

Date: 17 January 2015

Opposition: Aston Villa

Competition: League

BBC	Echo	Sunday Times	Sun Telegraph	Independent
	Mirror	Observer	Times	Telegraph
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17 January 2015

THE TIMES

Lambert points to his past but Villa are frozen in time

Aston Villa 0

Liverpool 2

Borini 24, Lambert 79

Referee MCLATTENBURG Attendance 39,758

For a moment, Paul Lambert's mind was cast back to 1997. Aston Villa had lost again, failed to score again and the club's supporters had turned against him in even greater numbers. This did not seem the appropriate time for a trip down memory lane to the day when he lifted the Champions League with Borussia Dortmund, but there was a message in his reminiscences -- he has experienced excruciating pressure before and coped.

"Listen, if you saw me before the European Cup final, that was pressure," the Aston Villa manager, right, said. "I thought my a*** was going to fall out of my shorts. And then [Alessandro] Del Piero scores a flick. That's pressure.

"I'm fortunate. I've been at the top level playing in European finals and things like that, so pressure is part and parcel of my nature. It's part and parcel of the game of football. You have to handle it. I'm strong enough to handle it."

In the eyes of those Villa fans who chanted for Lambert's removal towards the end of their team's latest dispiriting defeat, this time by a resurgent Liverpool, his ability to absorb pressure is not in question. Some, particularly the minority who protested on Saturday at the way their club are being run view it as part of the problem.

Like them, Randy Lerner, the absentee owner, knows that Lambert is likely again to do just enough to keep Villa in the Barclays Premier League and, with his investment protected, there is no need to make significant changes or invest heavily in the team.

To all intents and purposes, Villa are locked in a cycle of misery. Even the timid demonstration that took place for eight minutes after kick-off fitted in with that theory. When almost 40,000 people turn up on one of the coldest days of the year to watch a team fail to win for the 16th time in 18 league games and take their run without scoring in the Premier League into an eighth hour, the need for change is hardly emphasised. A few hundred people refusing to take their seats for eight minutes is neither here nor there.

Whatever Villa's problems, and clearly, given their form and perilous league position, there are many, Brendan Rodgers does not believe that Lambert is one of them. Diplomacy may have prevented the Liverpool manager from pointing the finger of blame at his close friend and contemporary, but he still made it abundantly clear that he believes those responsible for Villa's plight are to be found in the boardroom rather than the dugout.

"Could anyone do a better job than Paul in these circumstances? No. I don't think so," Rodgers said. "He is trying to develop young players. Expectancy here is probably very high, but he does not have the finances to compete. They don't have the resources to be top four, top six.

"He is doing the best he can. He's an outstanding manager who will get the best he can out of players. He has the opportunity to manage a great club and is giving it his all. It's a wonderful football club with a good history, but the reality is they can't spend a great deal of money."

If there is a weakness in Rodgers's argument, it is to be found in the growing assurance of his own team, a quality that was once again on display at Villa Park. Tasked with implementing a transfer policy that prioritises youth over proven quality, albeit a much better-resourced policy than Lambert's, Rodgers's coaching skills are bringing out the best in the young players that Liverpool have bought with Emre Can, in particular, flourishing at centre back after a difficult start to his Anfield career.

Goals in either half from Fabio Borini and Rickie Lambert gave Rodgers another gratifying win, while a third successive clean sheet away from home in the league demonstrated that, with the right personnel, three at the back can be an effective system. Certainly, the transformation that has taken place at Liverpool since losing 3-1 away to Crystal Palace less than two months ago is remarkable, with a record of one defeat in the 14 matches that have followed greatly enhancing their prospects of finishing in the top four.

While Rodgers is dreaming of participating in the Champions League once more, Lambert can only look back to the days when he, as a player, and Villa, as a club, rubbed shoulders with the European elite. Instead, he has only a relegation battle to look forward to and he will deal with it in the only way he knows how.

"You meet it head on," he said. "You don't walk away from it. You fight it."

RATINGS

Aston Villa (4-3-3): B Guzan 7 -- A Hutton 6, N Baker 6, J Okore 6, A Cissokho 6 -- A Westwood 5 (sub: C Gil, 59min 7) C Sanchez 6, F Delph 6 -- T Cleverley 5 (sub: A Weimann, 59 6), C Benteke 6, G Agbonlahor 4. Substitutes not used: S Given, L Bacuna, K Richardson, C N'Zogbia, M Lowton. Booked: Okore.

Liverpool (3-4-2-1): S Mignolet 8 -- E Can 9, M Skrtel 8, M Sakho 8 -- L Markovic 7, L Leiva 7, J Henderson 7, A Moreno 6 (sub: J Enrique, 71 5) -- P Coutinho 7, R Sterling 6 (sub: J Ibe, 85) -- F Borini 6 (sub: R Lambert, 71 6). Substitutes not used: D Ward, J Manquillo, A Lallana, J Williams. Booked: Lambert.

the guardian

Lambert defiant despite Villa drawing fifth straight blank

The pressure is piling up on Paul Lambert and Aston Villa, just three points above the relegation positions, no goals in the last five league games and Arsenal then Chelsea up next, but the manager intends to remain calm and carry on.

"I've been in pressure situations before. If you think this is pressure you should have seen me before the [1997] European Cup final," Lambert said. "High level football comes with pressure and you have to handle it. I still love doing this job because it has been my life."

At least the Villa supporters spared Lambert and his players the ignominy of a protest demonstration. The Holte End got behind the team and saw a much better performance than the one the previous week against Leicester, even if it was never likely to gain a reward against a slickly professional Liverpool.

Once Fabio Borini put the visitors ahead from Jordan Henderson's cross midway through the first half the result was never in doubt and the only interest lay in seeing whether Villa could end a barren spell now stretching to more than eight and a half hours by scoring a goal. They could not, largely due to Simon Mignolet's excellence in keeping out two worthy attempts from Christian Benteke.

"Simon has always been a great shot-stopper," Brendan Rodgers said of the goalkeeper he dropped last month. "But now you can see the confidence returning to his all round game. He's coming for crosses and making decisive contact and that in turn spreads confidence through the defence."

Lambert suggested that only Mignolet had prevented Villa taking something from the game, though Rodgers claimed Liverpool could have scored more goals on the counter. Raheem Sterling failed to convert in the first half while Borini's scoring touch deserted him after ending a personal goal drought of his own. It was his replacement, Rickie Lambert, who applied the coup de grace with a composed finish from the edge of the area after being sent on for the last 20 minutes.

The former Southampton player went straight over to celebrate with the Liverpool fans in the Doug Ellis Stand and picked up an unnecessary booking, but Rodgers was in conciliatory mood.

"I'm so pleased for Rickie, it must be a really special feeling for a Liverpool boy to score for the club," he said. "He is making exactly the contribution we wanted from him, he's coming off the bench and having an effect."

How Villa must wish they could find someone to do the same. Yet Lambert was one of several Liverpool signings in the summer and his namesake at Villa Park just does not have the same sort of resources at his disposal. The Villa manager did point to an encouraging debut from his own substitute Carles Gil but as the club prepares for another relegation dogfight it is clear they will not be attempting to buy their way out of trouble.

"We were in a relegation struggle last season and the season before that," Lambert said. "The club isn't where it was six or seven years ago, it is difficult financially."

Rodgers had some sympathy. "I've got a lot of time for Paul, we came through the Championship together," the Liverpool manager said. "The resources don't seem to be here any more to aim for top four or top six, so he is having to bring in young players. He is an outstanding manager though, he will maximise what he has."

Man of the match Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool)

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The Mail

STAYING POWER; Red-hot Rickie isn't ready to give up on his Liverpool dream

ASTON VILLA 0
 LIVERPOOL 2

AS ONE Lambert shuffled out of Villa Park fretting privately about what the future holds, another Lambert bounded out with a renewed sense of purpose.

If things have been increasingly bleak for Aston Villa manager Paul, the season has hardly gone to plan for Liverpool striker Rickie either. His starts have been rare, goals scarce and speculation increased that he might move on in this window.

West Brom and Crystal Palace are keen but he is not interested. Lambert's dream came true when he moved to Anfield from Southampton last June and he won't give up on it just because the transition has been bumpy.

Why should he? The 32-year-old substitute may have been on the pitch for only 20 minutes here but he made a difference, sweeping in the goal that guaranteed a win. Such was his joy, he almost jumped into the Witton Lane Stand to celebrate with Liverpool's fans. 'That's the best way to affect a game,' said Lambert. 'In the past I maybe would have passed instead of taking it on myself. It was nice to secure the game after Simon Mignolet had saved us. He was brilliant.

'I love those celebrations, I love watching them on TV. To do it myself with the Liverpool fans is something I'll always remember. The best moment I've felt since I've been here. Brilliant.

'I've no intention of leaving Liverpool while they want me. If they don't want me I'll go but I'm here to help in whatever way I can.' Manager Brendan Rodgers believes Lambert is doing that and has given up trying to get PS10million striker Divock Origi to Anfield this month by cutting short his loan back to Lille. In fact, Rodgers pumped the air as Lambert's drive sneaked past Brad Guzan.

'I was delighted for him,' said Rodgers. 'He is making the contribution I wanted. There is a spotlight on him because of the unavailability of other players but he was brought into make an effect. He'll always score goals.' There will be no dwelling on this win, not with Chelsea in town tomorrow for the first part of their Capital One Cup semi-final. 'I went to the Champions League semi-final against Chelsea in 2005,' Lambert said. 'It was the best atmosphere I've ever experienced. Can we do the same? It would be brilliant. We're getting better, we've got players coming back.

'Chelsea will probably be favourites but we've got the winning mentality back.'

SUPER STAT: This was Liverpool's fourth straight win at Villa Park -- the first time they have achieved that in their history.

ASTON VILLA (4-3-3): Guzan 7.5; Hutton 7, Okore 6, Baker 6, Cissokho 5; Westwood 5 (Gil 59min, 6), Sanchez 7, Delph 6; Cleverley 4 (Weimann 59, 7), Agbonlahor 4, Benteke 6. Subs not used: Given, Bacuna, Richardson, N'Zogbia, Lowton. Booked: Okore.

LIVERPOOL (3-4-3): Mignolet 8; Can 8, Skrtel 7.5, Sakho 7; Markovic 7, Henderson 8, Lucas 7.5, Moreno 6.5 (Enrique 60, 6); Coutinho 8.5, Borini 7 (Lambert 70, 7), Sterling 6 (Ibe 81). Subs not used: Williams, Ward, Manquillo, Lallana.

Scorers: Borini 24, Lambert 79. Man of the match: Philippe Coutinho. Referee: Mark Clattenburg 7.

The Daily Telegraph

We have got our winning mentality back, says Lambert
 Aston 0

Liverpool 2

Borini 24, Lambert 79

Att: 39,758

Ten years ago Rickie Lambert watched Liverpool make history and now the lifelong fan wants to contribute to the Anfield honours board himself.

Lambert, then plying his trade at Rochdale, was at Anfield for the 2005 Champions League semi-final against Chelsea which preceded Liverpool's astonishing victory in the final in Istanbul against AC Milan.

The Capital One Cup, where Liverpool meet Chelsea again in the semi-final tomorrow night, may not be as prestigious but victory would mean as much to Lambert.

"The semi-final against Chelsea was the best atmosphere I've ever experienced," Lambert recalled after scoring the crucial second goal to see off Aston Villa on Saturday. "I was in the Centenary Stand. It was brilliant. Unbelievable. Any trophy for Liverpool is what you want to try and do. The League Cup is the first one, so that's the one we will try to win first.

"We're getting better and better - that's the most exciting thing. We've got players coming back and we're still in all the cups. Chelsea will probably be favourites, that's fair to say. But I think we are in better shape going into this game than we were a couple of months ago. I think we've got the winning mentality back now."

Lambert has made only five league starts since moving from Southampton but he is happy. He drilled home past Brad Guzan on 79 minutes from the edge of the area to add to Fabio Borini's 24th-minute close-range strike. Lambert was off, running towards his own supporters, and a booking for over-celebrating could not dampen his spirits.

"You can't beat that feeling of scoring a goal especially for Liverpool," he said. "I will always remember that moment. I love those celebrations. To do it myself with the Liverpool fans is definitely the best moment I've felt since I've been here. I've wanted to be more effective but it just hasn't happened. To have an effect like that - brilliant."

While one Lambert was satisfied, another was left tearing his hair out. Aston Villa have now gone over eight hours without a league goal and have 11 in 22 league games overall. Suddenly Derby's Premier League worst of 20 goals in a season is under threat, although this was an improved display with new signing Carles Gil impressing as substitute.

Paul Lambert, who won the 1997 Champions League with Borussia Dortmund, insists he can handle the pressure. "If you saw me before the European Cup final that was pressure," the Villa manager said. "I thought my a--- was going to fall out of my shorts! Football is my life and if you cannot handle pressure you're in the wrong job.

"The club probably isn't what it was six, maybe seven years ago and finances dictate a lot, especially in this league. If we can get new signings we will but I am always confident with these lads. If they keep doing what they were doing out there the goals will come."

Brendan Rodgers was keen to back his opposite number. "I have a lot of empathy for every manager, but in particular Paul," the Liverpool manager said.

"We came through the Championship together, got promoted together and were appointed at the same time. He is doing the best he can."

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Lambert: I can handle the pressure. It's all I know

"If you saw me before the European Cup final, that was pressure; I thought my arse was going to fall out of my shorts," said Paul Lambert, recalling his feelings before the 1997 epic in which, as a player, he went on to help Borussia Dortmund overturn all odds by defeating Juventus. "Del Piero scores from a flick to pull it back to 2-1, now that's also pressure," he said.

Aston Villa, like their manager, know what it is to win club football's most glittering prize. Brian Moore's commentary of the moment Peter Withe won the trophy in 1982 is inscribed on one end of Villa Park. "This club has been embroiled in some huge things," said Lambert. "The '82 team is probably the greatest side this club will ever see. But now the club is what it is. I don't moan about it."

There are plenty who do. Villa were booed off after Saturday's 2-0 defeat by Liverpool. They had played quite well, better certainly than in the aimless 1-0 defeat at Leicester the previous weekend. However, it was still nearly nine hours of play since Villa last managed a Premier League goal and patience in this part of Birmingham was wearing thinner than a tramp's overcoat.

Slogging through his third season at Villa, Lambert is aware of what some supporters think of him and is prepared to confront it. "Football has been my life," he said. "I don't know anything else. If you can't handle the pressure, you are in the wrong game."

"I have been fortunate in playing at the top level in European Cup finals and things like that, so pressure has been part and parcel of my nature. You have to handle it. I am strong enough to handle it. You meet it head on; you don't walk away from it. You fight it."

The main enemy at Villa Park appears to be apathy. There was supposed to be a boycott of the first eight minutes of the match (one for every year of owner Randy Lerner's rule) but few at the Holte End appeared to bother.

The pre-match draw prize was a thermostat - a very nice thermostat controlled by an iPhone - but if they wanted to help fans escape the freezing January temperatures and Villa's terrible results, two weeks in Barbados might have generated more enthusiasm.

Lerner's lukewarm attitude to the club is at the heart of the matter. The entrepreneur first became attracted to football while studying at Clare College in Cambridge, the year Aston Villa were reigning European champions.

Since he has failed even to take them into the Champions League, and spent around [pounds sterling]200m on the project, the surprise is not that Villa is up for sale but that nobody seems very interested in buying it.

From the outside, Villa Park is a vastly more impressive stadium than Anfield or even the Etihad. Aston Villa has a sleek training facility at Bodymoor Heath, which unlike, say Leeds United with Thorp Arch, the club actually owns.

Villa is the biggest club in the second biggest city in England; it has history, hinterland, everything your average football-loving oligarch would want from his team.

"It is a brilliant club but the chairman said what he said," said Lambert, referring to Lerner's statement that his heart was no longer in the club and that it was time for "fresh, invigorated leadership".

"He outlined what he was going to do with it - and that is his prerogative, he owns the club. The club probably isn't what it was six or seven years ago but finances dictate a lot, especially in this league."

Brendan Rodgers would agree. The pressure and expectation of being manager of Liverpool are remorseless. After a 3-0 defeat at Manchester United and exit from the Champions League last month, Rodgers publicly wondered how he, a man hailed as manager of the year last season, could now be portrayed as "useless". Since then, Liverpool have taken 14 points from six matches.

He and Lambert grew up as managers in the Championship, Rodgers with Swansea City, Lambert at Norwich. Both won promotion in the same year, 2011, before moving to great institutions of English football to work for American owners. It is the quality of those owners that divides them.



Borini and Lambert show goal-shy home side how to do it
 Liverpool's revival continued to gather momentum as they won 2-0 at Aston Villa thanks to goals in either half from Fabio Borini and Rickie Lambert.

Brendan Rodgers' side started the brighter and deservedly led at the break from Borini's close-range finish from skipper Jordan Henderson's cross in the 24th minute.

Villa then had a big escape when Raheem Sterling shot tamely straight at Brad Guzan when one-on-one.

Pre-match threats of protests among disillusioned home fans came to nothing but it took Paul Lambert's men until the 40th minute to have a shot on target.

That sparked ironic cheers from the home crowd but Villa might have levelled had Tom Cleverley not shot over before the interval.

After the break Liverpool continued to carry the greater threat as Guzan needed to make a fine double save from Martin Skrtel and Henderson.

But Villa eventually rallied strongly and felt unlucky not to equalise.

Christian Benteke was denied by Simon Mignolet's brilliant point-blank save from the striker's right-foot shot on the turn.

And defender Nathan Baker did an embarrassing air-shot from Benteke's knockdown which had Lambert with his head in his hands.

Villa's new £3million midfielder Carles Gil from Valencia impressed when he came on and might have scored himself.

But Liverpool sub Lambert was more clinical with a low right-foot shot into the bottom corner after Fabian Delph lost possession.

It was tough on Villa who had a good spell in front of 39,758 but it is now over eight hours since they scored in the Premier League and Lambert's woes continue.

Teams

Aston Villa: Guzan, Hutton, Okore, Baker, Cissokho, Sanchez, Westwood, Delph, Cleverley, Agbonlahor, Benteke.

Subs: Weimann (Cleverley 59'), Carles Gil (Westwood 59')

Liverpool: Mignolet, Can, Skrtel, Sakho, Moreno, Lucas, Henderson, Markovic, Coutinho, Sterling, Borini

Subs: Enrique (Moreno 71') Lambert (Borini 71') Ibe (Sterling 85')

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Goals from Fabio Borini and Rickie Lambert ensured Liverpool's revival gathered pace with a hard-fought 2-0 win over Aston Villa at Villa Park. Brendan Rodgers' side stepped up their pursuit of Champions League qualification by extending their unbeaten run to eight games in all competitions. It was a gutsy display from Liverpool who had to dig deep and soak up plenty of pressure following Borini's first-half opener. The Italian striker celebrated his first goal for the club since April 2013 when he expertly tucked away Jordan Henderson's cross. However, in the second half it took the heroics of Simon Mignolet to protect that slender advantage. Substitute Lambert finally killed off Villa's hopes of a comeback with a sweet finish late on as he netted for the first time in nine appearances. It was also the first time since 2008 that Liverpool have kept three successive away clean sheets in the Premier League. The only change to the side which beat Sunderland seven days earlier saw the return to action of Raheem Sterling. The young winger, refreshed after being granted a two-week winter break by Rodgers, replaced Steven Gerrard, who was ruled out by the hamstring injury he picked up at the Stadium of Light. Sterling lined up alongside Philippe Coutinho and just behind lone frontman Borini in Rodgers' 3-4-2-1 formation. Pre-match talk of mass protests from the home fans against the reign of owner Randy Lerner failed to materialise with the Holte End largely full prior to kick-off. Villa supporters have been starved of entertainment this term with Paul Lambert's side netting just 11 league goals in 21 matches and in the first half rarely looked like adding to that tally. After a slow start, Liverpool began to exert control and it took a vital interception from Alan Hutton to stop Sterling from latching on to Borini's pass. Alberto Moreno then burst clear down the left and rifled into the far corner but his celebrations were curtailed by the offside flag. The breakthrough arrived in the 24th minute. Lazar Markovic found Henderson, who whipped an inviting cross towards the back post and Borini ensured it got the finish it deserved. Villa briefly came to life but Emre Can and Mamadou Sakho dealt brilliantly with the threat of Christian Benteke and Gabriel Agbonlahor. Sakho produced one fine tackle to thwart Agbonlahor before he could pull the trigger. Six minutes before the break it should have been 2-0. Sterling pounced on a defensive mistake and found himself with just Brad Guzan to beat but he went for a spectacular lob and wastefully knocked it straight at the keeper. Liverpool started the second half brightly and should have added to their account. Borini directed Martin Skrtel's nod down from Henderson's corner goalwards but a combination of Guzan and the post kept it out. Coutinho was then left fuming when Borini ignored his pleas for a cross when he was unmarked in the centre. The Italian went alone and ended up over-running it. Lambert made a double change just before the hour mark as new signing Carles Gil and Andreas Weimann replaced Cleverley and Ashley Westwood. The injection of fresh legs energised Villa, who pinned the Reds back and increasingly put them under the cosh. Benteke's sweet strike was brilliantly kept out by Mignolet, who then reacted quickly to deny Weimann. Liverpool had their chances on the counter-attack but from Moreno's pull-back, Borini blazed over from 14 yards. It took some desperate defending and good fortune to keep Villa out with Nathan Baker nodding over and then Skrtel blocking Benteke's strike. Rodgers took decisive action – taking off Borini and Moreno and bringing on Lambert and Jose Enrique. It did the trick. Lucas Leiva's 25-yarder was pushed behind by Guzan and with 11 minutes to go Liverpool wrapped up the points. Sterling's pass found Lambert, who took a touch to steady himself and drilled an unstoppable drive into the bottom corner. The jubilant frontman raced towards the away end where he was mobbed by the travelling Kop.

BIRMINGHAM MAIL

The Holte End's eight-minute planned protest fell flat on its face but once again Aston Villa lost and failed to score at home. Fabio Borini and Rickie Lambert were the men to do the damage this week as Liverpool ran out 2-0 winners and despite a much-improved performance the claret and blues are facing the same problems. Supporters threatened to vacate their seats in the famous stand for the first eight minutes of the clash to mark owner Randy Lerner's reign as chairman of the club. In the end, though, they couldn't be bothered and instead a passionate crowd roared on their side to try and lift them out of their current slump. Villa responded by showing a higher intensity and they were far more direct than in recent weeks. They even proved that they can actually create chances. But the same problems persist. They can't score goals, and now they're struggling to get results. Liverpool were dominant in the first half and had early chances. Alan Hutton needed to make a last-gasp intervention to stop Borini from shooting after a neat one-two with Raheem Sterling and then Alberto Moreno had the ball in the back of the net before his strike was rightfully ruled out for offside. On 24 minutes they took the lead. Jordan Henderson picked out Borini with a delightful curling cross and he poked it home to register his first Liverpool goal for 21 months. Brad Guzan, who has been outstanding in recent weeks, saved well to deny Philippe Coutinho minutes later and then Sterling wasted a one-on-one by chipping his weak effort into the goalkeeper's hands. Villa finished the half on the front foot and Tom Cleverley, who is yet to score or assist a goal since his loan move from Manchester United, should have equalised on 42 minutes. A brilliant move resulted in Ashley Westwood playing in the midfielder but instead of levelling the scores, he took a heavy touch and then fired over the bar. Although Villa showed more fight than in recent weeks they always appeared to be second best, Guzan again kept the scores down after the break when he somehow denied Borini from close range to turn his shot onto the post. Then came the Villa onslaught. Mignolet had to be at his best to deny Benteke from close range when Nathan Baker flicked a long ball into his path and he shot first time. Carles Gil was introduced for his debut and he almost scored after he danced through the Liverpool defence and played a one-two with fellow substitute Andreas Weimann. Unfortunately he was thwarted just before he let rip. From the resulting corner Baker thumped a powerful header over the crossbar and a minute later he fluffed a close-range effort when he should have broke the net. A third chance in as many minutes followed. Weimann set Hutton free again down the right and he crossed for Benteke who's overhead kick fizzed wide. Brendan Rodgers identified Hutton's freedom as the reason for Villa's joy and he quickly dragged left-back Moreno for Luis Enrique. It made the difference and Villa were made to pay for their misses. First Guzan denied Lucas by tipping his shot around the post but Lambert smashed home a minute later with almost his first touch to wrap up the win. Villa (4-4-2): Guzan, Hutton, Baker, Okore, Cissokho, Sanchez, Westwood, (Gil, 59) Cleverley, (Weimann, 59) Delph, Agbonlahor, Benteke. Subs: Given, Bacuna, Richardson, N'Zogbia, Lowton. Liverpool (3-5-2): Mignolet, Can, Sakho, Skrtel, Moreno, (Enrique, 70) Leiva, Henderson, Coutinho, Markovic, Sterling, (Ibe, 84) Borini (Lambert, 79) Subs: Ward, Manquillo, Lallana, Williams.

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Fabio Borini and Rickie Lambert deepen Villa gloom

This season Aston Villa have been mainly playing in binary numbers. Their previous seven results read: 0-1, 1-0, 0-0, 0-0, 0-1, 1-1, 0-1. Apart from a laborious FA Cup tie against Blackpool and a draw against Manchester United, the nils have belonged to them. This was different, this time they conceded twice.

When Rickie Lambert drilled his shot into the corner of Brad Guzan's net, Paul Lambert stood on the touchline staring into the deepest nothingness. When, more than a decade ago, Graham Taylor stood down as manager here, he said he was resigning "because Aston Villa is more than about finishing 16th."

In his first two seasons at Villa Park, this is where Lambert has taken them. They are 14th this morning with the potential to fall further still. Managers struggling for their lives are often finished off by some unlikely executioners. Lambert and Fabio Borini, the two Liverpool strikers who settled this match, had previously managed one Premier League goal between them.

When Martin Skrtel's header seemed to be heading for the corner of the net, Borini had swung at cold, thin air and Guzan had somehow tipped it on to the post. Villa actually played pretty well in the second half and when Simon Mignolet, who was relentlessly pounded with crosses, saved from Christian Benteke and Nathan Baker, Paul Lambert sank to his knees overwhelmed by frustration.

He was not the only one. It is eight hours and 42 minutes – roughly the running time of the Lord of the Rings trilogy – since Aston Villa last scored in the Premier League and their next two League fixtures pitch them against Arsenal and Chelsea. It is this crippling lack of entertainment that sparked the attempt to boycott the first eight minutes of the game – one for each year of Randy Lerner's ownership. As for judging the protest's effectiveness, it was rather like Dorothy Parker's comment when the author was informed of the death of America's notoriously taciturn president, Calvin Coolidge. "How," she asked "can they tell?" The idea had been for the ticket-holders of the Holte End, on which is a banner proclaiming itself to be Villa's "Twelfth Man", to stay away for the opening exchanges. All you could say was at kick-off, the Holte End, which was not sold out for the game, was pretty full. After nine minutes it became marginally fuller. Nine minutes before the final whistle it was emptying fast.

Despite the jeers, despite the chronic lack of goals, despite the prospect of a slow crawl away from the relegation zone, there appears to be no great appetite for getting rid of Lambert. "That is the way it has been for the last three, four, five years," he said when asked why Aston Villa were once more mired in the bottom half of the table. "There is no respite from it and the only response is to meet it head on. A club like this should not be in this position. I don't like it, the chairman doesn't like it, the chief executive doesn't like it, the fans don't like it and the players don't like it."

A little more than a month ago, Brendan Rodgers was facing the kind of pressure that is wearing down the man in the opposite dug-out. Liverpool had been beaten badly by Manchester United, were hopelessly off the pace domestically, out of the Champions League and every other question was about Mario Balotelli. Since that defeat at Old Trafford, Liverpool have not lost, largely because of the radical 3-4-3 formation that the Liverpool manager who admits to pacing the floor of his kitchen rolling tactics around his head, adopted.

They might have had more than the one goal before the interval, although it was beautifully finished by Borini after Jordan Henderson, captaining for the injured Steven Gerrard, had scooped the ball into the Italian's path. Then Raheem Sterling, back from his winter break in Jamaica, found himself clear on goal. The week in Kingston may have recharged his energies but it has not cured Sterling's clearest weakness as a forward – an inability to finish when the contest is between himself and a goalkeeper. The Holte End would recognise the symptoms. Aston Villa (4-4-2): Guzan; Hutton, Okore, Baker, Sissoko; Cleverley (Weimann, 59), Sanchez, Westwood (Gil, 59), Delph; Agbonlahor, Benteke.

Liverpool (3-4-3): Mignolet; Skrtel, Can, Sakho; Markovic, Henderson, Lucas Leiva, Moreno (Jose Enrique, 71); Sterling (Ibe, 85), Borini (Lambert, 71), Coutinho.

Referee: Mark Clattenburg

Man of the match: Henderson (Liverpool)

Match rating: 6/10

The Sunday Telegraph

Fabio Borini and Rickie Lambert on target in easy win

It has been far from the convincing season that Liverpool's high standards expected but a routine victory at Aston Villa suggests that it is one that could still end in Champions League football.

Fabio Borini's first half strike and sub Rickie Lambert's finish with 11 minutes to go gave Brendan Rodgers the victory he would have expected without his side being anywhere near their best.

But it also takes it to eight matches unbeaten and with a Capital One Cup semi-final tie with Chelsea to look forward to on Tuesday, their season is still very much alive on several fronts.

Aston Villa supporters in the club's famed Holte End failed to follow their pre-match plan of boycotting the first eight minutes.

However the stand started to empty for the last eight minutes of another frustrating defeat where the subject of relegation will now start to come up.

Villa followers had urged supporters to miss the first eight minutes – one for every year of Randy Lerner's ownership – to protest at the state of the club.

But to be fair to manager Paul Lambert, his side gave it a go with new signing Carles Gil impressing as sub but the reality is his side have only scored a paltry 11 goals in 22 league matches this term.

Liverpool achieved this win without captain Steven Gerrard rested with Tuesday in mind, but Rodgers still has his eyes on several prizes, not least a Champions League spot, with a three at the back system doing its job.

"It was fair to say that opening four months of the season we were nowhere near what we had been so we needed to find a solution," he said.

"I had seen enough of the dynamic to see the side had enough going forward. The challenge is to improve.

"We're building towards the future and progress really well. This period now the team is performing at a good level playing some wonderful football.

"If we can get through to the end of January, getting to the top four is still an objective.

"The system is working very well for us. My time here we've played a lot of different systems but this one is exciting. The players that we bring in are footballers anyway. But the most important thing for me is the identity and style of the team."

Villa had Fabian Delph back from suspension and Villa mood was generally one of support despite the backdrop to the match.

Liverpool showed an obvious threat from the off with Philippe Coutinho shooting wide at the far post from Jordan Henderson's corner.

But in contrast to recent weeks Villa at least created chances with Nathan Baker heading over from Ashley Westwood's free kick while Christian Benteke then nodded straight at Simon Mignolet.

Liverpool though went onto take a 24th-minute lead as Jordan Henderson's inch-perfect cross from the right was stabbed in by Borini. It was his first goal for the Merseysiders since April 2013 following a loan spell at Sunderland.

Raheem Sterling should have sealed victory before half-time as he attempted to cheekily chip Brad Guzan in a one-on-one situation but the effort did not trouble the American.

Villa could have levelled shortly afterward with Carlos Sanchez's long range effort coming close to catching out Mignolet while Tom Cleverley missed from a good spot from Ashley Westwood's intelligent pass.

Liverpool were close to sealing victory at the star of the second half with Martin Skrtel heading down Henderson's corner, Borini unable to make proper contact with the ball hitting the post with Henderson's subsequent shot superbly kept out by Guzan.

But the introduction of Gil for his debut sparked Villa into life.

It took a magnificent stop by Mignolet to keep out Christian Benteke's powerful effort after Nathan Baker had headed on Delph's cross.

However Liverpool went to wrap this game up as Lambert drilled home from the edge of the area after collecting Sterling's pass and ran towards the visiting fans to celebrate, a decision that resulted in his booking.

Despite yet another chorus of boos from the Villa Park faithful, Paul Lambert's job is not thought to be under any danger as yet. But losing an FA Cup home tie with Bournemouth and league games with Arsenal and Chelsea could send him closer to the abyss.

"We've had a dogfight for three, four, five years," he said. "It's just the same. There is no respite. You meet it head on.

"There are so many games, twists and turns you have all that to go.

"You don't want to be down here. I don't like it, the chairman does not like, the players do not like it and the fans do not like it. The goals will come.

"If it affected confidence we would not have played like that. You could not ask for anymore apart from the goal.

"I didn't think a boycott would help the team and I thought the fans were excellent. OK to lose a game, we were disappointed but the fans were excellent."

Date: 17 January 2015
 Opposition: Aston Villa
 Competition: League

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

17 January 2015



THE SUNDAY TIMES

Eight hours and counting - will Villa ever score again?

ASTON VILLA 0

LIVERPOOL Borini 24, Lambert 79 2

Ian Hawkey AT VILLA PARK EIGHT and three-quarter hours and counting. The wait between Aston Villa's 11th goal in the Premier League this season and the 12th can now be safely classified as a long-haul journey. Against a Liverpool who were less than overwhelming, but whose strikers, Fabio Borini and substitute Rickie Lambert seized their opportunities with an efficiency missing from their opponents, Villa finished up, once again, a study in impotence.

Even the grumbling from the grandstands seemed strangely unanimated. There was booing, at half-time, for a side who have not scored in the league since the 1-1 draw with Manchester United, six games ago, and at the end, when Villa's improved performance and higher levels of aggression yielded no goals and Lambert put the outcome beyond answer. Yet the jeers came only from isolated corners of the stadium.

Nor was a supposed protest by Villains, plotted and headlined ahead of kick-off, much of a show. Talk had been of a mass boycott of the opening eight minutes, to represent eight years under the patronage of Randy Lerner, the club's owner, turning into eight years of inertia. A few spectators filed in a little late, but not enough to alter the backdrop of the Holte End.

The latecomers did not miss a great deal, but arrived in time to see that their impatience with Villa's lack of attacking pizzazz this season is shared by some players. Nine minutes had passed when Christian Benteke was gesturing at Carlos Sanchez for having not used a moment of promising possession more urgently. Then Gabriel Agbonlahor dallied on the ball, allowing Mamadou Sakho to steal it from him.

There was a ponderousness about Villa, most evident in the opening half hour, and corrected somewhat in the second half, when new signing Carlos Gil made a promising impression, not lost on Paul Lambert, the Villa manager. "A top talent, and as good a debut as I can remember," said Lambert of the Spaniard.

Lambert pointed to the excellence of Simon Mignolet, the Liverpool goalkeeper, to explain another blank Villa day. Mignolet and Liverpool's back three dealt capably with what little threat the home team could summon up.

But Villa fans still had to wait until beyond the 40th minute to witness the first significant act from Mignolet, when he pounced a shot from outside the penalty area from Sanchez.

That attempt, ironically cheered, stirred a spell of greater Villa penetration. Tom Cleverley, finding a yard of space ahead of Lazar Markovic, had a shot snuffed out by the Serb, while Mignolet needed to race out of his box to clear from Agbonlahor.

All this was a rather tardy response to having fallen behind midway through the first period. Liverpool, without Steven Gerrard, whose tight hamstring led Brendan Rodgers to rest his captain with the midweek Capital One Cup semi-final against Chelsea in mind, and with Mario Balotelli having reported ill, had started the more menacing team, with Borini keen to make the most of only his third start in the Premier League this season. His goal, meeting a Jordan Henderson cross, took advantage of some slack marking but he nonetheless showed fine instincts to reach into the volley.

The visitors would have appreciated a deeper cushion than the one-goal lead as they weathered a spell of sustained Villa pressure. Martin Skrtel, Emre Can and Sakho had marshalled the powerful Benteke, but when the Belgian did escape his marker, and found the ball delivered as he likes it, his volley, bound for the top corner, was superbly saved by Mignolet.

Lambert, on for Borini, settled things 11 minutes from full-time. Lucas had just obliged Brad Guzan to tip a low shot around his left-hand post. Lambert then beat him in the opposite corner, with a precise, angled effort from Sterling's pass.

The introduction of two substitutes, Andreas Weimann and Gil, had geed up Villa, though they were still left at the end counting clear chances on the fingers of one hand. Nathan Baker's header, over the bar, was one that mildly alarmed Mignolet. "On another day we'd have got one or two goals," said Villa's Lambert. "The goals will come."

Star man: Martin Skrtel (Liverpool) Yellow cards: Aston Villa: Okore Liverpool: Lambert Referee: M Clattenburg Attendance: 39,758 Aston Villa: Guzan 7, Hutton 6, Okore 6, Baker 7, Cissokho 6, Cleverley 5 (Weimann 59min, 7), Sanchez 6, Westwood 6 (Gil 59min, 8), Delph 8, Benteke 7, Agbonlahor 6 Liverpool: Mignolet 8, Can 7, Skrtel 8, Sakho 7, Markovic 7, Henderson 7, Lucas 6, Moreno 7 (Enrique 71min, 7), Sterling 6 (Ibe 85min, 5), Borini 8 (Lambert 71min, 7), Coutinho 7

The Observer

Liverpool's Rickie Lambert seals win as Aston Villa fans lose patience

These are testing times for Aston Villa supporters but never let it be said they have lost their sense of humour. "We'll score again, don't know where, don't know when," was being chorused at the end, as the wait for a league goal stretched to a remarkable eight hours and 42 minutes.

The proposed protest in the Holte End never materialised; the stand was full at kick-off and nothing of note happened in the eighth minute – or at any other stage of the game – though a few boos were audible at the end of both halves. "A goal was the only thing that was missing," said Paul Lambert, the Villa manager, somewhat optimistically. "Their goalkeeper had a great second half. If we keep doing what we are doing the goals will come."

Brendan Rodgers did not entirely disagree. "Simon Mignolet was outstanding," he said. "He wasn't overworked but, when called upon, he made two great saves. That must have been frustrating for Paul, but maybe we could have had one or two more goals as well."

Liverpool should really have been two up by the interval – Raheem Sterling inexplicably squandering a great chance after the Villa defence evaporated to leave him one on one with Brad Guzan – but one goal is usually enough against opponents who have now failed to find the net in their past five league games. Fabio Borini, starting up front because Mario Balotelli was unavailable through illness, tucked away a Jordan Henderson cross at the far post to overcome a goal drought of his own and put Liverpool in front after 24 minutes. From that point onwards, the visitors never looked like being in trouble. They did double their lead from a wealth of chances created in the second half but a single goal would have sufficed. That is why Aston Villa supporters are so exasperated.

Liverpool had a goal disallowed for offside before the interval, an over-anxious Borini shot high over the bar shortly after scoring, and Guzan was grateful to save Sterling's tame effort, while the home side passed the ball around midfield without giving Mignolet anything to do until the 40th minute. When Villa did produce their first shot on target, it was straight at the goalkeeper from Carlos Sánchez, though Mignolet did have to work a little harder just before half-time when Tom Cleverley broke clear. The Belgian left his line quickly and Lazar Markovic recovered well enough to put Cleverley off in the act of shooting, in what amounted to Villa's only real opening of the first 45 minutes.

Advertisement
 Lambert keeps pleading for patience but his players need to be a little more proactive. They did not respond in any discernible way to going a goal behind, and did not appear to have any sort of plan to get back into the game other than sending Alan Hutton down the right to cross for Christian Benteke, a thankless task when up against a wing-back of Alberto Moreno's pace. Liverpool kept up their attacking threat in the second half, Henderson forcing a fine save from Guzan after the goalkeeper had tipped a header from Martin Skrtel on to a post, though Benteke did at least generate some noise from the Holte End with a shot on the turn that Mignolet did well to keep out.

That – along with Lambert sending on Andreas Weimann and Carles Gil, the latter a new acquisition from Valencia – seemed to wake up a somnolent stadium a little, though Liverpool were still doing more of the attacking and Borini's finish was wasteful when Moreno found him with a cross from the right.

Nathan Baker headed narrowly over from a corner and Mignolet saved again from Benteke, as Villa enjoyed a brief period of attacking fluency midway through the second half, but, when the ball fell invitingly for Baker in front of goal, the defender scuffed his shot.

Liverpool were not to be denied, however, and quickly weathered that mini storm. Guzan tipped a shot from Lucas Leiva around a post to concede a corner and, though Fabian Delph had a good chance to clear, he instead gave the ball away to Sterling, who deftly supplied Rickie Lambert for a cool finish from the edge of the area.

The Holte End fell silent again before the end, with just the travelling fans in the Doug Ellis stand making themselves heard, gleefully highlighting the fact that Liverpool had accomplished this victory without the injured Steven Gerrard.

While Villa have a chance to reacquaint themselves with the art of goalscoring in the FA Cup against Bournemouth, next week, a barren spell of five Premier League matches is not what you need when your next two opponents are Arsenal and Chelsea. Lambert received the loyalty he wanted from the Villa supporters on this occasion, though everyone connected with the club knows it is time to give something back in return.

Date: 17 January 2015
 Opposition: Aston Villa
 Competition: League

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

17 January 2015



Liverpool increased the pressure on Aston Villa manager Paul Lambert by beating his struggling side to secure a third away league win in succession. The threat of a pre-match protest by Villa fans did not materialise but the home side went behind when Fabio Borini prodded in a Jordan Henderson cross. Christian Benteke had a chance to level but his powerful strike was saved. Liverpool survived a number of other scares before Rickie Lambert arrowed in an 18-yard shot to secure victory.

The Reds have lost only one of their last 10 league games and earned the three points without captain Steven Gerrard, who had not been risked after going off with a tight hamstring during last Saturday's win at Sunderland. Villa, who improved after the break, failed to score for a fifth league game on the trot and they are now three points above the relegation zone, with their next two top-flight games against Arsenal and Chelsea.

Some Villa fans had threatened a protest by boycotting their seats in the Holte End for the first eight minutes of the match to mark each year that Randy Lerner had owned the club.

Villa's Lambert had urged against such action and the supporters appeared to have listened to his request with hardly an empty seat to be seen. However, the home side found themselves behind after striker Borini guided home an inviting Henderson cross to score his first goal of the campaign. Villa could have fallen further behind but Philippe Coutinho and Raheem Sterling failed to take two promising chances for the Reds.

Keeper Brad Guzan also kept Villa in the game when he tipped a Martin Skrtel header against the post.

Carles Gil, signed by Villa this week, came on to make his debut and his arrival signalled a spell of pressure from the home side.

However, Benteke had a well-struck half-volley saved by fellow Belgium international Simon Mignolet, while Baker headed a corner just over. Benteke also volleyed wide before Lambert gave Liverpool the breathing space they needed by scoring his third goal of the season with a low shot into the bottom corner.

Liverpool manager Brendan Rodgers:

"It was always going to be a difficult game. Aston Villa are a hard team to try to break down but we were very complete in our performance.

"We passed the ball around really well at times and our counter-attack was very good and we probably should have exploited that more than we did.

"Importantly, when we had to defend at important moments of the game we stood up to the challenge."

Aston Villa manager Paul Lambert:

"The second half I thought we were excellent. I didn't think there was too much in it in the first half.

"We lost a poor goal but the second half was relentless pressure from us and their goalkeeper has probably kept them in it with the save from Christian Benteke.

"I don't think anyone could fault us for the way we played in the second half.

"We just have to keep doing what we did today, keep getting the chances and they will go in."

Date: 17 January 2015

Opposition: Aston Villa

Competition: League

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

17 January 2015



Full time Match ends, Aston Villa 0, Liverpool 2.

90:00+4:07Full time Second Half ends, Aston Villa 0, Liverpool 2.

90:00+3:30 Attempt saved. Fabian Delph (Aston Villa right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the top centre of the goal.

90:00+2:56 Attempt missed. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool left footed shot from very close range misses to the left. Assisted by Jordan Ibe.

88:52 Attempt missed. Alan Hutton (Aston Villa header from the centre of the box is high and wide to the left. Assisted by Fabian Delph with a cross following a set piece situation.

88:13 Foul by José Enrique (Liverpool).

88:13 Alan Hutton (Aston Villa wins a free kick on the right wing.

87:12 Attempt missed. Emre Can (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is too high. Assisted by Jordan Henderson.

87:02 Attempt blocked. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from the left side of the box is blocked. Assisted by José Enrique.

86:25 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Alan Hutton.

84:10SubstitutionSubstitutionSubstitution, Liverpool. Jordan Ibe replaces Raheem Sterling.

82:17 Attempt missed. Fabian Delph (Aston Villa left footed shot from outside the box is just a bit too high. Assisted by Christian Benteke.

80:47Booking Rickie Lambert (Liverpool is shown the yellow card for excessive celebration.

80:20 Lucas Leiva (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.

80:20 Foul by Nathan Baker (Aston Villa).

79:54 Foul by Lucas Leiva (Liverpool).

79:54 Gabriel Agbonlahor (Aston Villa wins a free kick in the attacking half.

78:42Goal scored Goal!Goal! Aston Villa 0, Liverpool 2. Rickie Lambert (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box to the bottom left corner. Assisted by Raheem Sterling.

77:50 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Brad Guzan.

77:49 Attempt saved. Lucas Leiva (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom right corner. Assisted by José Enrique.

76:26 Offside, Aston Villa. Nathan Baker tries a through ball, but Christian Benteke is caught offside.

74:39 Attempt blocked. Raheem Sterling (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Rickie Lambert with a headed pass.

73:14 Foul by Carlos Sánchez (Aston Villa).

73:14 Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.

72:56 Attempt missed. Christian Benteke (Aston Villa header from the centre of the box misses to the right. Assisted by Carles Gil with a cross following a corner.

72:33 Corner, Aston Villa. Conceded by Martin Skrtel.

71:48 Foul by Rickie Lambert (Liverpool).

71:48 Jores Okore (Aston Villa wins a free kick in the defensive half.

70:52 Foul by Alan Hutton (Aston Villa).

70:52 José Enrique (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.

70:38SubstitutionSubstitutionSubstitution, Liverpool. José Enrique replaces Alberto Moreno.

70:04SubstitutionSubstitutionSubstitution, Liverpool. Rickie Lambert replaces Fabio Borini.

69:22 Attempt missed. Christian Benteke (Aston Villa right footed shot from the centre of the box misses to the left. Assisted by Alan Hutton with a cross.

68:18 Attempt blocked. Carlos Sánchez (Aston Villa right footed shot from outside the box is blocked.

68:15 Attempt blocked. Carles Gil (Aston Villa left footed shot from the right side of the box is blocked.

67:16 Corner, Aston Villa. Conceded by Martin Skrtel.

67:16 Attempt blocked. Christian Benteke (Aston Villa right footed shot from the right side of the box is blocked. Assisted by Fabian Delph.

66:29 Attempt missed. Nathan Baker (Aston Villa header from very close range is just a bit too high. Assisted by Fabian Delph with a cross following a corner.

65:56 Corner, Aston Villa. Conceded by Jordan Henderson.

65:25 Attempt blocked. Fabian Delph (Aston Villa left footed shot from outside the box is blocked.

63:18 Attempt missed. Fabio Borini (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box is too high. Assisted by Alberto Moreno.

60:43 Martin Skrtel (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.

60:43 Foul by Christian Benteke (Aston Villa).

60:32 Attempt saved. Christian Benteke (Aston Villa right footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the bottom right corner. Assisted by Nathan Baker with a headed pass.

59:52 Corner, Aston Villa. Conceded by Emre Can.

58:32SubstitutionSubstitutionSubstitution, Aston Villa. Carles Gil replaces Ashley Westwood.

58:20SubstitutionSubstitutionSubstitution, Aston Villa. Andreas Weimann replaces Tom Cleverley.

57:56 Hand ball by Lazar Markovic (Liverpool).

54:25 Delay over. They are ready to continue.

53:08 Delay in match Raheem Sterling (Liverpool because of an injury.

51:32Booking Jores Okore (Aston Villa is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.

51:30 Raheem Sterling (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.

51:30 Foul by Jores Okore (Aston Villa).

50:43 Offside, Liverpool. Alberto Moreno tries a through ball, but Philippe Coutinho is caught offside.

49:43 Offside, Liverpool. Martin Skrtel tries a through ball, but Fabio Borini is caught offside.

48:59 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Nathan Baker.

47:27 Simon Mignolet (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.

47:27 Foul by Nathan Baker (Aston Villa).

47:04 Corner, Aston Villa. Conceded by Lazar Markovic.

46:08 Corner, Aston Villa. Conceded by Lazar Markovic.

45:00 Second Half begins Aston Villa 0, Liverpool 1.

45:00+1:08Half time First Half ends, Aston Villa 0, Liverpool 1.

44:41 Foul by Lucas Leiva (Liverpool).

44:41 Carlos Sánchez (Aston Villa wins a free kick in the attacking half.

42:59 Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.

42:59 Foul by Ashley Westwood (Aston Villa).

42:02 Attempt missed. Tom Cleverley (Aston Villa right footed shot from the left side of the box is high and wide to the right. Assisted by Ashley Westwood.

41:21 Hand ball by Raheem Sterling (Liverpool).

40:08 Attempt saved. Carlos Sánchez (Aston Villa left footed shot from more than 35 yards is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Ashley Westwood.

39:53 Foul by Lazar Markovic (Liverpool).

39:53 Alan Hutton (Aston Villa wins a free kick in the attacking half.

39:09 Corner, Aston Villa. Conceded by Martin Skrtel.

37:37 Attempt saved. Raheem Sterling (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Lucas Leiva with a headed pass.

37:03 Attempt missed. Fabio Borini (Liverpool right footed shot from the left side of the box is too high. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.

36:30 Fabio Borini (Liverpool wins a free kick on the right wing.

36:30 Foul by Carlos Sánchez (Aston Villa).

33:40 Lucas Leiva (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.

33:40 Foul by Gabriel Agbonlahor (Aston Villa).

32:55 Emre Can (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.

32:55 Foul by Jores Okore (Aston Villa).

31:58 Foul by Fabio Borini (Liverpool).

31:58 Jores Okore (Aston Villa wins a free kick in the attacking half.

30:59 Attempt saved. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool header from the centre of the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Lazar Markovic with a cross.

26:43 Offside, Liverpool. Raheem Sterling tries a through ball, but Philippe Coutinho is caught offside.

23:54Goal scored Goal!Goal! Aston Villa 0, Liverpool 1. Fabio Borini (Liverpool right footed shot from very close range to the bottom left corner. Assisted by Jordan Henderson with a cross.

23:03 Raheem Sterling (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.

23:03 Foul by Ashley Westwood (Aston Villa).

18:19 Offside, Liverpool. Jordan Henderson tries a through ball, but Fabio Borini is caught offside.

17:24 Corner, Aston Villa. Conceded by Martin Skrtel.

16:51 Offside, Liverpool. Fabio Borini tries a through ball, but Alberto Moreno is caught offside.

16:09 Attempt saved. Christian Benteke (Aston Villa header from the centre of the box is saved in the bottom left corner. Assisted by Alan Hutton with a cross.

15:48 Foul by Alberto Moreno (Liverpool).

15:48 Tom Cleverley (Aston Villa wins a free kick on the right wing.

14:49 Lucas Leiva (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.

14:49 Foul by Carlos Sánchez (Aston Villa).

10:24 Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.

10:24 Foul by Carlos Sánchez (Aston Villa).

9:08 Corner, Aston Villa. Conceded by Emre Can.

8:05 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Carlos Sánchez.

4:12 Attempt missed. Nathan Baker (Aston Villa header from the centre of the box misses to the right. Assisted by Ashley Westwood following a set piece situation.

3:45 Gabriel Agbonlahor (Aston Villa wins a free kick on the left wing.

3:45 Foul by Lazar Markovic (Liverpool).

2:16 Foul by Emre Can (Liverpool).

2:16 Gabriel Agbonlahor (Aston Villa wins a free kick on the left wing.

1:35 Attempt missed. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from a difficult angle on the right misses to the right. Assisted by Jordan Henderson with a cross following a corner.

0:56 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Alan Hutton.

0:00 First Half begins.

0:00 Lineups are announced and players are warming up.