Date: 30 December 2017
Opposition: Leicester City
Competition: League

Express	Telegraph	Echo
Guardian	Mirror	Mercury
Independent	Mail	BBC

30 December 2017

EXPRESS

Mohamed Salah strikes twice as Reds fight back to beat Foxes

The Egypt international took his tally to 23 for the campaign, with 17 in the league, thanks to a second half double to reach the same mark set by Hunt in 1961-62.

Liverpool had been trailing to an early goal from Jamie Vardy, who set a record of his own by becoming the first Foxes player to score in five successive matches against the Reds.

Vardy has long been a thorn in the side of the Merseysiders and he took his tally to seven in eight appearances against them, but Jurgen Klopp's side have someone in even better form and they needed him to finally overcome another nemesis in Claude Puel.

The former Lyon and Southampton manager was six matches unbeaten against Klopp – including four clean sheets last season – heading into the game and looked to be working his magic again as early as the third minute.

With soon-to-be new signing Virgil van Dijk watching from the directors' box, the auditions began for who should partner the world's most expensive defender when the £75million man completes his move from Southampton on Tuesday.

Joel Matip was first to fluff his lines when his misplaced pass was picked up in midfield by Vicente Iborra, who slid a ball inside Reds left-back Andrew Robertson.

Riyad Mahrez, with a couple of yards head start, had plenty of time to square for Vardy to fire into an empty net.

Since August 2014 no one has scored as many goals as Vardy's 22 in 41 appearances against the Premier League's top six.

Salah, Philippe Coutinho, Roberto Firmino and Sadio Mane struggled for a breakthrough.

Salah had four decent chances, Coutinho and Firmino had long-range efforts saved by Kasper Schmeichel, Mane a goal correctly ruled out for offside, with Joe Gomez's drive from distance just dipping over.

Eight minutes into the second half Liverpool were level when Mane's clever back-heel picked out Salah, who held off Christian Fuchs and Daniel Amartey to pick his spot beyond Schmeichel.

Wilfred Ndidi shot just wide but it was a rare chance for the visitors, who surprisingly replaced both Vardy and Mahrez with 17 minutes to go.

Liverpool then took the lead with another backheel, this time from James Milner, allowing Salah to beat Schmeichel at his near post for his 17th goal in his last 17 appearances.

the guardian

Mohamed Salah double inspires Liverpool fightback after Vardy opener

By Jürgen Klopp's admission the £75m that Liverpool are paying for Virgil van Dijk is unpleasant but Mohamed Salah represents "a catch" at £36.9m. His valuation of the Egypt international appeared sensible, even understated in the perverse world of football economics, after Salah inspired an outstanding Liverpool recovery against Leicester City.

"The best reaction since I've been here," said the Liverpool manager, who celebrated with characteristic abandon on the final whistle and with good reason. Salah struck two more superb goals to overturn Jamie Vardy's opener at Anfield and take his season's tally to 23 in all competitions. No Liverpool player has ever scored more before new year, the former Roma winger equalling Roger Hunt's record from 1961-62 before departing with a limp that makes him a doubt for the New Year's Day trip to Burnley. Salah encapsulated Liverpool's quality throughout.

Klopp's team showed why Van Dijk has been bought at such expense when conceding cheaply and early but their comeback was hugely impressive in terms of performance and character. The result bodes well for a Liverpool team that can only improve with the defender on board and Claude Puel had no complaints over his first defeat in seven meetings with the Anfield club. "Liverpool played their best today," said the Leicester manager.

His Liverpool counterpart commented: "You don't want to go 1-0 down but if you do you want to see a reaction and it was fantastic. Not one player reacted in a negative way. We kept on going, created, created, created, and played brilliant football. Everyone in the stadium thought 'Wow, what a game' and 100 per cent it was one of the best since I've been here so far."

The world's most expensive defender had only just taken an executive seat in the main stand when Leicester took the lead thanks to another lapse in the rearguard that he has been bought to improve. Dejan Lovren may be the man with most to lose following the Holland international's acquisition but it was Joël Matip's mistake that demonstrated every Liverpool centre-half is threatened by the enhanced competition. Leicester punished the error superbly, in fairness.

Matip was under no pressure when he took the ball from Loris Karius, back in the team as Klopp rotated his goalkeepers, and sold Emre Can short with a careless pass. Vicente Iborra won the midfield challenge and swept an exquisite ball behind Andrew Robertson into Riyad Mahrez. The winger squared first time and there was Vardy, so often Liverpool's nemesis, arriving ahead of Matip to score from close range.

It was Vardy's seventh goal in eight appearances against Liverpool – becoming the first Leicester player to score in five successive meetings between the clubs in the process – and only the fourth league goal that Klopp's team have conceded at Anfield this season. It was also the cue for Liverpool to deliver a rampant response, albeit one that was littered with missed chances and good saves from Kasper Schmeichel until Salah levelled in style. It was an achievement by Leicester to hold their advantage until the interval.

The pressure was unrelenting from Liverpool and a refusal to be disheartened by wasted opportunities was as impressive as their performance. Merited reward finally came from the devastating feet of Salah with his 22nd and 23rd goals of a remarkable debut season in red.

Liverpool's equaliser reflected the confidence running through Klopp's players. Roberto Firmino and Can were involved before Sadio Mané sent Salah darting into the area with a delightful back-heel. The summer signing evaded challenges from Christian Fuchs and Daniel Amartey and, with Schmeichel advancing, fired a low left-foot shot through the goalkeeper's legs.

Similarly to Liverpool, Leicester responded well to conceding and almost regained the lead when Wilfred Ndidi curled a shot a fraction wide of Karius's goal. But with Philippe Coutinho causing mayhem with a series of impudent touchesover the visiting defence it was the hosts who continued to pose the greater threat. The winner also stemmed from a first-time flick into Salah, this time from James Milner, but there appeared no immediate danger with Harry Maguire towering at his back. In an instant, however, Salah was gone, rolling the big defender brilliantly before placing his latest precise finish into Schmeichel's bottom corner.

"I think Mo can keep this standard but I also think all the boys can keep this standard," said Klopp. Anfield could be in for a treat when Manchester City arrive in a fortnight.

Compiled by Graeme Riley

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The Mail

Mo Salah scores twice as Jurgen Klopp's side come from behind to win following Jamie Vardy's early opener

Everything Virgil van Dijk needed to know about his new club was there right in front of him. From the defensive howler that gifted Leicester an early lead to the brilliance of Mo Salah that meant Liverpool triumphed from adversity and remain in a Champions League spot. Van Dijk, whose £75million transfer from Southampton will be ratified when the window opens on January 1, received a great ovation as he took his seat in Anfield's main stand.

After three minutes, he saw exactly why he'd been bought, a loose pass from his prospective new defensive partner Joel Matip triggering a series of mishaps that allowed Jamie Vardy to score and have Leicester dreaming of a first Anfield win since 2000. Jurgen Klopp's men battered away for an equaliser for the remainder of the first half without joy. But when you have Salah – the Lennon and McCartney of Klopp's Fab Four – it's never over. His equaliser after 52 minutes left Daniel Amartey kicking thin air and Christian Fuchs on his backside.

The winner was even better, spinning Harry Maguire 180 degrees before sprinting off into the distance and firing home. It was Salah's 23rd goal of an outstanding debut season at Anfield, his 17th in the Premier League, and left one hoping England avoid Egypt at next summer's World Cup.

'He can keep this standard for sure,' said Klopp, who has to wait and see if his star man can recover in time to face Burnley on Monday after limping off late on.

'He scored two fantastic goals but he knows and I know he couldn't have done so well this season without the support of all the other boys. Sadio Mane's idea for the first goal, a lot of people wouldn't have seen it as an opportunity.

'You don't want to be 1-0 down but if you are, you want the best reaction, and ours was fantastic. I didn't see one nervous player. 'I liked the first half a lot apart from the scoreline. There was not a lot to change, just do the same again and again. It felt so good to see our goals go in. So fair and deserved. Everyone in the stadium could see "Wow, that was one of the best games we have played".'

With Van Dijk waiting in the wings and expected to make his debut in the FA Cup against Everton on Friday, there was pressure on existing centre-halves Matip and Dejan Lovren to perform, with Loris Karius preferred to Simon Mignolet behind them. Salah was withdrawn by Jurgen Klopp before he had a chance to score a hat-trick but was embraced by the German manager

Alas, Liverpool's defence crumbled in their first test. Matip played a criminally careless pass into midfield where Vincent Iborra was stronger than Emre Can to win the 50-50. The Spaniard's pass to Riyad Mahrez dissected a despairing stretch from left back Andy Robertson and when Mahrez fired low into the box Vardy easily won a foot race with Matip for a tap-in. Liverpool's reaction was good and they won't know how they reached the interval without scoring.

Maguire made a brilliant sliding tackle to deny Salah when he was put through and the Egyptian Messi also shot wide from Mane's cross after a brilliant first touch took him away from Fuchs. Kasper Schmeichel made saves from James Milner, and a particularly good one from Roberto Firmino, and when he was beaten by Mane, the goal was correctly ruled out for offside.

Even a ball change midway through the half didn't alter Liverpool's luck with Schmeichel saving again from Firmino and Robertson's penalty claim after a strong challenge from Amartey waved away by referee Neil Swarbrick.

Mane once again had the ball in the back of the net but was offside as he was then replaced by Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain The equaliser belatedly arrived early in the second half. Mane's clever backheel found Salah in the box and he wriggled his hips to throw Leicester's defenders off-track before slotting past Schmeichel.

In the aftermath of the goal, Maguire and Can were both booked grappling for the ball after Maguire had picked it up from the back of the net. 'It wasn't a necessary yellow but it showed our spirit,' said Klopp. Salah could have added to his impressive goal tally when fed by Philippe Coutinho but lifted his finish on to the roof of the net. At the other end, Leicester still carried a threat themselves and Wilfred Ndidi was agonisingly close with a 25-yard swerver struck with the outside of his boot. So, once again it was left for Salah to weave his magic shortly after Claude Puel had withdrawn Mahrez and Vardy.

Firmino's pass to Milner was played on first time by Liverpool's skipper and the Salah spun Maguire and accelerated away in one movement, before finishing. Supporters already seem to have taken Van Dijk to their hearts as they got their shirts printed at the club shop before kick-off To underline Klopp's team ethic, he sent on an extra defender Ragnar Klavan for the closing moments and the Estonian took one for the team, being accidentally punched in the back by Karius, as Liverpool held out. For Leicester's manager Puel, it was a second away defeat having taken the lead. 'It is a big disappointment because we were winning for a long time,' he said. 'We came up against fantastic players like Salah who can change the game any time. But I think we deserved something. I am frustrated for my squad.' They love their history at Anfield and one statistic stood out that underlines the impact Salah has made since his £34million move from Roma.

He is the first Liverpool player to score 23 goals between August and the New Year since Roger Hunt in 1960. Van Dijk will be impressed.

MATCH FACTS, PLAYER RATINGS, PREMIER LEAGUE TABLE AND MATCH ZONE
Liverpool XI (4-3-3): Karius 6; Gomez 7, Lovren 6.5, Matip 6, Robertson 7; Milner 7, Can 6, Coutinho 7 (Klavan 89); Salah 8 (Wijnaldum 83), Firmino 6.5, Mane 6.5 (Oxlade-Chamberlain 72, 6).
Subs not used: Lallana. Mignolet. Solanke. Alexander-Arnold.

Goals: Salah 52, 76. Bookings: Milner, Can. Manager: Jurgen Klopp.
Leicester XI (4-2-3-1): Schmeichel 6.5; Amartey 7, Morgan 7.5, Maguire 6.5, Fuchs 6; Iborra 6.5, Ndidi 7; Mahrez 6.5 (Okazaki 73 6), Gray 6, Albrighton 6 (James 83); Vardy 6.5 (Slimani 74 6). Subs not used: Hamer, Musa, Dragovic, Thomas.
Goals: Vardy 3. Bookings: Maguire, Ndidi. Manager: Claude Puel.
Referee: Neil Swarbrick 6.5

The Daily Telegraph

Mo Salah scores twice in comeback victory as Virgil van Dijk watches on

Mo Salah is proof of how swiftly excessive fees can become bargain prices.

In the pre-Neymar sale days of yore when £36 million was considered hefty, Salah was Liverpool's record transfer. That is a title three others have since taken from the Egyptian, inflation rising speedier than the winger's gear changes. He is achieving more worthy milestones in a campaign transforming Liverpool's recruiters from some of the most criticised to the shrewdest.

A match-winning double here took Salah's tally for the season to 23. No Liverpool player has scored more before New Year's Day – Salah matching Roger Hunt in the 1961-62 season.

"When Mohamed Salah came in people thought it was too much and now they think 'wow, what a catch'," Klopp had said pre-match. How prophetic.

The tributes continued after Salah inspired Liverpool's comeback win in an enthralling game.

"He can keep that standard for sure. He can improve, but it is not just about scoring," said Klopp, whose main concern was spotting Salah limp in the dressing room post-match.

"He knows and I know if he hadn't had all the support of all the other boys, he couldn't have scored these goals."

There was a time not so long ago Liverpool's mega signings were not so trusted. As with Sadio Mane last season, that perception has altered. Klopp has spent two days justifying the most recent world record outlay, but there is now more elation than cynicism at Anfield when the club spend big.

Virgil Van Dijk watched on here – the fact he is still contracted to Southampton for 24 hours obviously no barrier to settling into his next club – and was given an early glimpse of why Liverpool paid so much for his services before Salah secured the points.

As Van Dijk accepted applause from spectators in the Main Stand, those he is seeking to replace took three minutes to demonstrate familiar flaws.

Overall the defence played well – Joe Gomez was especially impressive and Dejan Lovren excellent – but an unforced error by Joel Matip enabled Jamie Vardy to tap-in in front of The Kop. It was Vardy's fifth in five games against Liverpool. Liverpool then sought to do what they have failed in their previous four meetings with Claude Puel. Score.

At Lyon and Southampton Puel was a nemesis to the Merseyside club, which may explain Klopp's animated celebrations at full-time. More likely was the satisfaction seeing his team diligently claiming what they deserved. It is a sign of progress.

This was the first time this season Liverpool conceded the opening goal and won.

"The reaction was fantastic. We created and created. It was one of the best games we have played," said Klopp.

Salah, Philippe Coutinho, James Milner and the tireless Roberto Firmino all went close in the first half. Final passes were rushed, opportunities snatched at, and first touches less sure. They would find their composure later, Salah twice demonstrating poise.

He equalised after 52 minutes, after pouncing on Mane's backflick. His second in the 76th minute was better. He turned Harry Maguire before beating the Leicester keeper with an instant finish. The visitors carried plenty of threat, but ultimately paid the price for a curious double substitution when Vardy and Riyad Mahrez were replaced shortly before Salah struck again.

There was much to commend Leicester who fought hard against superior opponents and in Wilfred Ndidi and Maguire, especially, possessed accomplished performers.

"I think we deserved something," said Puel. "We created problems, had a great start with this fantastic goal. Their second goal was not a chance, he created it himself."

For all Liverpool's quality in attack, Klopp reserved most praise for his back four.

"The most important thing was the defensive performance," he said. "It was the concentration in defining moments. They were spot on and aggressive."

It sounded like an attempt to reassure those most under threat. Liverpool are purring, but Van Dijk will not be a spectator too long.

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THE INDEPENDENT

Mohamed Salah double fires Liverpool to victory against Leicester but win soured by late injury

Claude Puel was unbeaten in six matches as a manager against Liverpool before this meeting but then the Frenchman did not have Mohamed Salah to worry about in any of those prior encounters.

As has so often been the case for Liverpool this season, Salah's brilliance proved the difference as his pace, trickery and, most importantly clinical finishing, gave Jurgen Klopp's side a victory after they had fallen behind to Jamie Vardy's opening goal.

It ensured Liverpool are now unbeaten in 17 home league and cup games at Anfield while Klopp is now on his best run as the club's manager having not lost in 12 Premier League matches.

Salah, meanwhile, is fast carving his name into Liverpool folklore with his goalscoring feats as he notched his 23rd of the season in all competitions.

His brace ensured he equalled a club record set by Roger Hunt in the 1961-62 campaign for most goals in a season before the turn of the year.

However, a concern for Klopp will be the winger asking to be substituted with seven minutes left after picking up a limp which could make him a doubt for Liverpool's clash with Burnley on New Year's Day. The Egyptian is set to be assessed in the coming days to determine the extent of his injury.

The victory was watched by Liverpool's £75m club-record signing Virgil van Dijk, wearing a black polo neck which gave the appearance of a man about to deliver a box of Milk Tray.

There was nothing conspicuous, however, about the assortment of errors the Dutchman saw with his own eyes as Liverpool's weaknesses at the back allowed Leicester to take the lead.

Joel Matip was particularly at fault. The Cameroon centre-back's timid pass from the back sold Emre Can short and Vicente Iborra's sharpness saw him steal possession and quickly release Riyad Mahrez down the right flank.

The Algeria winger glided past left-back Andrew Robertson and his teasing low cross was met by Vardy, who showed his penalty box predatory instincts to nip in front of Matip and finish.

It was Vardy's 10th goal of the season, with the 30-year-old striker at his most prolific against teams from the top six.

Vardy, who scored against Liverpool in September, has also netted in Leicester's matches with Arsenal, Chelsea and Tottenham in addition to both Manchester clubs.

In fairness to Liverpool's defence, particularly at Anfield, it has been much improved since their debacle against Tottenham Hotspur at Wembley but there is always the unerring sense this type of mistake is only round the corner.

Klopp has often talked about decision-making being a key element in Liverpool's defensive play, and Matip electing for a risky ball inside rather than a simple pass to Joe Gomez reflected that.

He may not be the immediate quick fix the Kop are searching for, but the decisiveness and commanding leadership offered by Van Dijk should breed greater confidence among Klopp's backline.

Liverpool shook off their sluggishness, though, and should have equalised moments after Vardy's opener when Mohamed Salah was found by Sadio Mane only to get his angles wrong and drag a shot wide from eight yards.

Philippe Coutinho stung the palms of Kasper Schmeichel with a shot from distance while Mane had the ball in the net from Robertson's cross only to be correctly flagged offside.

Liverpool continued to threaten the visitors' goal from distance with Gomez and Roberto Firmino both going close before the break.

Where Salah snatched at his efforts in the first half, his composure early in the second period saw him equalise for the home side.

The Egyptian chased Mane's backheel into the penalty area before his close control took him past Daniel Amartey on to his favoured left foot.

With the Kop screaming for the net to bulge, Salah took a second then arrowed a pinpoint finish through the legs of Schmeichel.

Leicester's chances were more fleeting although Karius breathed a sigh of relief when Wilfred Ndidi's sweetly struck shot following a corner whistled past the post.

Salah was to prove the difference between the two sides, though, when he added his and Liverpool's second to put the Reds in front with 14 minutes remaining.

Firmino rolled the ball into James Milner and his clever flick slipped in Salah. Milner looked for the return pass, but Salah had other ideas.

The 25-year-old showed his strength to roll Maguire before he clinically dispatched the ball past Schmeichel to seal the victory and keep Liverpool's bid to finish in the top four on track.

DAILY Mirror

Mohamed Salah double sees off Foxes as Van Dijk watches on at Anfield

Mohamed Salah scored twice to equal Roger Hunt's club record for goals scored before the turn of the year as Liverpool came from behind to beat Leicester 2-1.

The Egypt international took his tally to 23 for the campaign, with 17 in the league, with a second-half double to reach the same mark set by Hunt in 1961-62.

Liverpool had been trailing to an early goal for Jamie Vardy, who set a Leicester record of his own by becoming the first Foxes player to score in five successive matches against the Reds.

Vardy has long been a thorn in the side of the Merseysiders and he took his tally to seven in eight appearances against them, but Jurgen Klopp's side have someone in even better form and they needed him to finally overcome another nemesis in Claude Puel.

The former Lyon and Southampton manager was six matches unbeaten - including four clean sheets as Saints boss last season - heading into the game and looked to be working his magic again as early as the third minute.

With soon-to-be new signing Virgil van Dijk watching from the directors' box, the auditions began for who should partner the world's most expensive defender when the £75million man completes his move from Southampton on Tuesday.

Joel Matip was first to fluff his lines when his misplaced pass was picked up in midfield by Vicente Iborra, who slid a ball inside Reds left-back Andrew Robertson.

Riyad Mahrez, with a couple of yards head start, had plenty of time to square for Vardy to fire into an empty net.

Since August 2014 no one has scored as many goals as Vardy's 22 in 41 appearances against the Premier League's top six.

The television cameras immediately switched to a capture a straight-faced Van Dijk in the Main Stand, as if anyone needed reminding how great the expectation on his shoulders is.

Van Dijk's arrival is intended to shore up a side who score goals for fun but Salah, Philippe Coutinho, Roberto Firmino and Sadio Mane struggled for a breakthrough.

Salah had four decent chances, Coutinho and Firmino had long-range efforts saved by Kasper Schmeichel, Mane a goal correctly ruled out for offside with Joe Gomez's drive from distance just dipping over.

When Schmeichel did fumble the ball once at a corner Matip was slow to react and his shot was blocked. Robertson also had optimistic claims for a penalty turned down.

Eight minutes into the second half Liverpool were level when Mane's clever back-heel picked out Salah, who held off Christian Fuchs and Daniel Amartey to pick his spot beyond Schmeichel, who soon after was beaten by the Egyptian's lob only to be saved by the roof of the net.

Wilfred Ndidi shot just wide but it was a rare chance for the visitors, who surprisingly replaced both Vardy and Mahrez with 17 minutes to go.

Almost immediately Liverpool took the lead with another back-heel, this time from James Milner, allowing Salah to hold off and then turn Harry Maguire before beating Schmeichel inside his near post for his 17th goal in his last 17 appearances.

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Klopp's Reds can last the pace, this was a different type of triumph

A year of rich promise was signed off with a bang at Anfield.

The roar which echoed around the stadium at the final whistle and the manner in which Jurgen Klopp bounded down the touchline told you everything about the significance of the outcome. Liverpool have made a habit of winning with a swagger during the proud 15-game unbeaten run they will take into 2018.

But this was a very different type of triumph. This was a day when they needed to roll their sleeves up and dig deep to grind out a hard-fought victory.

They made life difficult for themselves as Joel Matip's early error enabled Jamie Vardy to fire Leicester City in front. The Reds then proceeded to waste some gilt-edged chances as they struggled to make their dominance count.

But, crucially, there was never any sense of panic. They stuck to their guns and got their reward as a majestic second-half double from Mohamed Salah transformed the mood. In doing so Salah took his tally to 23 goals in all competitions this term - no Liverpool player has ever scored more in a season before the turn of the year. The Egyptian winger's blistering run of form shows no sign of slowing up.

New £75million signing Virgil van Dijk, who watched on from the directors box, will have appreciated the character on display as much as the quality.

The commanding Dutch centre-back will provide the perfect lift in the new year as Klopp looks to ensure that momentum is maintained between now and May.

A year ago the wheels momentarily came off in January as a lack of depth cost Liverpool. This time around they look much better equipped to last the pace.

2017 will go down as a year of great progress under Klopp. Not only did he end the club's painful absence from the Champions League but he ensured that they look like they belong at that level once again having topped their group in style.

There have been bumps along the way, not least the embarrassing drubbings at the hands of Man City and Tottenham, and too many home draws against mediocre opposition. But the big summer signings of Salah and Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain proved inspired and the Reds have reaped the rewards of keeping Philippe Coutinho and refusing to be bullied by Barcelona.

The eye-catching development in the likes of Trent Alexander-Arnold, Joe Gomez and Roberto Firmino has served to showcase Klopp's ability as a coach.

The style has evolved. A team too reliant on Sadio Mane a year ago now has a four-pronged attack as potent as any in European football.

With Liverpool in the top four of the Premier League and in the last 16 of the Champions League, there's so much to play for. With Van Dijk on board and Naby Keita to follow, you would have to have a heart of stone to approach 2018 with anything other than unbridled optimism. Van Dijk was applauded by fans as he took his seat at Anfield shortly before kick-off and he didn't have to wait long to see why the Reds decided they needed to break the bank for a defensive leader.

Klopp's men played their way into trouble and gifted the Foxes the lead inside three minutes. Matip's sloppy pass sold Emre Can short and Vicente Iborra pounced to feed Riyad Mahrez, who squared for Vardy to convert his seventh goal in eight appearances against the Reds. Matip compounded his mistake by failing to get goal side of Vardy. If this was an audition to see who should play alongside Van Dijk then Dejan Lovren rather than Matip would have got the part. It was only the fourth league goal Klopp's men have conceded at Anfield all season.

Belatedly, Liverpool settled and started to really stretch Leicester's backline. With Mane recalled alongside the other three members of Klopp's Fab Four there was no shortage of pace and firepower. Some of the approach play was delightful with Coutinho leading the charge from a central role but the Reds' finishing left much to be desired. Salah should have restored parity after latching on to Mane's pull back. His first touch was exquisite and he had time to pick his spot but inexplicably he fired wide. The chances kept on coming with Harry Maguire's sliding challenge on Salah saving the Foxes before Kasper Schmeichel clung on to Coutinho's sweetly struck 25-yarder. Mane did have the ball in the net after converting Andy Robertson's cross but his celebrations were rightly curtailed by the offside flag.

Liverpool had to be careful not to over-commit going forward in the knowledge that Vardy, Mahrez and Demarai Gray were waiting to hit them on the counter. But for the most part it was defence v attack as Leicester somehow made it through to the break with their lead intact. Salah burst into the penalty box after a classy one-two with Firmino and clipped it past Schmeichel but agonisingly wide of the far post. Firmino was twice thwarted by the keeper and then Robertson saw his penalty appeals waved away after getting a shove from Daniel Amartey.

Liverpool's attempts to maintain a quick tempo weren't helped by Schmeichel's cynical time wasting. Just like against Swansea on Boxing Day, Liverpool emerged for the second half with a real spring in their step. Within seven minutes of the restart they were level.

It was a classy team move with Firmino and the combative Can involved before Mane back-heeled the ball into the path of Salah. The Reds' top scorer shrugged off Christian Fuchs and Amartey and drilled emphatically past Schmeichel.

Anfield erupted and then the Kop willed Klopp's men forward in search of greater reward. Salah lifted one effort just over the bar after being released by Coutinho's pass and then Mane was denied by the offside flag once again.

With their lead gone, Leicester broke off the shackles and started to show some ambition again.

Matip went some way to atoning for his earlier blunder by blocking Vardy's strike before Wilfred Ndidi whistled one just wide. Klopp sought fresh legs with Oxlade-Chamberlain replacing Mane and it did the trick. With 14 minutes to go Liverpool were in front. There appeared to be little danger when James Milner flicked a pass from Firmino into Salah's feet 20 yards out. Salah had the hulking figure of Maguire for company but the winger expertly turned away from the defender and kept his cool to beat Schmeichel. The closing stages were nerve-racking with a flurry of long throws and penalty box scrambles. But the Reds held out and got the job done. It was the first time since beating Leicester away in September that they had won a game by such a narrow margin. 2017 was a good year for Liverpool. 2018 promises to be even better.

MATCH FACTS

Liverpool: Karius, Gomez, Matip, Lovren, Robertson, Can, Milner, Coutinho (Klavan 89), Mane (Oxlade-Chamberlain 72), Salah (Wijnaldum 83), Firmino.

Not used: Mignolet, Lallana, Solanke, Alexander-Arnold.

Leicester City: Schmeichel, Amartey, Maguire, Morgan, Fuchs, Mahrez (Okazaki 73), Iborra, Ndidi, Albrighton (James 83), Gray, Vardy (Slimani 73).

Not used: Hamer, Dragovic, Thomas, Musa.

Referee: Neil Swarbrick Attendance: 53,226 Goals: Vardy 3, Salah 52, Salah 76

Bookings: Milner, Can, Robertson, Maguire, Ndidi

Man of the match: Mo Salah. Another match-winning performance.

LEICESTER MERCURY

Late rally is not enough against dominant Reds

Mohamed Salah scored twice as Liverpool came from behind to inflict defeat on Claude Puel's Leicester City. Jamie Vardy had fired City in front after just three minutes at Anfield but it was almost total domination from the Reds after that, although City stood firm until the second half before Salah was able to get in behind the City defence on two occasions to rescue the win for Jugen Klopp's men. It is now just one point for City from their last four games as City brought 2017 to a disappointing close. Puel made four changes from the side that lost at Watford on Boxing Day. Daniel Amartey came in at right-back as replacement for the injured Danny Simpson after serving a suspension, while Christian Fuchs replaced Ben Chilwell at left-back after the youngster was sent home with flu-like symptoms. Vicente Iborra replaced Andy King in central midfield after being rested at Watford, with King not even making the substitute's bench, and Demarai Gray came in for Shinji Okazaki as the support striker for Jamie Vardy. There were a couple of notable inclusions amongst the substitutes as George Thomas was promoted from the under-23s and Ahmed Musa was also a surprise inclusion. Puel was unbeaten in all six matches as a manager against Liverpool, having already taken charge of a winning team at Anfield with Lyon and Southampton, so he was looking for the hat-trick.

The last manager to win an away match at Anfield with three different clubs was Martin O'Neill, with City, Celtic and Aston Villa, and Puel got the perfect start. City took the lead after just three minutes and the goal came from a familiar source. Iborra capitalised on a poor pass out from the back from Joel Matip and played Riyad Mahrez in, and the Algerian squared the ball unselfishly for Vardy to have an easy tap-in in front of the Kop. Vardy has been a scourge of the Reds in recent games, scoring seven of the previous nine goals City had scored against Liverpool. However, that only served to wake the hosts up and it was a relentless red tide that surged constantly towards Kasper Schmeichel's goal.

City were struggling to contain Mohamed Salah in particular and the Egyptian could have had a hat-trick before half time. He wasted two golden opportunities and Amartey almost presented him with another when his attempted clearance after Schmeichel saved a Firmino shot almost ended up at Salah's feet.

Saido Mane had a goal ruled out for offside and Coutinho also threatened to grab the equaliser but somehow City hung on, leaving Reds fans scratching their heads as to how City were still leading at the break. Puel had been an animated figure in the visiting technical area, venting his frustration as his side struggled to retain possession during the rare occasions they could get the ball.

However, it took just seven minutes of the second half for the equaliser to eventually come and this time Salah didn't miss. He was able to get the wrong side of Fuchs, ride his challenge and beat Amartey before slipping his finish past Schmeichel. Salah went close again just before the hour when Liverpool broke clear again but his attempted lob over Schmeichel was too high.

City were lacking composure on the ball and the partisan home crowd were turning up the heat on the visitors. It was not an atmosphere for the faint hearted, but one requiring a cool, calm head, especially from the officials.

The linesman's flag again denied Mane on 66 minutes and again the decision was proved to be correct. City almost shocked the home fans again shortly afterwards as Wilfred Ndidi went close with a volley after the hosts half-cleared a Fuchs long throw and City seemed to have renewed belief.

However, it was a short reprieve and Salah took advantage of some poor defending from Maguire to score the second.

There didn't seem to be much threat as Salah got the ball with his back to goal 25 yards out, but Maguire got far too tight and allowed the Reds striker to role him before planting his finish past Schmeichel.

City were now chasing the game and they pushed for the equaliser as the Reds dropped back, satisfied with their lead, but they couldn't salvage a point and slipped to a second consecutive defeat.

Date: 30 December 2017
Opposition: Leicester City
Competition: League

Express	Telegraph	Echo
Guardian	Mirror	Mercury
Independent	Mail	BBC

30 December 2017

B B C

Manager Jurgen Klopp called Liverpool's reaction to going a goal down against Leicester the "best I've ever seen" after Mohamed Salah's double helped them come from behind to win at Anfield.

Jamie Vardy gave the visitors an early lead when he poked home from a Riyad Mahrez pass before Salah equalised in the second half.

The Egypt international then turned Harry Maguire on the edge of the area before firing in his second of the day - and 17th Premier League goal of the season - to give Liverpool the lead.

Klopp described the hosts' performance as "perfect" and the Reds, who will finish the year in fourth place, extended their unbeaten run to 15 games.

Leicester stay in eighth but have now gone five games without a victory.

"On perfect days we win football games," said Klopp.

"The crowd were unbelievable and we needed them today to score these two goals. It's a good team performance and a well-deserved win."

The only concern will surround the fitness of match-winner Salah, who Klopp said was "limping" when he was substituted with less than 10 minutes left to play.

"We have to check it," added the German. "We tried to change it as quick as possible and of course that is not too good."

Klopp's men show persistence

Liverpool have failed to capitalise on their chances too many times this season - having to settle for draws against both West Brom and Spartak Moscow after dominating for 90 minutes.

That was not the case on Saturday as the Reds battled through a tough defensive unit to come back from a goal down against the 2016 Premier League champions. There were still plenty of missed opportunities - Salah squandered four efforts in the first half alone, before Liverpool's top scorer made up for it with two clinical finishes after the break.

It still took 17 shots, six on target, for the hosts to get the result they needed but the recovery from falling behind so early is an encouraging sign for Klopp's side as they head into the new year.

At the other end, it was a fairly solid performance from centre-back duo Dejan Lovren and Joel Matip, who have both been criticised for their performances at times this season.

Overall, Klopp has much to be pleased about after his team produced a persistent display against the Foxes, who have so far been something of a bogey side for the German manager.

Before Saturday's victory, the Reds had lost three times against Leicester under Klopp - more than they have to any other club since he took over in October 2015.

Vardy continues to haunt Reds

Leicester went into half-time with the lead thanks to yet another goal from Vardy - his 10th of the season.

His record against Liverpool is impressive - scoring seven of Leicester's past nine goals against the Reds in the Premier League.

It was no surprise to see him identified as a threat before the game and he was just that - running in behind the defenders and looking to find spaces behind Liverpool's back four.

There were signs of danger for the home side when Vardy found space on the left even before his third-minute opener.

He could have doubled Leicester's lead shortly before half-time too but for a heavy touch which allowed Lovren time to recover.

Even after Salah's equaliser, England striker Vardy continued to be a constant threat, with the offside flag coming to Liverpool's aid on more than one occasion. It was therefore a surprise to see him substituted with the teams level - alongside Mahrez, who had assisted Vardy's early goal.

The pair have scored in five of the Foxes' seven games this month and fans will no doubt question Claude Puel's decision to take both of them off with more than 15 minutes still left to play.

What the managers said

Liverpool manager Klopp: "It is a maximum satisfaction to win like this today and on perfect days we win football games. Today was pretty much perfect.

"When we were one goal down our reaction was the best I've ever seen in this situation. The crowd were unbelievable and we needed them today to score these two goals.

"Mo [Salah] was fantastic with his dribbling and his vision. I couldn't ask more from him. Staying in the game is the real deal of football in this league - but I am happy for Mo, I am happy for the team, because this group is a fantastic group of players. It's a good team performance and a well-deserved win."

Liverpool turnaround frustrates Puel

Leicester manager Puel: "Of course, after a defeat it is a disappointment - but Liverpool played their best today.

"We did well to score first and we tried to keep that in the second half. We need to continue our work, but it is important to concentrate on the game on Monday and forget this game to move forward.

"We lost the ball too quickly and we could have launched counter-attacks better, but it was a good game with a positive attitude of unselfish players and now we must look forward to Monday."

Prolific Salah - the best of the stats

Liverpool have scored 77 goals in 30 games so far this season - their highest total at this stage of a campaign as a top-flight club.

After winning four in a row under Puel, the Foxes have since gone four Premier League games without a win, losing three, and have lost consecutive league matches for the first time since September.

Salah has been directly involved in 22 goals in 21 league appearances for Liverpool this season (17 goals, five assists).

Salah (23 goals) has scored more goals in all competitions this season than eight Premier League clubs (Crystal Palace, Burnley, Brighton, Swansea, West Brom, Huddersfield, Southampton and Newcastle).

Of Vardy's 51 Premier League goals, 22 have come against 'big six opposition' (43%).

Vardy (seven) has scored more Premier League goals against Liverpool than against any other team. Only Andrew Cole (11) and Thierry Henry (eight) have scored more Premier League goals against the Reds than Vardy.

Man of the match - Mohamed Salah

Man of the match could easily have been awarded to Harry Maguire, who defended with every part of his body as Leicester tried to cling on. In the end, it was Salah who proved the difference and for all his efforts, Maguire could not stop him from completing the Reds' comeback.

What's next?

Liverpool travel to Turf Moor to take on Burnley in the league on New Year's Day (15:00 GMT) - a fourth game in 10 days for Klopp's side.

Leicester will aim to bounce back when they host Huddersfield Town at the same time, as they too struggle with a busy calendar.

BBC

Match ends, Liverpool 2, Leicester City 1.

90'+5' Second Half ends, Liverpool 2, Leicester City 1.

90'+5' Foul by Roberto Firmino (Liverpool.

90'+5' Daniel Amartey (Leicester City wins a free kick in the defensive half.

90'+3' Delay over. They are ready to continue.

90'+3' Delay in match Ragnar Klavan (Liverpool because of an injury.

90'+1' Andrew Robertson (Liverpool is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.

90'+1' Foul by Andrew Robertson (Liverpool.

90'+1' Shinji Okazaki (Leicester City wins a free kick in the defensive half.

90' Georginio Wijnaldum (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing.

90' Foul by Daniel Amartey (Leicester City.

89' Substitution, Liverpool. Ragnar Klavan replaces Philippe Coutinho.

84' Offside, Leicester City. Harry Maguire tries a through ball, but Vicente Iborra is caught offside.

83' Foul by Andrew Robertson (Liverpool.

83' Shinji Okazaki (Leicester City wins a free kick in the attacking half.

83' Substitution, Liverpool. Georginio Wijnaldum replaces Mohamed Salah.

83' Substitution, Leicester City. Matty James replaces Marc Albrighton.

82' Attempt blocked. Shinji Okazaki (Leicester City right footed shot from the left side of the box is blocked. Assisted by Demarai Gray.

76' Goal! Liverpool 2, Leicester City 1. Mohamed Salah (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box to the bottom right corner. Assisted by James Milner.

75' Attempt saved. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from the left side of the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain.

74' Substitution, Leicester City. Islam Slimani replaces Jamie Vardy.

73' Substitution, Leicester City. Shinji Okazaki replaces Riyad Mahrez.

72' Substitution, Liverpool. Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain replaces Sadio Mané.

72' Attempt missed. Dejan Lovren (Liverpool header from the centre of the box is too high. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho with a cross following a corner.

71' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Harry Maguire.

68' Corner, Leicester City. Conceded by Andrew Robertson.

68' Attempt blocked. Demarai Gray (Leicester City right footed shot from the right side of the box is blocked. Assisted by Marc Albrighton.

67' Attempt missed. Wilfred Ndidi (Leicester City left footed shot from outside the box is close, but misses to the right.

65' Offside, Liverpool. Philippe Coutinho tries a through ball, but Sadio Mané is caught offside.

62' Wilfred Ndidi (Leicester City is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.

62' Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.

62' Foul by Wilfred Ndidi (Leicester City.

60' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Daniel Amartey.

59' Attempt missed. Mohamed Salah (Liverpool left footed shot from the right side of the box is too high. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho with a through ball.

58' Attempt blocked. Jamie Vardy (Leicester City right footed shot from the left side of the box is blocked. Assisted by Demarai Gray.

55' Offside, Leicester City. Wilfred Ndidi tries a through ball, but Jamie Vardy is caught offside.

53' Emre Can (Liverpool is shown the yellow card.

53' Harry Maguire (Leicester City is shown the yellow card.

52' Goal! Liverpool 1, Leicester City 1. Mohamed Salah (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box to the centre of the goal. Assisted by Sadio Mané.

50' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Daniel Amartey.

47' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Christian Fuchs.

Second Half begins Liverpool 0, Leicester City 1.

45'+2' First Half ends, Liverpool 0, Leicester City 1.

45'+1' Attempt missed. Sadio Mané (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is high and wide to the right. Assisted by Andrew Robertson.

43' Offside, Liverpool. Joseph Gomez tries a through ball, but Mohamed Salah is caught offside.

41' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Daniel Amartey.

39' Foul by Joel Matip (Liverpool.

39' Demarai Gray (Leicester City wins a free kick in the attacking half.

38' Foul by Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool.

38' Wilfred Ndidi (Leicester City wins a free kick in the defensive half.

36' Attempt blocked. Joel Matip (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked.

36' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Wes Morgan.

36' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Wilfred Ndidi.

35' Attempt blocked. Demarai Gray (Leicester City left footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Jamie Vardy.

30' Attempt blocked. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Joseph Gomez.

29' Attempt saved. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Joel Matip.

28' Attempt blocked. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is blocked.

25' Attempt missed. Joseph Gomez (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is close, but misses the top right corner.

22' Attempt missed. Mohamed Salah (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box misses to the right.

22' Attempt saved. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom right corner. Assisted by James Milner.

20' Attempt missed. Mohamed Salah (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box misses to the left. Assisted by Roberto Firmino.

19' Offside, Liverpool. Andrew Robertson tries a through ball, but Sadio Mané is caught offside.

16' Attempt blocked. James Milner (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Andrew Robertson.

15' Offside, Leicester City. Wes Morgan tries a through ball, but Jamie Vardy is caught offside.

15' Attempt saved. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom right corner. Assisted by Sadio Mané.

14' Sadio Mané (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.

14' Foul by Wilfred Ndidi (Leicester City.

11' Foul by Mohamed Salah (Liverpool.

11' Harry Maguire (Leicester City wins a free kick in the defensive half.

11' Attempt blocked. Mohamed Salah (Liverpool left footed shot from the left side of the box is blocked. Assisted by James Milner with a through ball.

8' James Milner (Liverpool is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.

8' Foul by James Milner (Liverpool.

8' Riyad Mahrez (Leicester City wins a free kick in the attacking half.

7' Attempt missed. Mohamed Salah (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box is close, but misses to the left. Assisted by Sadio Mané.

3' Goal! Liverpool 0, Leicester City 1. Jamie Vardy (Leicester City right footed shot from the centre of the box to the high centre of the goal. Assisted by Riyad Mahrez.

2' Offside, Liverpool. Philippe Coutinho tries a through ball, but Roberto Firmino is caught offside.

1' Attempt blocked. Demarai Gray (Leicester City left footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Jamie Vardy.

First Half begins.

Lineups are announced and players are warming up.

Compiled by Graeme Riley