Fabianski to ensure that Swansea went in at the interval trailing by only one goal as he parried Coutinho's piledriver. Liverpool still had time to create another opportunity, Skrtel's volley being blocked by the Swansea defence.

The second half began in slapstick fashion with a comedy booking followed by a farcical goal. Skrtel was on the receiving end of the yellow card, his fifth of the season necessitating a one-match ban, for holding on to Routledge's shorts to such an extent that the winger was forced to change them. Any embarrassment that he felt at having to strip to his underwear in front of almost 45,000 people was nothing compared with that experienced by Fabianski, though.

A routine backpass from Ashley Williams should have caused Fabianski no problem, but instead of clearing, the Poland goalkeeper opted for a crossfield pass and succeeded only in firing the ball against Lallana with the rebound taking it into the goal at the Kop end. From Liverpool's point of view, the goal was testament to their recently rediscovered pressing game, but it was a horrible one to concede. The same applied to the goal that brought Swansea back into the game less than a minute after going 2-0 down as they took advantage of Liverpool's fear of crosses. After first failing to deal with Dyer's ball into the area, Liverpool made matters worse when Sakho met Routledge's cross with a header that allowed Gylfi Sigurdsson to reduce the arrears from close range.

Sterling then ended another move with a shot against the inside of a post. But, having survived that scare, Swansea failed to emerge from the next one as Lallana latched on to Coutinho's flick and danced around two challenges from Fernandez and Rangel before beating Fabianski with a low finish that restored Liverpool's two-goal lead. All of a sudden, in their final game of the year, Liverpool were looking like the team that lit up Anfield in the opening months of 2014. They did not need any help from Swansea but they got some anyway with Shelvey glancing Henderson's corner past Fabianski to record his second own goal against his former club. Bafetimbi Gomis struck the bar with a curling effort, but with the three points secured by then, Rodgers's greatest concern is likely to be another strike which saw Sterling make contact with Fernandez's face; another incident

worthy of possible FA intervention.

Liverpool (3-4-2-1): S Mignolet -- E Can, M Skrtel, M Sakho -- J Manquillo, L Leiva, J Henderson, A Moreno -- A Lallana (sub: L Markovic, 77min) P Coutinho (sub: F Borini, 90) -- R Sterling (sub: M Balotelli, 83).

Substitutes not used: D Ward, K Toure, S Gerrard, R Lambert. Booked: Skrtel. Swansea City (4-2-3-1): L Fabianski -- A Richards (sub: A Rangel, 46), F Fernandez, A Williams, N Taylor -- L Britton (sub: Ki Sung Yeung, 67), J Shelvey -- N Dyer, G Sigurdsson, W Routledge -- W Bony (sub: B Gomis, 62). Substitutes not used: G Tremmel, M Emnes, T Carroll, K Bartley.

Referee: A Marriner.

the guardian

Lallana's double gives Rodgers and Liverpool breathing space

Liverpool ended 2014 as they began it. Their defence can still cause palpitations from the most harmless situations but, more importantly for Brendan Rodgers, the relentless attacking threat that underpinned their title challenge and then went awol made its return against Swansea City.

Garry Monk's men, like so many at Anfield last season, struggled to find a solution. Swansea contributed to their own demise with Lukasz Fabianski handing one goal to Adam Lallana and Jonjo Shelvey completing the scoring for his former club. There could be further punishment for the Swansea midfielder from the Football Association after he threw an arm into the face of Emre Can. Liverpool's Raheem Sterling, too, may be sweating for raising a hand to his provocateur Federico Fernandez, but otherwise this was a performance to savour from the forward triumvirate of Sterling, Lallana and Philippe Coutinho.

All three displayed the movement, touch and creativity that Rodgers' team have lacked without Luis Suarez and Daniel Sturridge and were at the heart of several sweeping moves that illustrated how confidence is returning at Anfield. Lallana finished off the best in style, his gradual improvement indicative of that belief now flowing through the Liverpool team.

Rodgers said: "In the last two or three weeks the performance level has been much closer to what we were over the last 18 months. A lot of hours have gone into finding a tactical idea that allows us to get back to that. Apart from a ridiculous spell after we scored the second goal when we gave the ball away cheaply, conceded one and did our best to give them another goal, it was a real dominant performance."

Liverpool rarely allowed Swansea out of their own half before the interval as they controlled proceedings and tested Fabianski through Martin Skrtel, who collected a fifth booking of the season and will miss Leicester City's visit on New Year's Day, Sterling and Coutinho. The Germany Under-21 midfielder Can started in central defence and was not flustered until being smacked in the face by Shelvey's flailing arm. Shelvey had been told before the game by his manager to "wise up" against needless bookings. He is not one for taking advice.

Sterling's indiscretion was not as dangerous but the match officials missed both incidents and retrospective action may follow. Rodgers said: "I have seen the incidents. The cameras will probably show them 100 times and we will get bored of watching it. I think the referee called both right and got on with the game."

Liverpool took the lead through one of many incisive attacks. Mamadou Sakho sent Alberto Moreno scurrying down the left, he found Lallana, who in turn released Jordan Henderson to the byline. Moreno continued his run into the penalty area and converted from close range when the cross arrived despite Fabianski's best efforts. Swansea's chances of recovery were dashed by a comical error. The former Arsenal goalkeeper was presented with what should have been a routine clearance by Ashley Williams' back-pass. Instead, and seemingly oblivious to the in-rushing Lallana, he attempted to sweep the ball out wide and succeeded only in hitting the Liverpool player who reeled away in delight as the ball dropped into the unguarded net.

Liverpool's hopes of a second successive clean sheet were extinguished within a minute when Can and Sakho failed to clear crosses and Gylfi Sigurdsson buried a simple finish. But with Lallana and Coutinho in confident mood, Liverpool regained absolute control.

Lallana's second goal of the night, Liverpool's third, was outstanding. Henderson played a simple pass to Coutinho who sent the pounds 25m summer signing sprinting through the centre with an exquisite backheel. Lallana drifted away from Fernandez and Angel Rangel before burying a fine finish into the far corner.

Liverpool's fourth completed a miserable return to Merseyside for Shelvey, who glanced Henderson's corner to the near post beyond his own goalkeeper and into the far side of the Swansea net. Monk looked on aghast at Swansea's latest act of self-destruction but this was a night when Liverpool recaptured their flair.

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The Mail

ADAM'S DOUBLE DELIGHT; Lallana rides his luck then Shelvey own goal caps it for Reds

A SECOND win in as many games, featuring two vastly different finishes by Adam Lallana, gave Liverpool some much needed momentum at the end of a difficult few months for Brendan Rodgers and his team.

They remain some way off the side that returned to the top of the Barclays Premier League last Christmas only to slip up, quite literally, and allow Manchester City to take the title.

Indeed, had it not been for a below-par performance from Swansea, victory might have been rather harder to come by, particularly as the deployment of Raheem Sterling as a lone striker is not working terribly well against strong defenders like Ashley Williams and Federico Fernandez.

But Rodgers will be satisfied with the way his side dominated large parts of this encounter, particularly in a midfield area missing Steven Gerrard.

Liverpool's manager is unlikely to declare wins against Burnley and Swansea a turning point, and he is unlikely to declare his players capable of thriving without the presence of their talismanic captain.

What will please him, though, is the way his team went about their business last night -- notably a work ethic that was epitomised last season by Luis Suarez and that finally seems to be evident in the players having to step up following his departure.

Alberto Moreno had a marvellous game as a wingback but it was Philippe Coutinho, Jordan Henderson and Lallana who shone. Liverpool's second goal was a reward for that endeavour, even if Lukasz Fabianski will have nightmares about his clearance kick that bounced off the advancing Lallana and spun freakishly into the net.

The fact that Swansea responded as quickly as they did, Gylfi Sigurdsson seizing on a mistake by Mamadou Sakho within a minute to reduce the deficit, might have concerned Rodgers.

But then came a wonderful goal from Lallana, sparked by the combined skill of Coutinho and Henderson but still owing much to the England forward's ability to beat two defenders. Shelvey then completed a miserable night by meeting Henderson's corner with a glancing header that flew beyond the reach of Fabianski.

Rodgers seemed to be taking something of a gamble, and not just because of Emre Can's selection as a member of three-man defence after a decent showing there against Burnley. It was the three other changes, among them the omission once again of the ageing Gerrard, that made you wonder if it was wise when his team needs a bit of continuity.

That said, Liverpool started brightly enough even if their supporters seemed a little subdued. The first chance fell to Martin Skrtel, who met a corner from Henderson with a header that went straight to Fabianski.

They went closer still when Sterling brought the best out of Fabianski with a thumping volley after a neat one-two with Moreno, and Lallana then seized on the rebound only to direct his effort some distance over the bar.

Still Liverpool dominated, and Coutinho would be next to test Fabianski, albeit meekly.

Swansea were offering little in response, with Wilfried Bony relegated to the role of spectator while the home side continued to press. Coutinho tried his luck again, finding more power but this time lacking accuracy.

A delightful flick from Coutinho that was designed to send Sterling clear demanded a strong, athletic response from Fernandez, who did well to hold off Liverpool's makeshift centre forward.

When Swansea did have possession, Liverpool did a fine job of pressing them and closing down the space. It was enough to draw applause from Rodgers. What they continued to lack, though, was a commanding presence in attack, a player who could give Swansea's defenders more to think about than Sterling could provoke.

In Moreno, however, they had their solution, the wingback finishing a move he began with a close-range 33rd minute finish. Most impressive was the fact that Moreno continued his run after passing to Lallana, who in turn moved the ball out to the opposite flank where Henderson was perfectly positioned to find the advancing Spaniard with his cross.

Lifted by their lead, Liverpool nearly scored again within a minute when Coutinho forced Fabianski to save well at his near post.

Swansea did not respond well. Or more to the point Jonjo Shelvey did not respond well. Having been warned by his manager for collecting needless bookings, he might well have earned himself a red card had Andre Marriner seen him lash out at Can with what looked like a wild elbow in the face.

At the opposite end Coutinho continued to impress, turning smartly at one stage on a ball from Sakho before unleashing a shot Fabianski had to parry to safety. Swansea were better immediately after the break, only to go 2-0 down with the mistake by Fabianski that saw Lallana score inadvertently.

In fairness to the Welsh side, they did then threaten an upset when Sakho, under pressure from Bony, diverted Wayne Routledge's cross for Sigurdsson to make it 2-1. But in a frantic 10-minute spell, Sterling saw one effort bounce off a post before Lallana finished quite brilliantly, with Shelvey adding a fourth for his old club in the 69th minute.

The Daily Telegraph

Classy Lallana tears Swans apart

Liverpool 4 Moreno 33, Lallana 51, 61, Shelvey 69 og
Swansea City 1 Sigurdsson 52

Att: 44,714

It was tough to work out which was more audible at Anfield; the echo of Adam Lallana's name from the Kop or the sighs of relief from Liverpool's recruitment staff. Six months on from their much maligned PS120 million spending spree, there are encouraging signs of returns on the heavy investment, with Lallana's double in a comprehensive win against Swansea further evidence that something may yet grow from the magic beans.

Lallana has looked the archetypal Liverpool player since the day he signed, his balance, poise and search for a penetrating pass always making it a case of when rather than if he would settle, but this was his finest night so far in a red jersey.

His second goal in particular, in which he eased his way past two Swansea defenders before picking his spot, was a fitting way for Anfield to bid farewell to 2014, a year in which an absent friend left his mark with goals of similar quality before injury and a PS75million transfer fee took him elsewhere.

Lallana will never be Luis Suarez, but he gets the supporters on their feet when he is in this mood and has been as influential as anyone in Liverpool's upturn.

Lallana is not the only new boy who is looking better. Rodgers has spent six months working out how to utilise his eight signings, and in recent times has found they are more effective in unfamiliar positions. Those square pegs look comfortable in the round holes.

Although back on the bench here, Lazar Markovic impressed at wingback against Arsenal, and now German midfielder Emre Can finds himself cast as a ball-playing centre-half. Pretty accomplished he looked for most of the evening too, his ability to find a pass from the back defining the Rodgers blueprint. "When I watched Emre last year, one of the games, I travelled to Hamburg, he was playing as a centre-half in a 4-2-3-1. You see his presence," Rodgers said.

Can's only blemish was a misjudgment in the build-up to Gylfi Sigurdsson's goal, but if he proves to be capable when repelling attacks he could turn out to be the defender Dejan Lovren was meant to be.

Alberto Moreno, who scored the first, is also improving in a new wingback role. What most encouraged the Kop was the fluency of Liverpool's play, much more in tune with what they were witnessing in the early stages of 2014 rather than the turgid past six months. "The last two or three weeks the performance level has been much more what we were over the course of the last 18 months," Rodgers said.

"A lot of work, a lot of hours have gone in to find a tactical idea to get back to that. It was a real dominant performance apart from a ridiculous spell of seven minutes when we scored the second goal and gave the ball away cheaply, conceded and did our best to give them another goal."

Lallana, Philippe Coutinho and Raheem Sterling provide the creative energy, the Brazilian relishing the open spaces that his colleagues create with tireless running off the ball. Swansea keeper Lukasz Fabianski made his first save from Martin Skrtel's sixth-minute header. It set the tone as Liverpool's speed and penetration brought the thrill factor back.

Liverpool were deservedly ahead after Moreno's attacking instinct carried him from deep in his half into Swansea's six-yard box after 33 minutes. It was an excellent passing move, starting with Mamadou Sakho and continuing with an exchange between Coutinho and Lallana.

Henderson overlapped and crossed for the marauding Spaniard, who could not miss despite Fabianski's best efforts.

It was no surprise when Garry Monk made a half-time change - Angel Rangel replaced Ashley Richards - although by then the visitors were fortunate not to be a man down.

Shelvey, a former Liverpool mid-fielder, threw his elbow at Can in full view of the Kop, but it was not visible to referee Andre Marriner. A studios FA disciplinary panel may take a different view of the incident over the next few days. Sterling will be equally hopeful that a wayward throw of the hand at Federico Fernandez is overlooked, too.

Swansea had barely readjusted to Monk's half-time changes when they found themselves two down in comical circumstances - a shocker from Fabianski on 51 minutes. Closed down by Lallana, the Pole inexplicably rifled his clearance at the approaching midfielder and it rebounded into the empty net.

The hosts duly obliged with a gift of their own a minute after doubling their lead. Sakho's poor header found Sigurdsson six yards out and Anfield was edgy once more.

The difference to earlier in the season is Liverpool are punishing teams again. Sterling hit the post after another blistering counter-attack and Lallana grabbed his second in the most elegant manner on 62 minutes, pouncing on Coutinho's flick and gliding past the Swansea defence.

Shelvey's Anfield return deteriorated when he headed Henderson's corner into his own net for Liverpool's fourth. All that was left was for the manager to choreograph the applause for his outstanding performers, Lallana, Sterling and Coutinho, removed early for maximum appreciation.

It bodes well for Liverpool's topfour aspirations.

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THE INDEPENDENT

Lallana sweeps aside the anxiety as Reds light up

Before the light goes out on an extraordinary year for Liverpool - of which it would be an understatement to say there have been highs and lows - here was a reminder that all is not necessarily lost.

This is a club who scored 71 home goals last season, the second best in the Premier League, but who had managed only 18, the division's worst tally, before last night and went into the fixture with nine joint top scorers - all on a tally of one. Brendan Rodgers promised it would take time for them to come good and this display and their first four-goal haul since the annihilation of Tottenham, last March, which suggested at the time that they might be champions, offers fragile hope. Rodgers has searched for answers, chopped, changed and agonised, but in Liverpool's third goal the colour, energy, intelligence and pace of 2014 was recast in his 3-4-3 system. A Philippe Coutinho backheel into the path of Adam Lallana, who burst past around the Swansea defence to score, was a fitting combination from the two players who had lit up the night. Lallana's emergence as the prime beneficiary of the new system provides most promise.

Every Anfield fixture these days seems to remind Liverpool of the powers they once possessed, now have lost. Swansea at home last February was another of those fixtures they took by storm - 2-0 up inside 20 minutes, before that perennially shaky defence of theirs gave way and they needed to score four to win narrowly. That was the Swansea manager Garry Monk's first game at the helm and though he looks every inch the Rodgers prot[c]g[c] - he has even got the Northern Irishman's hand signals off pat - Rodgers did not anticipate meeting him in a position where he was three points behind the Welsh club, 10 long months later. An anxiety brooded on the cold Merseyside night as Rodgers fielded a goalkeeper, Simon Mignolet, who had come up with that bizarre suggestion, pre-match, that he had nothing to prove, starting his first game since he was dropped for his side's journey into Old Trafford. Jamie Carragher had it right on that point. "He's got everything to prove," he said. "Not just his Liverpool career but his whole future." But Liverpool did not find need of him and neither, for once, was their talisman a requirement. There has been a tendency when Rodgers has dropped Steven Gerrard to the bench - as he did last night - for the side to look uncertain, fragile and in need of him, though this time was different. It was Gerrard who looked to be in an alien place, heading off up the touchline for a run and forgetting his bib, which he went back to fetch, while Liverpool revealed that the fluidity of their display against Arsenal nine days ago was no fluke.

The passing and movement was crisp and quick from the beginning, with the front line of Raheem Sterling, Lallana and Coutinho working together impressively and ambitiously, but it was Liverpool's willingness to play a different way that was also striking. Passing the ball through from end to end - the Rodgers' mantra - has not been possible this season, with opponents willing to press Liverpool harder, and the long diagonal pass, bypassing the centre, was a device that Rodgers was willing to let his players try this time. The game was nine minutes old when Emre Can, on the right-hand side of Liverpool's three-man defence executed a 50-yard pass that Coutinho slipped off to Alberto Moreno, whose first touch took it over the dead ball line when the goal might have opened up.

The same diagonal line of attack, again converted into a threat by Coutinho's imagination, almost took Sterling in to score. Can's coolness in the back line will have encouraged Rodgers and though Martin Skrtel's booking means he will miss Thursday's match against Leicester City here, it was his beautiful jump from a Jordan Henderson corner that forced Lukasz Fabianski to save sharply at head height. The nervousness vanished and nothing could contain Liverpool as Moreno created and finished the opening goal - advancing on to short ball from Mamadou Sakho, delivering sharply to Lallana and advancing to send the low cross from Henderson into the net. The technique was impeccable. The cross was at pace and it would have been easy for Moreno to put the ball over.

Jonjo Shelvey was lucky to avoid dismissal for throwing a hand into Can's face. It was 45 minutes before Mignolet was required to do so much and come to collect a high ball and the Anfield cheers came out of relief, not irony.

The irony was located in Monk, not Rodgers, being the manager with reasons to curse a goalkeeper. For all that he has had to thank Fabianski for in the past few days - key saves against Aston Villa and Hull City - the goalkeeper was culpable when Liverpool doubled their advantage six minutes into the second half, driving a dangerous back pass into the right shoulder of Lallana and watching as it sailed into the net. A two-goal lead offers no more certainty for Liverpool now than it did last February and there were echoes of the sides' last encounter when the obligatory central defensive mistake from the back line handed Swansea an equaliser. Sakho panicked under a Wayne Routledge cross, with Wilfried Bony threatening on his shoulder as Swansea displayed more intent, and sent the ball straight to Gylfi Sigurdsson, who slammed it home. An unconvincing Mignolet stop from Sigurdsson moments later created a momentary sense that catastrophe lurked but then came the virtuoso goal which sent Lallana's name echoing around Anfield. Fabianski allowed Liverpool to breathe completely. His faulty positioning from Henderson's corner just beyond the hour allowed the ball to skid off Shelvey's head and into the net. Both sides would hit the woodwork, with substitute Baf[c]timbi Gomis crashing against the stanchion between post and bar, but at last in this desperate season, Liverpool could justifiably say that they were imperious.

DAILY MIRROR

REDS TURN A CORNER

WHISPER it quietly, but an Adam Lallana-inspired Liverpool offered a hint of new hope as the New Year approaches.

The PS26million summer signing scored twice to not only quash a menacing second-half Swansea revival, but help his side record more than two goals at home for the first time this season.

It could even suggest the Reds are beginning to rediscover their old swagger. For all their well-recorded struggles in front of goal, Liverpool were good value for their convincing scoreline, and could easily have dismissed the Welsh visitors with even more authority, given the chances they created.

It will please boss Brendan Rodgers massively, not least because his bold decision barely a fortnight ago to abandon a more defensive approach and return to the ambitious, attacking play which made his name, has finally paid dividends.

And how. Lallana's two goals mean he becomes the first Liverpool player to score more than one in the league at Anfield this season, a startling statistic which illustrates how difficult they have found it in front of goal.

Here, orchestrated by the magic of Philippe Coutinho in midfield, Liverpool dominated the game, and scored almost at will, after a fine first-half goal from Alberto Moreno set the tone.

His close-range strike after a brilliant run opened up a game cagey until that point... which then exploded after the break, as Garry Monk's men ventured forward themselves with more ambition.

First Lallana profited from some outrageous fortune - though forced by his own willingness to work - when he closed down visiting keeper Lukasz Fabianski and saw the attempted clearance cannon from his shoulder into the empty net. Almost immediately Swansea struck back when the otherwise impressive Emre Can missed a cross and one-time Liverpool target Gylfi Sigurdsson profited from close range.

The Welsh side could have been level a minute later when Simon Mignolet belied the pressure he is under with a fine save from Wilfried Bony, and it was Lallana who plunged the knife into the visitors, with his second on 61 minutes.

It was the goal of the night too, a ghosting run aided by the unselfish work of the again impressive Raheem Sterling, took him into the box, and he finished in emphatic style. Incredibly, it came after Sterling had hit the post in a mad four minutes which could easily have delivered four goals.

Lallana's contribution was the defining influence, settling down his side as they nervously faced the Swansea revival, and a fourth settled the game, when Jordan Henderson's corner was headed into his own net by Jonjo Shelvey.

It was poetic justice of sorts, because he shouldn't have been on the pitch, after crassly ignoring his manager's demand to grow up with what looked like a swinging elbow into the face of Can, that may still be dealt with retrospectively by the FA.

Moreno's goal offered an insight into how Liverpool are an interesting study in football momentum right now. They dominated the opening half, and deserved the lead.

Yet the general air around Anfield before the game - and even after he scored - was subdued, almost apprehensive, fuelling the idea these are troubled times here.

Yet they entered this contest on a run of just one defeat in their last nine games, which hardly suggests there is a fundamental crisis gripping the club.

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It was almost as though the last four months hadn't happened. Liverpool FC recalled the spirit of their title challenge as they signed off a rollercoaster year with a thrilling, emphatic victory. And with it came further evidence Brendan Rodgers' optimism of a top-four challenge may not be misplaced. The Reds delivered their most dominant Anfield performance of the campaign by dismissing Swansea City 4-1 to move ahead of the visitors in the Premier League table.

Two goals from Adam Lallana – his first-ever brace in the top flight – helped ensure the Reds have now lost just one of their last 10 games and stand only five points adrift of the Champions League places at the halfway point of the season. Following narrow victory at Burnley on Boxing Day, Christmas has thus far been merry for Rodgers and his players, who will complete their festive campaign at home to rock bottom Leicester City on New Year's Day.

Of course, there was the obligatory haphazard defending that allowed Gylfi Sigurdsson to give Swansea a brief glimmer of an unlikely comeback.

But having been set on their way by Alberto Moreno's well-crafted opener, an own goal from Jonjo Shelvey completed Liverpool's rout.

Finally, things are starting to click for the Reds.

Passes found their mark, players hunted in packs and there was a real energy and conviction absent for much of the early months.

Lallana impressed, but he wasn't alone. Raheem Sterling again buzzed with intent up front, Jordan Henderson was far more influential in a preferred central midfield role while the rejuvenated Philippe Coutinho posted his best display in months. Rodgers, mindful of the hectic festive schedule, rotated his resources with Javier Manquillo and Moreno returning to the flanks, allowing Henderson to step inside in place of the benched Steven Gerrard.

Simon Mignolet remained in goal after replacing the injured Brad Jones at Burnley, and Emre Can's impressive second-half cameo at Turf Moor earned only a fifth Liverpool start. And following the alarmingly lacklustre first half at Burnley, Liverpool's lively opening was a welcome return to the showing against Arsenal in their last home outing. After Sterling forced a corner, Martin Skrtel rose above Federico Fernandez to meet Henderson's deep delivery but powered his header straight at Swansea goalkeeper Lukasz Fabianski.

The Reds came closer in the 13 minute. Sterling released Moreno down the left and then raced into the box to meet the Spaniard's low cross with a fierce shot parried out by Fabianski. Manquillo kept the bobbling ball alive but Lallana should have done better than blasting over from 12 yards.

Coutinho then shot at Fabianski as Liverpool continued to probe, the Brazilian curling an ambitious effort wide and then close to releasing Sterling for a carbon copy of the winner against Burnley. Swansea offered little in response, having to wait until the half-hour to fashion their first semblance of a chance when Mignolet comfortably handled a Nathan Dyer header from a deep Neil Taylor cross. If a gentle reminder Liverpool needed to capitalise on their dominance, it was one they almost instantly heeded by finding the breakthrough three minutes later with a goal that owed everything to Moreno's attacking instincts.

Found well by Mamadou Sakho down the left, the wing-back raced forward and, with ball having been fed right through Lallana to Henderson, continued his run to meet the latter's excellent low cross and smash home off the diving Fabianski.

The Reds could have furthered their lead before the interval, the impressive Coutinho warming the palms of Fabianski with a thunderous shot and the Swans defence blocking Skrtel's goalbound volley from a Henderson corner.

Swansea were fortunate to end the half with 10 men, referee Andre Marriner somehow missing a clear elbow by former Reds midfielder Jonjo Shelvey into the face of Can. Skrtel, though, was the first person to be cautioned shortly after the break following a less than subtle foul on Wayne Routledge, a fifth booking of the campaign ruling him out of the Leicester game.

Then the game exploded into life. Liverpool doubled their advantage in farcical circumstances on 51 minutes when Fabianski received an Ashley Williams backpass and smashed his clearance against the approaching Lallana, the ball looping into the empty net. But the Reds were immediately undone by more comedy defending. Can failed to cut out a long ball to Routledge, the Swans winger crossed and Sakho challenged Bony but could only direct into the path of Sigurdsson who finished from two yards.

From the kick-off, Mignolet made a good save to keep out Bony's shot and, from a subsequent lightning break, Henderson crossed from the right for Sterling to direct an effort against the inside of Fabianski's post.

If Lallana's first goal was fortunate, his second on 61 minutes was sheer brilliance.

Found by Coutinho's delicious backheel flick from a Henderson pass, Lallana drifted left into the box, danced beyond two defenders and finished into the bottom corner. After a brilliant tackle by Williams denied Can netting Liverpool's fourth, Shelvey obliged on 69 minutes when he met Henderson's corner at the near post and flicked the ball into his own net.

That was that. Sterling was involved in an unseemly spat with Fernandez that could have seen both players disciplined, while Swansea substitute Bafetimbi Gomis hit the post.

For a delighted home crowd, this was much more like it.

South Wales Evening Post

ADAM Lallana scored twice as Liverpool defeated Swansea City 4-1 at Anfield.

It was a tough night for Swansea, who stayed in the game for an hour.

But ultimately they were picked apart by a Liverpool side who have not had too many more enjoyable nights than this throughout their difficult campaign. Jonjo Shelvey kept his place despite Monk's stinging pre-message to the midfielder over the need for him to wise up.

For a while Shelvey responded positively, looking after the ball as well as anyone in white, but he blotted his copybook when his flailing arm caught Emre Can. Referee Andre Marriner gave nothing. Swansea must wait to see whether the Football Association take action.

Perhaps Shelvey was getting frustrated, for Monk's men struggled to find much fluency in a first half in which Liverpool deservedly took the lead.

There were plenty of early warning signs as Swansea struggled on the ball and did not close their hosts down when out of possession.

Martin Skrtel threatened first, climbing high at the far post only to head straight at Lukasz Fabianski.

Swansea's goalkeeper was soon in action again, blocking Raheem Sterling's close-range volley after Alberto Moreno had advanced down the left.

The rebound fell kindly for Adam Lallana, but he scooped wastefully over the bar. This Liverpool may not have the goals of Luis Suarez and Daniel Sturridge, but Swansea were still struggling to smother the home threats.

Philippe Coutinho was enjoying himself, rattling a shot across the face before Neil Taylor led a rare Swansea counter.

Nathan Dyer did well to meet his centre ahead of Moreno, but the winger's header flew straight into the arms of Simon Mignolet.

Swansea were failing to test Liverpool's ailing keeper as much as they would have liked, as highlighted when Wilfried Bony's long-range drive sailed high into the Kop.

Liverpool looked much more menacing, and got the goal they deserved when Moreno surged down the left.

He cut the ball inside for Lallana, who swept it right for Jordan Henderson.

His cross was perfect for the galloping Moreno, who just did enough to beat Fabianski from point-blank range.

Swansea were wobbling now, and things might have got worse before the break but for the alertness of their in-form No. 1.

First Fabianski pawed out Coutinho's near-post shot, then he beat away a fierce drive from the Brazilian.

Swansea improved at the start of the second half, Bony heading too close to Mignolet, but their hopes of a comeback took a self-inflicted blow when Fabianski made his first error since leaving Arsenal.

Rather than clearing his lines, the Pole tried to pick out a team-mate and only succeeded in driving the ball straight at Lallana.

Cruelly, it ricocheted into the Swansea net.

Monk's side might now have folded, yet to their credit, they were back in the contest within a minute.

Dyer crossed deep for Routledge, and his centre was headed straight to Gylfi Sigurdsson by Mamadou Sakho.

The Icelander made no mistake, sweeping the ball home from close range.

Now Liverpool were rocking, and Sakho's loose ball presented Bony with a chance straight from the kick-off. The Ivorian's shot was fierce, but Mignolet saved Liverpool.

Last season's runners-up were soon on the front foot again in what was suddenly a wide open contest.

Raheem Sterling might have capped a rapid counter with a third home goal, but his shot came back off the post.

Lallana made no such mistake when Coutinho's classy backheel opened Swansea up, the £25 million former Southampton man rolling a shot into the bottom corner of Fabianski's net.

Now Swansea looked beaten — but there was more pain to come.

Shelvey, who always seems to be the focus when facing his old employers, killed off any slim hopes of a revival by heading Henderson's corner into his own net.

Substitute Bafetimbi Gomis was unfortunate not to get one back late on, when his measured shot came back off the bar.

But by then Swansea were beaten. Well beaten, in truth.

Date: 29 December 2014
 Opposition: Swansea City
 Competition: League

Times	Telegraph	Echo
Guardian	Mirror	South Wales Post
Independent	Mail	BBC

29 December
2014



Liverpool moved to within five points of the top four as their recent upturn in form continued with an emphatic victory over Swansea at Anfield.

The home side took the lead through Alberto Moreno's close-range finish. Adam Lallana made it 2-0 when Lukasz Fabianski's attempted clearance struck him and found the net before Swansea's Gylfi Sigurdsson hit back immediately. But Lallana struck again with a low finish and Jonjo Shelvey's headed own goal from a corner sealed the rout.

It could have been worse for Swansea, with Raheem Sterling striking the post with a shot from an angle and substitute Mario Balotelli drawing a good save from Fabianski with a low drive.

It has been a year of two halves for Liverpool, who began 2014 with drive, purpose and a 16-game unbeaten run to take them to within a whisker of an unexpected Premier League title, but in the last few months have been characterised by doubt and inconsistency.

Aptly, this was a game of two very different halves, with a slow-paced and unmemorable first period giving way to a dynamic and entertaining one after the break.

Liverpool were the better side in both - especially the second - to ensure they end the year with back-to-back victories that lift them up to eighth in the table, five points behind fourth-placed Southampton.

Without the injured Daniel Sturridge, the Reds still lack strength up front, which was most apparent in the stale 33 minutes before Moreno darted into the box to finish Jordan Henderson's low cross to give them the lead.

But, in spreading three of his quickest and most skilful players - Lallana, Sterling and Philippe Coutinho - across the forward line, manager Brendan Rodgers has at least discovered an effective alternative.

And with Henderson and Lucas putting in the hard yards behind them, Rodgers was vindicated in his decision to leave out captain Steven Gerrard, who had started all seven of their previous fixtures this month.

The pick of the bunch was Lallana, who put a poor first-half miss behind him to assert himself decisively on the game.

His first goal owed a lot to fortune, with Fabianski's kick deflecting off him and looping into the net, but it also illustrated his desire through his willingness to close the keeper down in the first place.

In contrast, his second - a decisive blow after Swansea had gained a foot-hold in the game through Sigurdsson's close-range finish to make it 2-1 - was chiefly down to his ability as he collected a neat flick from Coutinho, beat two men and finished low.

The Reds were assisted by Swansea, who have practised the high-tempo, high-pressing game Rodgers is trying to rediscover at Anfield to superb effect this year but were uncharacteristically limp and wasteful in possession.

The visitors' biggest crime was a failure to regularly test home goalkeeper Simon Mignolet, who had been dropped "indefinitely" by Rodgers due to his poor form but was brought back following an injury to his replacement Brad Jones.

Bafetimbi Gomis did strike the bar with an 18-yard shot late on but by then they had already gifted the hosts an unassailable lead through former Liverpool midfielder Shelvey's near-post header into his own net from Henderson's corner. Shelvey was also involved in an incident earlier in the game when he caught Liverpool's Emre Can with a flailing arm.

Afterwards, the 22-year-old tweeted to say that the contact was "unintentional" and that he had apologised to Can.

Liverpool manager Brendan Rodgers: "It was a great performance against a very good side. I felt for the big part of the game we dominated.

"We gave away a poor goal and it goes to 2-1 and they almost score again straight after so that is a frustration. But apart from that spell the work-rate was outstanding and we were really exciting going forward.

"For me it was about getting back to performing well and getting ideas that will help the players play how we want to play. Tonight we were convincing. We have to keep that intensity and work-rate."

Swansea manager Garry Monk: "I think we played OK. We had the most possession, we created chances, but the mistakes we made cost us the game.

"You get punished at this level. We performed OK but those mistakes cost us.

"Lukasz Fabianski has been fantastic this season but every player makes a mistake. You lose as a collective."

Date: 29 December 2014

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29 December
2014



Full time Match ends, Liverpool 4, Swansea City 1.
90:00+3:04 Full time Second Half ends, Liverpool 4, Swansea City 1.
90:00+2:00 Ki Sung-Yueng (Swansea City wins a free kick in the defensive half.
90:00+2:00 Foul by Alberto Moreno (Liverpool).
90:00+0:54 Attempt missed. Bafétimbi Gomis (Swansea City left footed shot from outside the box is close, but misses to the left. Assisted by Angel Rangel.
89:37 Substitution Substitution Substitution, Liverpool. Fabio Borini replaces Philippe Coutinho.
88:48 Attempt saved. Mario Balotelli (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the bottom left corner. Assisted by Lazar Markovic.
87:50 Attempt missed. Wayne Routledge (Swansea City right footed shot from outside the box is just a bit too high. Assisted by Ki Sung-Yueng.
87:00 Attempt missed. Jordan Henderson (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box misses to the left. Assisted by Lazar Markovic.
84:05 Attempt missed. Bafétimbi Gomis (Swansea City right footed shot from the centre of the box misses to the right. Assisted by Angel Rangel with a cross.
83:57 Attempt blocked. Bafétimbi Gomis (Swansea City right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Gylfi Sigurdsson.
82:31 Substitution Substitution Substitution, Liverpool. Mario Balotelli replaces Raheem Sterling.
81:57 Offside, Swansea City. Nathan Dyer tries a through ball, but Bafétimbi Gomis is caught offside.
79:10 Foul by Jonjo Shelvey (Swansea City).
79:10 Jordan Henderson (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
77:57 Attempt missed. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is high and wide to the right.
76:26 Substitution Substitution Substitution, Liverpool. Lazar Markovic replaces Adam Lallana.
75:32 Corner, Swansea City. Conceded by Emre Can.
75:26 Attempt blocked. Ashley Williams (Swansea City header from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Gylfi Sigurdsson with a cross.
75:07 Corner, Swansea City. Conceded by Martin Skrtel.
73:35 Attempt saved. Raheem Sterling (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom left corner. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.
73:01 Offside, Liverpool. Philippe Coutinho tries a through ball, but Raheem Sterling is caught offside.
71:46 Bafétimbi Gomis (Swansea City wins a free kick in the defensive half.
71:46 Foul by Emre Can (Liverpool).
70:11 Bafétimbi Gomis (Swansea City wins a free kick in the attacking half.
70:11 Foul by Martin Skrtel (Liverpool).
68:03 Goal scored Goal! Own Goal by Jonjo Shelvey, Swansea City. Liverpool 4, Swansea City 1.
67:28 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Neil Taylor.
67:27 Attempt blocked. Martin Skrtel (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked.
67:24 Attempt blocked. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Raheem Sterling.
66:31 Foul by Ki Sung-Yueng (Swansea City).
66:31 Raheem Sterling (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
66:08 Substitution Substitution Substitution, Swansea City. Ki Sung-Yueng replaces Leon Britton.
63:34 Raheem Sterling (Liverpool hits the left post with a left footed shot from a difficult angle on the left. Assisted by Adam Lallana.
61:40 Substitution Substitution Substitution, Swansea City. Bafétimbi Gomis replaces Wilfried Bony.
60:48 Goal scored Goal! Goal! Liverpool 3, Swansea City 1. Adam Lallana (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box to the bottom right corner. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.
59:47 Attempt saved. Adam Lallana (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom right corner. Assisted by Lucas Leiva.
58:46 Federico Fernández (Swansea City wins a free kick in the defensive half.
58:46 Foul by Lucas Leiva (Liverpool).
57:29 Foul by Angel Rangel (Swansea City).
57:29 Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
53:00 Raheem Sterling (Liverpool hits the right post with a left footed shot from the centre of the box. Assisted by Jordan Henderson with a cross following a fast break.
52:24 Corner, Swansea City. Conceded by Mamadou Sakho.
52:15 Attempt saved. Wilfried Bony (Swansea City right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom left corner.
51:40 Goal scored Goal! Goal! Liverpool 2, Swansea City 1. Gylfi Sigurdsson (Swansea City left footed shot from the left side of the six yard box to the bottom left corner.
50:13 Goal scored Goal! Goal! Liverpool 2, Swansea City 0. Adam Lallana (Liverpool with an attempt from outside the box to the centre of the goal.
49:36 Attempt saved. Wilfried Bony (Swansea City header from the centre of the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Gylfi Sigurdsson with a cross.
49:23 Delay over. They are ready to continue.
49:13 Delay in match (Swansea City).
48:23 Booking Martin Skrtel (Liverpool is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.
48:16 Wayne Routledge (Swansea City wins a free kick on the right wing.
48:16 Foul by Martin Skrtel (Liverpool).
47:40 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Neil Taylor.
46:15 Attempt missed. Raheem Sterling (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is high and wide to the right.
45:00 Second Half begins Liverpool 1, Swansea City 0.
45:00 Substitution Substitution Substitution, Swansea City. Angel Rangel replaces Ashley

Richards.
45:00+1:13 Half time First Half ends, Liverpool 1, Swansea City 0.
45:00+1:06 Attempt blocked. Martin Skrtel (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Jordan Henderson with a cross.
45:00+0:42 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Wayne Routledge.
44:54 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Lukasz Fabianski.
44:52 Attempt saved. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the top centre of the goal. Assisted by Mamadou Sakho.
44:05 Attempt missed. Nathan Dyer (Swansea City left footed shot from the centre of the box is just a bit too high following a set piece situation.
43:09 Nathan Dyer (Swansea City wins a free kick in the attacking half.
43:09 Foul by Alberto Moreno (Liverpool).
35:55 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Lukasz Fabianski.
35:53 Attempt saved. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from a difficult angle on the left is saved in the bottom left corner. Assisted by Alberto Moreno.
32:38 Goal scored Goal! Goal! Liverpool 1, Swansea City 0. Alberto Moreno (Liverpool left footed shot from very close range to the centre of the goal. Assisted by Jordan Henderson.
31:41 Attempt missed. Wilfried Bony (Swansea City right footed shot from outside the box is high and wide to the right.
30:03 Attempt saved. Nathan Dyer (Swansea City header from the centre of the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Neil Taylor with a cross.
29:03 Foul by Ashley Williams (Swansea City).
29:03 Adam Lallana (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
21:50 Attempt missed. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from long range on the left misses to the right. Assisted by Mamadou Sakho.
16:40 Foul by Alberto Moreno (Liverpool).
16:40 Nathan Dyer (Swansea City wins a free kick in the defensive half.
15:29 Attempt saved. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom right corner. Assisted by Lucas Leiva.
12:29 Attempt missed. Adam Lallana (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box is too high.
12:24 Attempt saved. Raheem Sterling (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Alberto Moreno with a cross.
5:18 Attempt saved. Martin Skrtel (Liverpool header from the right side of the six yard box is saved in the top centre of the goal. Assisted by Jordan Henderson with a cross.
4:46 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Ashley Richards.
3:33 Offside, Liverpool. Jordan Henderson tries a through ball, but Javier Manquillo is caught offside.
2:52 Foul by Nathan Dyer (Swansea City).
2:52 Alberto Moreno (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
0:44 Foul by Emre Can (Liverpool).
0:44 Wilfried Bony (Swansea City wins a free kick in the attacking half.
0:00 First Half begins.
0:00 Lineups are announced and players are warming up.