

Date: 27 February 2017
Opposition: Leicester City
Competition: League

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THE  **TIMES**

the guardian

Jamie Vardy fires back to inspire rampant Leicester to shock Liverpool. It was a surreal evening and it is hard to know where to start other than to say that the [Leicester City](#) players clearly felt they had a point to prove. Debate will have raged long into the night about what this exhilarating performance says about their players and the club's decision to sack Claudio Ranieri, yet the only thing that matters for the owners is that the Premier League champions are back. Vichai Srivaddhanaprabha, the chairman, and Aiyawatt, his son and the vice-chairman, will feel a sense of vindication about the controversial call they made to dismiss Ranieri and Leicester, inspired by Jamie Vardy, recorded their first [Premier League](#) win of the year to climb up to 15th place in the table.

Leicester were unrecognisable from the side who had been sleepwalking towards the Championship and much more like the all-encompassing team of last season. Vardy scored twice – his first Premier League goals since December – and Danny Drinkwater, another of the stars of the title-winning campaign, chose an opportune time to register his first of the season with a fine shot from outside the area.

One of the abiding images of the evening, however, came on 65 minutes, when Ranieri's name was sung with gusto for the first time. Lighting up the stadium with their mobile phones, the home supporters stood to applaud the Italian manager who was gone but not forgotten.

Moments later Philippe Coutinho pulled a goal back but this was never going to be Liverpool's night. Jürgen Klopp's team were blown away as soon as Leicester started and on this evidence, that 16-day break without a game did them more harm than good. It was a chastening night for them, in particular Lucas Leiva, who was asked to deputise for the injured Dejan Lovren at centre-half and never gave the impression that he was up to the job.

Vardy, back to his best, gave the Brazilian the runaround and on another night could easily have scored a hat-trick. Instead he finished with two goals, just as he did in the corresponding fixture last season, when a Hollywood screenwriter came to watch him for the first time and it seemed as though everything Vardy and Leicester did turned to gold.

It has been a different story for so much of this season and it was impossible not to wonder what would have been going through Ranieri's mind as Leicester turned back the clock with a dynamic display that was full of aggressive running, with Wilfred Ndidi catching the eye in central midfield. They pressed high up the pitch – something they have rarely done over the last couple of months – and carried a genuine threat whenever they attacked.

Leicester City v Liverpool: Premier League – as it happened
In the absence of Claudio Ranieri, Leicester delivered precisely the kind of performance which made them champions, recording their first league goals and first win of 2017; Liverpool, meanwhile, were abject.

The only surprise was that we had to wait until the 28th minute for the opening goal. By half-time, however, Leicester had doubled their lead, Craig Shakespeare was being asked to wave to the home supporters and the club's owners had big smiles on their face in the directors' box.

It was a stunning first half that raises all sorts of questions about the players' motivation, Ranieri's tactics and where that performance had been hiding for so long. Shakespeare made the point that Leicester had played with similar verve and conviction against Manchester City under Ranieri, yet this seemed different because of the circumstances.

Vardy's opening goal was Leicester's first in the Premier League for 638 minutes and owed much to Marc Albrighton's vision as well as Lucas's poor defending. Albrighton's perfectly weighted pass exposed the Brazilian and Vardy did the rest with the minimum of fuss, coolly dispatching a low shot inside Simon Mignolet's near post.

That goal had been coming. Shinji Okazaki, restored to the starting lineup, had come close in the sixth minute with a header that Mignolet turned around a post. Robert Huth wastefully headed Albrighton's corner over the bar and Vardy, after a brilliant first touch that took him around Lucas, should have scored with a left-foot volley that the [Liverpool](#) goalkeeper managed to claw away.

Liverpool had threatened only sporadically, although Kasper Schmeichel did make a decent save to smother Coutinho's shot. Leicester, however, kept coming back for more and scored a second in spectacular style.

James Milner's header from Albrighton's floated centre dropped invitingly for Drinkwater about 25 yards from goal, yet there was still much to admire about the way the midfielder expertly speared a controlled volley into the far corner of the net.

Klopp, not surprisingly, sent Liverpool out early for the second half and for a period the visitors put Leicester under pressure. Yet it was the home team who scored what seemed like the decisive goal of the evening when Vardy struck again on the hour mark. This time the architect was Christian Fuchs, who created a yard of space with a neat turn to dig out a right-foot cross that Vardy met with a superb glancing header.

Coutinho, picked out by Emre Can, beat Schmeichel with a nice finish from 18 yards a few minutes later but there was never going to be a way back for Liverpool, who looked like a team who had feared the worst from the moment Ranieri was sacked. Leicester, in contrast, appeared liberated.

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The Mail

Jamie Vardy brace and Danny Drinkwater stunner seals Foxes' first league win of 2017 four days after Claudio Ranieri's sacking

Jamie Vardy overhit his cross and Riyad Mahrez chased it all the way to the far corner in a way that seemed strangely unfamiliar. Christian Fuchs arrived at pace and the pair exchanged urgent passes. Fuchs centred, perfectly, and there was Vardy to head Leicester's third. 'Leicester City,' sang the fans, 'we know what we are.' Indeed we do; but the players would get very upset if we said it. For this was a performance that bore as much resemblance to what we have seen from this group recently, as Leicester 2015-16 does to the campaign so far.

Bar this game. For here were Leicester back to their best. Claudio's away, and now the mice will play. Leicester defeated Liverpool by an even greater margin than in this fixture last year – 3-1 instead of 2-0 – and it could have been more. Vardy looked one of the best goalscorers in the Premier League again, the defence were forceful and tight, even Mahrez put in a shift.

Kasper Schmeichel made several good saves and Philippe Coutinho pulled one back after 68 minutes, but Leicester were in a different class from a team who have ambitions of qualifying for the Champions League. From first minute to last there was only ever going to be one winner. As in this fixture last year, Leicester were simply better at Liverpool's greatest strength. The ferocious effort Jurgen Klopp has sought in his own men for 18 months, pales beside what Leicester put in on a good day. They were magnificent again, just as we remember them, closing the red shirts down, harrying, hustling. Liverpool could not handle them, could not cope with the absence of time, the speed with which everything had to be done. Klopp's team have not lost a game this season given more than a week to prepare, but they had a fortnight to ready themselves for this and were still left breathless. Klopp's team have not lost a game this season with more than a week to prepare, but they had a fortnight to ready themselves for this and were still left breathless. Few will be ready for Leicester if they maintain this, not even Sevilla perhaps, yet there is something unsavoury in a team that now appears revitalised having rid themselves of the coach who engineered the greatest campaign in English football history. In the 65th minute – Claudio Ranieri's age – the fans sang his name, but who knows if he was even watching from his home in Italy? If he was, it may have been with pursed lips. Here were his boys, back to their best, but considering what had gone before, it was hardly edifying, and they may be surprised by the reaction of those outside the camp.

Not the supporters, because they lapped it up, happy to see a convincing win at last. Yet to neutrals, there was little in this display to convince that Ranieri had been anything but the victim of a dressing-room coup. Nothing to convince that the players hadn't been to blame for his downfall, and that all the heartfelt tweets and posts that, eventually, followed his departure amounted to little more than another soaking for their ex-boss: this time in crocodile tears.

This was a different Leicester. Not a new Leicester, because we have seen a display of this intensity before, but a Leicester that had not been sighted since May last year and the title run-in. They snapped into Liverpool with a desire that has simply been missing. They played it fast, played it furious, played with relentlessness that just blew Liverpool away. It is little over a year since these teams met at the King Power Stadium, a Leicester win that confirmed their seriousness as title contenders and served as a prelude to the victory Ranieri was proudest of all season – away to Manchester City. It is hard to believe the coach that masterminded the greatest title-winning season of them all is gone less than a year later, but here we are. There were handmade signs, a hired hearse outside with a blue and white floral display reading RIP FOOTBALL, but once the action began Ranieri's name was barely mentioned. The locals were too busy cheering on a team that had suddenly reappeared and attempting to ingratiate themselves with caretaker boss Craig Shakespeare. 'Shakey, give us a wave,' they sang – and naturally he obliged. Others had a darker take. 'Leicester has Shakespeare in charge tonight,' tweeted Gary Lineker. 'In the words of his Claudio, 'Done to death by slanderous tongues was the hero that here lies'. 'Much Ado About Nothing, act five, scene three, if you're interested. The fans were not. This was a night to get behind the team, they had decided, as long as the team was worth getting behind. And they were. The moment Vardy left a mark on Sadio Mane with less than a minute gone, we knew. Liverpool were playing a different team to the one that surrendered so meekly at Swansea and most points east of there, too. So it proved. Liverpool had been on one of those mid-winter warm weather training trips that worked so well for Stoke at the weekend, but Leicester looked twice as fast. Maybe taking the first six months of the season off is as beneficial as a week in La Manga. Leicester City's players celebrate their second goal after Drinkwater doubled their tally against Liverpool at the King Power

Leicester exposed Liverpool the same way they did a year ago. Quick ball into Vardy up top, long throws into the box by Fuchs. The first of those after five minutes found Robert Huth, whose header was kept out by goalkeeper Simon Mignolet. Just two minutes later, a repeat projectile was half cleared and fired back in by Vardy, the ball bouncing up off the turf and steered on by Shinji Okazaki's head: again Mignolet saved.

The pressure was building, though, and Lucas Leiva in particular was struggling to cope with Vardy. After 20 minutes, Kasper Schmeichel hit a simple long ball down the middle which Vardy plucked out of the air as if his boots were coated in adhesive. He took it down, took it past Lucas, but failed to get a true connection on his shot. Liverpool could not hold, though, and with 28 minutes gone. Leicester

scored their first league goal in nearly 11 hours of football. Marc Albrighton played the finest of through-passes first time and Vardy was on to it, outstripping Liverpool's defence and finishing first time past Mignolet at the near post.

The Brazilian runs back to his half after scoring his side's first goal of the game but it proved too little, too late for the visitors. A game of head tennis in the centre of the pitch went horribly wrong for Liverpool, Albrighton played the finest of through passes first time and Vardy was onto it, as he would have been a year ago – if not a month – outstripping Liverpool's defence and finishing first time past Mignolet at the near post. Shortly before half-time, Leicester made it two. Albrighton's cross was half-cleared by James Milner, falling to Danny Drinkwater who struck it first time from 25 yards out low into the corner.

The King Power erupted while maybe somewhere in Rome, a very decent man reached for his remote control and with a reflective sigh, changed the channel.

LEICESTER CITY (4-4-1-1): Schmeichel 7.5; Simpson 7.5, Morgan 7.5, Huth 7.5, Fuchs 7; Mahrez 7 (Gray 79'), Drinkwater 7.5, Ndidi 8, Albrighton 8 (Chilwell 90); Okazaki 7 (Amartey 68'); Vardy 8.5 **Subs not used:** King, Slimani, Zieler, Ulloa

Goals: Vardy 28, 60; Drinkwater 39 **Manager:** Craig Shakespeare 8
LIVERPOOL (4-3-3): Mignolet 6; Clyne 6, Matip 6, Lucas 5 (Woodburn 84'), Milner 6; Lallana 5 (Origi 66' 6), Can 5, Wijnaldum 5.5; Mane 5 (Moreno 66' 5), Firmino 6, Coutinho 7 **Subs not used:** Karius, Klavan, Stewart, Alexander-Arnold

Goal: Coutinho 68 **Manager:** Jurgen Klopp 5.5 **Referee:** Michael Oliver 7
Attendance: 32,034 **MoM:** Jamie Vardy

The Daily Telegraph

Leicester 3 Liverpool 1: Foxes come out fighting to kick-start season

There has been such a sense of tragedy to Leicester City that it felt appropriate a man called Shakespeare should step in, change the storyline and give it a dramatic twist.

The Premier League champions lifted themselves out of the relegation zone with an extraordinary performance, summoning the spirit of last season in the first match since Claudio Ranieri was sacked.

Assistant Craig Shakespeare has been put in charge and this result, and the way Leicester played, provided forceful evidence that he should get the job on a longer-term basis as Liverpool – woefully off-the-pace Liverpool – were overwhelmed and with it saw their chances of finishing in the top four and qualifying for the Champions League damaged.

For Leicester it is about survival – and a last-16 Champions League tie against Sevilla – and the transformation here can be spun either way depending on your standpoint. Either the players can hang their heads in shame at having turned it around only after Ranieri has gone or they have responded to his departure with a sense of responsibility and an act of release. Either way there was a reaction and a win, the first in the league this year.

This was a raw-meat approach from Leicester. A back-to-basics; up and at them, make it full throttle and keep-the-foot-down approach. It was a throwback line-up also with Shakespeare effectively fielding the XI who won the league – with the addition of Wilfred Ndidi imitating superbly in the N'Golo Kanté role – and brilliant displays by Jamie Vardy, who scored twice, Danny Drinkwater, Christian Fuchs and, above all, the tireless, clever Marc Albrighton.

Liverpool, arriving after their midseason break to La Manga, simply could not cope. They were allowed the ball, Leicester claimed just 31 per cent possession, but were hit hard time and time again with the home side smartly playing on Lucas Leiva at centre-half who could not cope with Vardy's movement, pace and aggression. Strangely Liverpool have now suffered four of their five league defeats this season to sides who started the day in the relegation zone and manager Jürgen Klopp acknowledged it was simply not good enough; not even close to being good enough. Twice he mentioned that "we all play for our future", and it appeared to be something of a warning. | Leicester vs Liverpool - key match stats
 Next up for Leicester are Hull City, at home, and it is entirely possible that Shakespeare will be confirmed until the end of the season before then although Marco Silva's side will surely prove more canny and circumspect than Liverpool who were open. That helped Leicester. As did the atmosphere. There was uncertainty as to how the fans would react – would there be banners akin to the "rats" accusations that Chelsea's players faced after Jose Mourinho's sacking last season? – but those fears were quickly banished. The fans rallied round; they felt the need to get behind their team and fully played their part.

It added to the sense of emotion and Leicester surfed it until it eventually became a tidal wave that engulfed Liverpool; just as Klopp feared. He had warned his team but sometimes it is hard to batten down the hatches when you do not quite know the full weight of what is going to hit you. Also, it is not in Klopp or Liverpool's nature to do caution.

The first goal mattered. Really mattered. Vardy went close, serving a warning, but only half-connected with the ball as he was given a sight of goal and Lucas failed to deal with him. Simon Mignolet blocked. But then the goalkeeper was beaten. A slack pass infield by Georginio Wijnaldum went straight to Albrighton who played a wonderfully incisive first-time pass between the Liverpool central defenders for Vardy to sprint clear. Through on goal he calmly steered the ball beyond Mignolet and the stadium erupted. That earthquake scale – one of the stories of last season – was being revisited by the reverberations.

It was Leicester's first league goal of 2017 and, astonishingly, they quickly gathered a second with Albrighton retrieving a half-clearance to hook the ball

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back into the area. James Milner headed it away but it dropped to Drinkwater who, 25 yards out, adjusted superbly to shape his body and half-volley right-footed beyond a stranded Mignolet. It was all about the technique, the execution, the swerve and the celebration.

Liverpool were reeling and were sent out early for the second half by a clearly angry Klopp. He demanded an immediate response and his team camped in Leicester's half although that made them more vulnerable to the counter-attack with Vardy relentlessly preying on Lucas's shoulder.

There were warnings and then came another goal with Ndidi intercepting – for the umpteenth time – and Riyad Mahrez eventually retrieving Vardy's deep cross to combine with Fuchs. The full-back centred and there was Vardy, again evading Lucas, to guide a close-range header past Mignolet.

Liverpool had finally to summon a response and Adam Lallana's last act, before being substituted, was to force Kasper Schmeichel into a fine save. As Lallana trooped off, on 65 minutes, there was a chorus of "Ranieri" (65 to reflect the Italian's age, apparently) with the lights from the fans' phones also used to illuminate the stands in tribute to their now former manager. It felt appropriate, well judged – and helped by a three-goal advantage.

That was soon just two with Emre Can running from deep before cutting inside and laying the ball off to Philippe Coutinho who shifted his feet quickly and side-footed past Schmeichel.

Was there time? Lucas headed wide and Schmeichel fumbled Coutinho's shot just past the post but Leicester were throwing their bodies on the line; playing like their lives depended upon it. Finally they are fighting. The plot has twisted.



Leicester prove there's life after Ranieri with shock win against Liverpool

It was the first game since they shot Bambi. The first game since the sacking of the man who had steered Leicester's unsung squad to their universally appreciated Premier League title. The first game since, if you believe the more melodramatic coverage of Claudio Ranieri's dismissal, Cinderella tarnished this century's favourite football fairy tale by dumping Prince Charming.

The full impact of that decision will be known only in time but the short-term effect was startling as a Leicester team without a goal or victory in the Premier League in 2017 stopped the rot in emphatic fashion with a 3-1 victory over Liverpool. On Saturday they had slipped into the bottom three since the first time since April 2015. Now they climbed out of it after an evening where they looked like champions once more.

Craig Shakespeare's first game in caretaker charge brought the bounce the club's owners will have hoped for and boosts his chances of remaining in the post, at least for the short term. Suddenly Saturday's match against Hull City looks eminently winnable for a side who had previously lost five in a row in the Premier League. What it does for Liverpool is another story on a dreadful night for the Merseysiders, who were overrun in midfield and horribly uncertain in defence.

This had been an opportunity for Jurgen Klopp's men to climb back into the top four; instead they added Leicester to the list of bottom-half outposts where they have fallen short this season, along with Burnley, Bournemouth and Hull. Liverpool have won only two of their 12 games played in 2017 and at this rate, could even find themselves in a fight with Everton for sixth place.

This was Shakespeare's first starting XI since taking temporary charge and it was the essentially the one which delivered the league title last season with the same players -- N'Golo KantA[c] excepted -- and same shape. Leicester began the match, moreover, with the same intensity and energy and desire as last season. Admittedly there was too much intensity in Vardy's poor, unpunished, first-minute challenge on Sadio ManA[c] when he took ball and man and had Jurgen Klopp hopping up and down in anger on the sidelines. But the tone was set and Leicester's urgency nearly brought an early goal when Shinji Okazaki got his head to a Vardy shot but Simon Mignolet saved well.

The club's vice-chairman Aiyawatt Srivaddhanaprabha had defended the Leicester players in his match programme notes from the accusation they had conspired in Ranieri's downfall. "This was our decision, our decision alone and it is unfair that our players, who supported Claudio fiercely, are being accused of disloyalty," he wrote. Maybe, but the difference in their performance levels told its own story as a revitalised group of players set about harrying Liverpool with an impressive unity of purpose.

Vardy should have given them the lead after 20 minutes after he collected a long Schmeichel kick with a terrific touch and turned Joel Matip. He failed to beat Mignolet then but soon had his first league goal.

Again, it was straight out of last season's playbook. From the centre-circle Marc Albrighton dissected the Liverpool centre-backs with a brilliant first-time ball to send Vardy harrying away down the inside-right channel. He had not scored in the Premier League since 10 December but suddenly this was the Vardy of 2015/16 as he flashed the ball past Mignolet at the near post.

Leicester's second was even better as Drinkwater pounced on a headed clearance by James Milner and from the edge of the D directed a wondrous, volleyed shot into the corner of Mignolet's goal.

The absence of captain Jordan Henderson, sidelined by a foot injury, did not help Liverpool but they were second best from the first whistle. Kasper

Schmeichel made decent saves from Philippe Coutinho and Emre Can before the break but this was a shadow of the Liverpool who had blown away Tottenham Hotspur in their last outing 16 days earlier. Whatever the benefits of last week's break to La Manga, they were not evident here.

Liverpool's night got worse as the electric Vardy rose above Can to head in from a Christian Fuchs centre. When Liverpool did respond, it was too late. The King Power crowd had just lit up their phones and chorused Ranieri's name when the visitors pulled a goal back. Schmeichel had done well to deny Adam Lallana but Coutinho's low 15-yard strike was too precise

By now Klopp had sent on Divock Origi and Alberto Moreno for Lallana and ManA[c] but there was no late cavalry charge. We even saw Riyad Mahrez come to life with a jinking run and lay-off to Drinkwater who nearly added a fourth goal. Penny for the thoughts of Signor Ranieri?



SO NOW THE REAL FOXES STAND UP; Claudio goes and Leicester look champion

JAMIE VARDY landed a right-hander on a corner flag, Kasper Schmeichel double-punched the air, Danny Drinkwater screamed delight.

Player-power, eh? Whether it got Claudio Ranieri the sack or not, two things are for sure.

On the pitch under Ranieri, it had been switched off.

With Claudio gone, it was back on again.

Read into that what you like, probably the obvious.

But to the board and the fans, any betrayal of Ranieri might not matter so much now. Even title-winning, sentimental loyalty can be fleeting. With Vardy scoring twice and Danny Drinkwater hitting a beauty, this was the fairytale Leicester, the champions.

There was almost an inevitability about their rediscovered vigour, an unavoidable and welcome consequence of the players being painted as ungrateful, unfit, disinterested schemers.

No-one was more reinvigorated than Vardy, no one can put as much venom into the angry celebration as he can. Not that any sort of celebration has been too common this season.

When he scampered past two caravan-towing centrehalves and finished like a Footballer of the Year should finish, it was his first Premier League goal since that hatrick against Manchester City in December.

Liverpool conveniently parted down the middle as City had but Marc Albrighton's pass was still a peach. This was the Albrighton of the titelwinning team and you could ditto that throughout the line-up. It was certainly true in Drinkwater's case. Not only did he assert a degree of dominance in midfield, he produced the sort of strike that was a testament to technique that has deserted him too often this season, a carefully controlled 25-yard volley fading away from Simon Mignolet.

On a night of pointed, euphoric reactions, Drinkwater went for the roaring knee-slide as the Thai owners hand-slapped the punters within high-fiving reach of the heated seats. The feeling in those privileged parts was clearly one of relief.

Relief there were gestures rather than backlashes among the fans. A march to the stadium seemed as much in honour of Claudio Ranieri as an angry protest against his dismissal while, inside the stadium, you would have needed some amplifier to pick up any sort of mutinous muttering. And whether the neutral likes it or not, why would there be?

Why would there be when Vardy and Riyad Mahrez were chasing lost causes like they used to do?

That is what led to the third. An overhit pass from a team-mate might have been frowned at by Mahrez until now, instead he chased it down, had an exchange with Christian Fuchs, whose cross was emphatically headed in by Vardy.

The goal underlined the staggering mediocrity of Liverpool here, two weeks of rest, recreation and warmweather training left them in vacation mode.

Despite the pleasantlytaken goal from Philippe Coutinho, this was a performance that again seriously beings their top-four credentials into question.

Leicester took full advantage, and the fans were back to their thunderously supportive.

After the third went in, there was a phone-lit, fullthroated tribute to Ranieri bellowed around the ground. If he had been watching, you suspect he would have turned off well before that moment.

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'Bullied' Reds roll over in pitiful display without any excuse
Liverpool were welcomed at the King Power Stadium by the sight of a hearse with flowers spelling out 'RIP Football'. Jurgen Klopp's players seemed to take the message literally. What followed was a lifeless performance as the shoddy Reds were deservedly put to the sword by a revitalised Leicester City.

The wake following Claudio Ranieri's shock sacking turned into a night of celebration for the champions and Liverpool proved to be the perfect guests as they simply rolled over. So much for that commanding victory over Tottenham proving to be a turning point after such a miserable start to 2017.

So much for that 16-day break and bonding trip to La Manga giving the Reds the perform platform to step up their push for Champions League qualification.

There could be no excuses for such a pitiful display.

Make no mistake, Liverpool got bullied. They got outfought and outworked as they lost battles all across the field. After all the flak the Leicester players had taken for their part in Ranieri's downfall there was always going to be reaction, but Klopp's side didn't come close to matching the hosts' show of energy and desire and that's unacceptable. With Craig Shakespeare in the home dugout, the Reds' served up a Comedy of Errors as defensive weaknesses were glaringly exposed.

Jamie Vardy and Danny Drinkwater fired the Foxes into a 2-0 lead at the break before Vardy's second of the night put the outcome beyond doubt.

Philippe Coutinho's seventh goal of the season provided a glimmer of hope but Liverpool never looked like salvaging anything.

For those in the travelling Kop there was a sense of deja vu as Leicester became the fifth side in the bottom half of the table to claim the Reds' scalp this term.

The blueprint they followed was painfully familiar. The Foxes sat back, packed the central areas and forced Liverpool wide as they defended in numbers and then hit Klopp's men on the counter-attack. The Reds enjoyed 69% possession but did precious little with it. This was Hull City away revisited.

Klopp is adamant that Liverpool don't have a problem when it comes to facing that kind of stubborn opponent but the results don't lie.

Lack of depth brought into sharp focus

The players let Klopp down but he also has to have a look in the mirror because the game plan for these type of matches just isn't working.

This was a night that also brought into sharp focus the lack of depth in Klopp's squad and the folly of not strengthening during the January window.

Over the course of the evening Liverpool had two midfielders playing at centre-back and another one at left-back. Square pegs in round holes.

In the absence of captain Jordan Henderson, who was ruled out by a foot injury, there was a chronic lack of leadership. Nobody took responsibility.

The relegation threatened Foxes, who hadn't scored a Premier League goal in 2017 let alone won a game, were combative from the off and Liverpool found themselves with their backs firmly pressed against the wall early on.

Vardy set the tone with the striker fortunate to get away with planting his studs on Sadio Mane's boot. Christian Fuchs' long throws caused plenty of problems with Simon Mignolet clinging on to deny Robert Huth before turning away Shinji Okazaki's header. Liverpool belatedly settled but despite enjoying plenty of the ball they rarely threatened. The front four of Adam Lallana, Mane, Roberto Firmino and Philippe Coutinho failed to fire. There was none of the spark or swagger which repeatedly carved Spurs apart.

Joel Matip tried to inject some life into proceedings as he strode forward with purpose but for the most part Liverpool's build up play was slow and predictable. Most alarming was Leicester's ability to spark panic with the most basic of ale-house tactics Full-backs James Milner and Nathaniel Clyne failed to provide any semblance of quality down the flanks. Neither was there any control in midfield with Gini Wijnaldum a pale shadow of the man who bossed proceedings against Spurs. What was most alarming was Leicester's ability to spark panic with the most basic of ale-house tactics. After Kasper Schmeichel launched it down field, Vardy was allowed to bring it down and get away from both Lucas Leiva and Matip before scuffing at Mignolet. Liverpool were clinging on and their luck ran out just before the half hour mark. Wijnaldum's error close to halfway was pounced on by Marc Albrighton, who expertly released Vardy. The England international raced through and coolly tucked it past Mignolet.

Coutinho could have restored parity but the angle was tight and Schmeichel made the block. Six minutes before the break Liverpool's plight deepened. Milner's defensive header from Albrighton's cross was poor and Drinkwater made him pay, unleashing a sweetly struck right-footer which nestled in the bottom corner.

Klopp responded at the interval by going to three at the back with Can, who was one of the few to make a real contribution, forced into duty as a left-sided centre-back. Liverpool remained a distant second best. Lessons simply weren't learned as the struggling Lucas was repeatedly left one on one in a foot race with Vardy. It was a mismatch.

At the other end Firmino was way off the pace and when he did get some decent service his touch let him down badly.

Liverpool's fate was sealed on the hour mark. Once again they were architects of their own downfall.

Lallana stood off Fuchs and senselessly allowed him to cross from the left.

The delivery was pinpoint and Vardy got above Can to nod into the far corner. Divock Origi and Alberto Moreno replaced the ineffective Lallana and Mane but it was akin to rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic.

Coutinho provided a lifeline when he slotted home from the edge of the box after a surging run and inviting lay-off from Can.

The Germany international then had appeals for a penalty waved away before Origi was thwarted by Schmeichel at his near post.

The Danish keeper unconvincingly kept out Coutinho's volley but Liverpool's late revival was far too little, far too late.

MATCH FACTS

LEICESTER CITY: Schmeichel, Simpson, Morgan, Huth, Fuchs, Drinkwater, Ndidi, Mahrez (Gray 79), Okazaki (Amartey 69), Albrighton (Chilwell 90), Vardy. Subs: King, Slimani, Zieler, Ulloa. **GOALS:** Vardy 28, 60, Drinkwater 39.

LIVERPOOL: Mignolet, Clyne, Matip, Lucas (Woodburn 84), Milner, Lallana (Orig 66), Can, Wijnaldum, Mane (Moreno 66), Firmino, Coutinho. Subs: Karius, Klavan, Stewart, Alexander-Arnold. **GOAL:** Coutinho 68.

REFEREE: Michael Oliver.

ATT: 32,034.

Man of the match: Emre Can. Best of a bad bunch.

Leicester Mercury

Why haven't we seen that more often?

It has been an extraordinary few days in [Leicester City's](#) history.

The shock sacking of Claudio Ranieri on Thursday led to an outpouring of love for the Italian for his incredible achievement last season, which captured the imagination of the watching world, and a deluge of anger and recrimination over the decision. Those who had cheered City's title triumph now wished for their demise for having ruined some of the romance of their victory by sacking its chief instigator. The City players had to endure a media frenzy with accusations the players had instigated Ranieri's removal, with the players breaking their silence to defend their honour amidst growing animosity.

Through all the emotion and drama, through these stormy seas, City needed a calm head and they turned to Ranieri's and Nigel Pearson's trusted lieutenant Craig Shakespeare to steady the sinking ship.

His first team had a familiar feel to it. In fact, besides the gangly figure of Wilfred Ndidi in central midfield instead of the diminutive N'Golo Kante, it was a carbon copy of the side that had performed so well the previous campaign.

There was also the notable additions of Islam Slimani and Leonardo Ulloa, who had threatened not to play again for the club after accusing Ranieri of betrayal, among the substitutes. But there was no place in the squad for summer arrivals Ahmed Musa, Papy Mendy and Bartosz Kapustka.

The City players were probably on to a hiding to nothing. If they performed well, those who fostered the betrayal theory would point the finger even more, while if they wilted under the pressure the decision to remove Ranieri and risk the wrath of the watching world would be for nothing. Taking the brunt of a lot of the criticism was Vardy. Pundits had accused Vardy of a lack of effort at times and of losing his hunger for goals, but he had been buoyed by his second half strike in Sevilla – the last goal of Ranieri's reign. So what would the response be? Well, City were transformed from the side that had not scored a league goal in 2017 and had lost their last five. From the first whistle, they were aggressive, hard working and committed. Vardy left his mark on Sadio Mane in the first minute and that set the tone for a first half performance of vintage proportions.

Simon Mignolet had been forced to produce a string of saves to deny Vardy and Shinji Okazaki before Vardy scored a typical goal on 29 minutes when he raced on to a superbly weighted throughball from Albrighton and slotted a precise finish past Mignolet. The celebrations among the City players demonstrated just what that goal meant to them. But it was to get even better six minutes before half-time when Drinkwater produced a stunning volley from 25-yards which gave Mignolet no chance. It was almost as impressive in a different way to Vardy's goal of season against the same opposition last season. It may not have been from the same distance but the technique was exquisite. The City fans were loving what they were seeing and they roared on Shakespeare's men. Any suggestions before the game of a backlash from supporters were completely misjudged.

They had even more to cheer on the hour when Vardy scored his second with a deft header from a sublime cross from Christian Fuchs. Fuchs had linked up well with Mahrez in the build-up and City were now in full flow.

Even Kasper Schmeichel was getting on the act with a superb save to deny Adam Lallana. Then cue the 65th minute and the City fans rose to a man to chant the name of their departed leader in tribute to his incredible achievement. It must have been bitter sweet for the Italian, wherever he was watching on from.

The City fans were silenced when Philippe Coutinho pulled a goal back for the visitors after a sweeping move that carved City open at the back, but only for a second or so. That clean-sheet remains elusive. Ranieri once famously offered his players pizza from his native country as a bribe for a shut-out. Birmingham-born Shakespeare may be offering Balti pies. City had some defending to do as the Reds tried desperately to battle their way back into the game, but this was a much more resolute and committed City and their display will leave an obvious question... Why haven't we seen that more often this season?

Teams Leicester City (4-4-2) 1 Kasper Schmeichel: 17 Danny Simpson, 6 Robert Huth. 5 Wes Morgan. 28 Christian Fuchs: 26 Rivad Mahrez. 4 Dannv Drinkwater.

Date: 27 February 2017 Opposition: Leicester City Competition: League	Guardian	Mirror	BBC	27 February 2017
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	Telegraph	Echo		

25 Wilfred Ndidi, 11 Marc Albrighton: 20 Shinji Okazaki, 9 Jamie Vardy:
 Subs: 3 Ben Chilwell (for Albrighton, 90+1min), 10 Andy King, 13 Daniel Amartey (for Okazaki, 69min), 19 Islam Slimani, 21 Ron-Robert Zieler, 22 Demarai Gray (for Mahrez, 80min), 23 Leonardo Ulloa
 Liverpool (4-3-3) 22 Simon Mignolet; 2 Nathaniel Clyne, 32 Joel Matip, 21 Lucas, 07 James Milner; 20 Adam Lallana, 23 Emre Can, 5 Georginio Wijnaldum; 19 Sadio Mane, 11 Roberto Firmino, 10 Philippe Coutinho
 Subs: 1 Loris Karius, 17 Ragnar Klaven, 19 Alberto Moreno (for Mane, 66min), 27 Divock Origi (for Lallana, 66min), 35 Kevin Stewart, 58 Ben Woodburn (for Lucas, 83min), 66 Trent Alexander-Arnold
 Referee: Michael Oliver
 Stats Goals: Vardy (28min), Drinkwater (39min), Vardy (60min), Coutinho (68min)
 Half-time: 2-0 Yellow cards: None
 Att: 32,034
 Possession: 31% (City), 69% (Liverpool) Shots on target: 7 (City), 7 (Liverpool)
 Shots in total: 13 (City), 17 (Liverpool) Corners: 5 (City), 12 (Liverpool) Fouls: 8 (City), 7 (Liverpool)



Leicester produced a superb display in their first game following the sacking of Claudio Ranieri, moving out of the Premier League bottom three as two goals from Jamie Vardy and a Danny Drinkwater strike saw off Liverpool.
 It was a much-improved display from the Foxes under caretaker boss Craig Shakespeare, who took over after the departure of the man who led them to last season's remarkable title triumph.
 The first strike was straight from the 2015-16 playbook as Vardy collected Marc Albrighton's precise long pass before racing clear and finishing low past Simon Mignolet to score his second goal in a week.
 The second was an absolute cracker from Vardy's England team-mate Drinkwater, who showed superb technique to lash home his first goal of the campaign from outside the box following a clearance from a long throw.
 And Vardy sealed the win with a glancing header from Christian Fuchs' cross in the second half before Philippe Coutinho stroked home a consolation goal.
 The goals were the first the Foxes have scored in the league in 2017 and ended a run of five straight top-flight defeats in spectacular fashion.
 Liverpool - who would have climbed to third with a victory - have now lost five of their past seven matches in all competitions.
 Ranieri's name was everywhere at the King Power - in pre-game conversations, on banners and in chants - as was his face, courtesy of paper masks worn by some Foxes supporters.
 The 65-year-old Italian has left an indelible imprint on the club with last season's astonishing success.
 However, the inconvenient truth for many is that he was overseeing statistically one of the worst title defences in English top-flight history - one that has left Leicester facing the prospect of become the first reigning champions to be relegated since Manchester City in 1938.
 Amid suggestions the players had stopped playing for their former boss, there was an element of damned if you do win and damned if you don't in this game.
 However, the need for victory was paramount and they were excellent from start to finish as Shakespeare drew a committed, energetic and ruthless display to improve his chances of steering the club to safety - and possibly succeeding Ranieri on a permanent basis.
 The champions also have players in form. Vardy now has three goals in two games and Kasper Schmeichel remains an authoritative presence in goal, as he demonstrated with two big saves to deny Coutinho and Emre Can in the first half and Adam Lallana after the break.
 While Leicester have embarked on a demanding February comprising five matches, Liverpool have taken to the field just twice this month and came into this game off the back of a 16-day break, during which they took a training trip to La Manga in Spain.
 But instead of looking refreshed, the Reds looked rusty throughout and were simply unable to make an impression on a night when they were always likely to be second on the bill.
 Just over 12 months ago, Jurgen Klopp's side were undone on this ground as a Vardy-inspired Leicester consigned them to a defeat that left them 16 points off top spot in eighth.
 They are now 14 points behind leaders Chelsea in fifth but look as far away from challenging for the title as they did in 2016.
 Goalscorer Coutinho was their only consistent attacking threat, while the defence continues to look shaky - especially with Lucas masquerading at centre-back - and their midfield lacked the industry and bite to compete in the absence of injured captain Jordan Henderson.
 They now have a real challenge on their hands if they are to finish in the top four and seal a return to the Champions League next season.
 Man of the match - Jamie Vardy (Leicester)
 What the managers said
 Leicester caretaker manager Craig Shakespeare: "I could see in their eyes that they were up for the fight in the warm-up.
 "The professionalism of the players has never been questioned by me. Having taken training with them, I know the criticism has hurt and perhaps there was a little more fire in the belly because of that."

"They know they are guilty of underperforming - but this is only one result and we must build on that."
 Leicester 3-1 Liverpool: Players reacted to criticism - Craig Shakespeare
 Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp: "The language issues become a bit harder when you lose. It's hard to find the right words.
 "It's not that Leicester were over-aggressive tonight, I think we were not physical enough.
 "We knew how Leicester would play, go back to their roots. We could have done much better. We let them be Leicester of last year - that's our fault.
 "We should get criticised. This inconsistency makes absolutely no sense."
 Leicester 3-1 Liverpool: Jurgen Klopp fails to draw any positives
 Ndidi does Kante impression - the stats you need to know
 Leicester have won all six of their Premier League games in which they have scored first this season, the only 100% record in the division.
 Four of Liverpool's five Premier League defeats this season have been against clubs who started the match in the relegation zone (also Burnley, Swansea and Hull City).
 Vardy's goal was Leicester's first in the top flight since 31 December, ending a run of 637 minutes without finding the net in the competition.
 Coutinho's strike was his first in 12 games for Liverpool - he last scored against Watford in November.
 Wilfred Ndidi made 11 tackles on Monday. Only former Leicester midfielder N'Golo Kante - now at Chelsea - has made more in a Premier League match this season (14 against Liverpool in January).
 Only in 2012, when they picked up five points, have Liverpool won fewer points from their opening seven Premier League games of a calendar year than the six they have so far in 2017 (level with 1993).
 What next?
 Leicester host another relegation-threatened side on Saturday when Hull visit the King Power Stadium (15:00 GMT kick-off), followed by the second leg of their Champions League last-16 tie with Sevilla at 19:45 on 14 March.
 Liverpool host Arsenal in Saturday's 17:30 kick-off and follow that up with another home game the following Sunday when Burnley travel to Anfield (16:00).

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Match ends, Leicester City 3, Liverpool 1.
 90'+10' Delay over. They are ready to continue.
 90'+6' Second Half ends, Leicester City 3, Liverpool 1.
 90'+5' Divock Origi (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing.
 90'+5' Foul by Wes Morgan (Leicester City.
 90'+5' Attempt missed. Christian Fuchs (Leicester City left footed shot from more than 40 yards on the left wing is just a bit too high from a direct free kick.
 90'+4' Foul by James Milner (Liverpool.
 90'+4' Ben Chilwell (Leicester City wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 90'+1' Substitution, Leicester City. Ben Chilwell replaces Marc Albrighton.
 88' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Christian Fuchs.
 87' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Kasper Schmeichel.
 87' Attempt saved. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Nathaniel Clyne with a cross.
 86' Attempt blocked. Nathaniel Clyne (Liverpool right footed shot from the right side of the box is blocked. Assisted by Roberto Firmino.
 84' Substitution, Liverpool. Ben Woodburn replaces Lucas Leiva.
 83' Delay over. They are ready to continue.
 83' Delay in match Jamie Vardy (Leicester City because of an injury.
 81' Attempt missed. Lucas Leiva (Liverpool header from the centre of the box misses to the right. Assisted by Nathaniel Clyne with a cross following a corner.
 81' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Danny Simpson.
 80' Substitution, Leicester City. Demarai Gray replaces Riyad Mahrez.
 79' Attempt missed. Daniel Drinkwater (Leicester City right footed shot from the centre of the box is just a bit too high. Assisted by Riyad Mahrez.
 78' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Kasper Schmeichel.
 78' Attempt missed. Divock Origi (Liverpool right footed shot from the left side of the box is close, but misses to the left. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.
 77' Attempt saved. Christian Fuchs (Leicester City left footed shot from outside the box is saved in the centre of the goal.
 69' Substitution, Leicester City. Daniel Amartey replaces Shinji Okazaki.
 68' Goal! Leicester City 3, Liverpool 1. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box to the bottom left corner. Assisted by Emre Can.
 67' Attempt blocked. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Joel Matip.
 66' Substitution, Liverpool. Divock Origi replaces Adam Lallana.
 66' Substitution, Liverpool. Alberto Moreno replaces Sadio Mané.
 65' Attempt missed. Georginio Wijnaldum (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box misses to the right following a corner.
 65' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Kasper Schmeichel.
 65' Attempt saved. Adam Lallana (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Roberto Firmino.
 64' James Milner (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 64' Foul by Daniel Drinkwater (Leicester City.
 63' Attempt missed. Joel Matip (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is close, but misses to the right. Assisted by Georginio Wijnaldum.
 60' Goal! Leicester City 3, Liverpool 0. Jamie Vardy (Leicester City header from the centre of the box to the bottom right corner. Assisted by Christian Fuchs with a cross.
 59' Offside, Leicester City. Shinji Okazaki tries a through ball, but Jamie Vardy is caught offside.
 57' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Robert Huth.
 57' Attempt blocked. Sadio Mané (Liverpool left footed shot from the right side of the box is blocked. Assisted by Nathaniel Clyne.
 54' Attempt saved. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom left corner.
 52' Offside, Liverpool. Roberto Firmino tries a through ball, but Sadio Mané is caught offside.
 Second Half begins Leicester City 2, Liverpool 0.
 45'+3' First Half ends, Leicester City 2, Liverpool 0.
 45'+2' Attempt missed. Joel Matip (Liverpool header from the centre of the box misses to the left. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho with a cross following a corner.
 45'+2' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Kasper Schmeichel.
 45'+2' Attempt saved. Emre Can (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom right corner. Assisted by Sadio Mané.
 45'+1' Attempt missed. Marc Albrighton (Leicester City right footed shot from more than 35 yards misses to the right.
 43' Adam Lallana (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 43' Foul by Christian Fuchs (Leicester City.
 41' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Marc Albrighton.
 40' Attempt blocked. Adam Lallana (Liverpool right footed shot from the right side of the box is blocked. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.
 39' Goal! Leicester City 2, Liverpool 0. Daniel Drinkwater (Leicester City right footed shot from outside the box to the bottom right corner.
 38' Attempt blocked. Wilfred Ndidi (Leicester City header from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Christian Fuchs.
 37' Corner, Leicester City. Conceded by Lucas Leiva.
 34' Attempt saved. Wilfred Ndidi (Leicester City right footed shot from the right side of the box is saved in the bottom right corner. Assisted by Jamie Vardy.
 33' Foul by Lucas Leiva (Liverpool.
 33' Jamie Vardy (Leicester City wins a free kick in the attacking half.
 33' Attempt saved. Georginio Wijnaldum (Liverpool with an attempt from the centre of the box is saved in the bottom left corner. Assisted by Adam Lallana with a cross.
 30' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Riyad Mahrez.
 30' Attempt saved. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool left footed shot from the left side of the six yard box is saved in the centre of the goal.

28' Goal! Leicester City 1, Liverpool 0. Jamie Vardy (Leicester City right footed shot from the right side of the box to the bottom right corner. Assisted by Marc Albrighton with a through ball.
 27' Delay over. They are ready to continue.
 27' Delay in match Danny Simpson (Leicester City because of an injury.
 24' Attempt blocked. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Roberto Firmino.
 24' Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 24' Foul by Daniel Drinkwater (Leicester City.
 23' Joel Matip (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 23' Foul by Robert Huth (Leicester City.
 22' Offside, Leicester City. Wilfred Ndidi tries a through ball, but Jamie Vardy is caught offside.
 20' Corner, Leicester City. Conceded by Nathaniel Clyne.
 20' Attempt saved. Jamie Vardy (Leicester City left footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the bottom right corner.
 20' Offside, Liverpool. Simon Mignolet tries a through ball, but Emre Can is caught offside.
 19' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Danny Simpson.
 18' Georginio Wijnaldum (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing.
 18' Foul by Wilfred Ndidi (Leicester City.
 16' Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
 16' Foul by Daniel Drinkwater (Leicester City.
 15' Attempt missed. Robert Huth (Leicester City header from the centre of the box is high and wide to the right. Assisted by Marc Albrighton with a cross following a corner.
 14' Corner, Leicester City. Conceded by Lucas Leiva.
 14' Foul by Emre Can (Liverpool.
 14' Shinji Okazaki (Leicester City wins a free kick in the attacking half.
 12' Adam Lallana (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 12' Foul by Daniel Drinkwater (Leicester City.
 11' Foul by Joel Matip (Liverpool.
 11' Robert Huth (Leicester City wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 11' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Daniel Drinkwater.
 10' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Wes Morgan.
 7' Corner, Leicester City. Conceded by Simon Mignolet.
 7' Attempt saved. Shinji Okazaki (Leicester City header from the centre of the box is saved in the bottom right corner. Assisted by Jamie Vardy.
 7' Attempt blocked. Jamie Vardy (Leicester City right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked.
 6' Robert Huth (Leicester City wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 6' Foul by Sadio Mané (Liverpool.
 5' Attempt saved. Robert Huth (Leicester City header from the centre of the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Christian Fuchs.
 4' Offside, Leicester City. Robert Huth tries a through ball, but Riyad Mahrez is caught offside.
 4' Corner, Leicester City. Conceded by James Milner.
 2' Delay over. They are ready to continue.
 1' Delay in match Sadio Mané (Liverpool because of an injury.
 First Half begins.
 Lineups are announced and players are warming up.