Date: 7 October 2012
Opposition: Stoke City
Competition: League

BBC	Times	Telegraph	Echo
	Guardian	Mirror	Post
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7 October 2012

THE TIMES

Stoke's bullying stance exposes Rodgers' trust in possession being a winner

Liverpool 0
Stoke City 0
Referee L Mason
Attendance 44,531

When Brendan Rodgers explained his managerial philosophy, he said that it was "death by football", but he did not specify who would be the victims. Yesterday, as Liverpool once again passed, passed and passed some more but to no great effect, it seemed that, in the short term at least, it could be his own team who suffer as they were left waiting for their first home win of the season.

The six unanswered bookings that Stoke City picked up en route to a point will earn them a [pounds sterling]25,000 fine from the FA, and it also handed Rodgers something of a fig-leaf to cover up his team's failings. Unlike Norwich City, whom Liverpool routed last weekend, Stoke were no soft touch and while their rough-house approach may win them few friends, Liverpool still had more than enough of the ball to make their superiority tell. But once again they were unable to do so.

While the possession statistics continue to flatter Liverpool, few other performance indicators do. The Barclays Premier League table shows them in fourteenth place. Their failure to win any of their first four home league games of the season is the first time that Liverpool have struggled so badly at Anfield at the beginning of a campaign since 1911. For Rodgers, the age-old cliche about possession being nine tenths of the law equates to little at present.

Stoke's physicality riled Liverpool, but it also highlighted a possible fault line in their own approach. Rodgers's commitment to what he describes as "relentless possession" is fundamental -- to such an extent that he proclaims he sees no need for a back-up strategy "because plan B is to make plan A better" -- but when faced with opponents who do not allow them to play, the need for a plan B can be apparent.

Andy Carroll could have provided something different -- a towering presence with the potential to reach the crosses that Liverpool were sending in during the second half if nothing else -- but Rodgers harbours no regrets over his decision to allow the forward to join West Ham United on loan.

In effect, Stoke bullied Liverpool to such an extent that, at one stage, Lee Mason, the referee, felt it necessary to warn Ryan Shawcross, the Stoke captain, that he should exercise his authority to warn his team-mates that repeated fouling would no longer be tolerated.

Shawcross should also have intimated that Stoke had no reason to resort to such means, for they were discomforting Liverpool enough just by pressing high up the pitch. That approach should have paid dividends during the first half when Pepe Reina had to save from Charlie Adam and Michael Kightly to prevent the visiting side from taking the lead.

Those incidents betrayed the weaknesses of playing to a template as Reina followed his manager's orders by trying to start a move forward with a pass to a midfielder, only for Stoke to close down the intended recipient. Adam should have taken advantage after Nuri Sahin yielded possession under pressure, while Kightly was unfortunate that Reina recovered his position well enough to tip his 30-yard chip over the bar.

Liverpool improved in the second half and created enough chances to win, Luis Suarez, Raheem Sterling and Martin Skrtel striking the woodwork. But they could find no way through as Stoke secured their first clean sheet away from home since January. Their opponents on that occasion? Liverpool.

RATINGS

Liverpool (4-3-3): J M Reina 6 -- A Wisdom 7, M Skrtel 6, D Agger 8, G Johnson 7 -- J Allen 7, N Sahin 6 (sub: O Assaidi, 79min), S Gerrard 6 -- Suso 6 (sub: J Cole, 67 5), L Suarez 7, R Sterling 6. Substitutes not used: B Jones, J Henderson, S Coates, J Carragher, F Borini.

Stoke City (4-2-3-1): A Begovic 7 -- G Cameron 5, R Shawcross 7, R Huth 6, M Wilson 6 -- G Whelan 4 (sub: D Whitehead, 20 5), S N'Zonzi 6 -- J Walters 6, C Adam 6 (sub: M Edu, 81), M Kightly 7 (sub: M Etherington, 63 6) -- P Crouch 6. Substitutes not used: T Sorensen, K Jones, M Upson, C Jerome. Booked: Kightly, Huth, Shawcross, Adam, Walters, Whitehead.

theguardian

Liverpool thankful for Kop's patience as Rodgers' project draws another blank

Brendan Rodgers outlined his vision on the day he was appointed Liverpool manager. "I want to make coming to Anfield the longest 90 minutes of an opponent's life," he said in June. It was all part of the learning curve when Manchester City, Arsenal and Manchester United departed undefeated but it threatens the patience when Stoke join the ranks of the unscathed.

Anfield delivered on that score, saving its wrath for Stoke's physicality, to earn another glowing tribute from Rodgers. But there is not an inexhaustible supply, as the last Liverpool manager to start a season with six points from seven games quickly discovered. The Liverpool of Rodgers and Roy Hodgson are worlds apart in terms of style, promise and belief in the manager, yet it is now four home league matches without a win and the only arduous aspect against Stoke was in the watching.

Rodgers saw it differently. "It was a physical game but there are no complaints from us," he said. "I just thought it was brilliant to see the young players cope well in that type of environment. The attitude and application was fantastic but the final touch or pass wasn't always there. I also thought the crowd was fantastic. This is a club that has won only two league games at home in this calendar year and has not won two consecutive home league games in almost a year. So to get that sort of backing off the crowd was terrific."

Liverpool could have pinched victory in the 90th minute when Martin Skrtel flicked against a post but this was an unconvincing display overall. The campaign to secure a penalty for Luis Suarez this season also suffered a self-inflicted blow when the Uruguay executed a ludicrous dive over Marc Wilson's foot in an attempt to win a
second-half spot-kick. "I haven't seen the incident so cannot comment," said Rodgers. Tony Pulis was more forthright. The Stoke manager said: "Retrospective decisions are made on a Monday and Luis Suarez should be punished. The one in the penalty box was an embarrassment and how he wasn't booked I don't know."

Stoke ended the day with six bookings and a pounds 25,000 FA fine as a consequence. Liverpool were infuriated by the visitors' approach but their own inability to hurt opponents should concern them more.

Injury cost Michael Owen a place in the squad and Anfield an opportunity to bait their former striker. But another former Liverpool player almost made a quick impact. Charlie Adam seized on a back-pass from Nuri Sahin after the on-loan midfielder found himself with few options when collecting a short goalkick from Jose Reina, under orders to play his way out from the back. The Liverpool keeper smothered Adam's shot at close range.

The moment again demonstrated how Rodgers' instructions remain a work in progress and how, by pressing theLiverpool midfield when Reina takes possession, their play can be easily disrupted. It was repeated when Steven N'Zonzi intercepted another Reina clearance and Michael Kightly's chip forced Liverpool's keeper into a redeeming tip-over save.

Stoke had also gone close when Glen Whelan's free-kick flashed across goal and Skrtel hooked clear as Peter Crouch lurked. Liverpool's first threat took 27 minutes to arrive, Asmir Begovic pushing away Steven Gerrard's drive from 30 yards, but as the Spaniard Suso grew into his first league start at Anfield and Suarez began to find space, their performance improved. Chances, however, remained scarce.

Liverpool were preoccupied by perceived leniency from the referee, Lee Mason, as Stoke responded to their opponents' recovery through fair means and foul. Some grievances were imagined but not those against Robert Huth. The German appeared to stamp on Suarez early on and also escaped a booking when he clattered into Suarez's ankle. Less than 10 minutes later he brought him down in mid-flight and was shown yellow. It could easily have been his second.

Pulis's team were on the back foot in the second half and Glen Johnson twice went close to scoring, the first a shot from distance and the second when sent clear by Gerrard's pass only to loft his effort over. Raheem Sterling side-footed against the outside of a post, Suarez shot inches wide and, finally, Skrtel shaved the woodwork.

But this was an afternoon when the absence of a Plan B - otherwise known as Andy Carroll - cost Liverpool. "I don't really do the desperation thing in the last 10 minutes where you're kicking it long," was Rodgers' response to that.

Man of the match Ryan Shawcross
(Stoke City)

Compiled by Graeme Riley

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The Mail

FALL GUY KOPS IT

LIVERPOOL IT SAYS much for the underwhelming nature of this afternoon that one of the most dramatic acts was saved until 30 minutes after the final whistle. Asked for the second time about Luis Suarez's apparent dive in the Stoke penalty area 15 minutes from time, visiting manager Tony Pulis invited the assembled media to draw their own conclusions and swept suddenly from the room rather like the diva we all know he isn't.

In the moments beforehand, however, Pulis had already said enough. 'I don't know how many times he has fallen over but the one in the penalty box is an embarrassment and how he has not been booked I just don't know. Retrospective decisions are made on a Monday by the FA and they should be looking at this. Give him three games and he will stop falling over.

'He puts pressure on the referee and every time he goes down you've got 40,000 Liverpool fans getting after the ref and I don't think that's right.' Pulis had a point.

On another difficult afternoon for Brendan Rodgers' Liverpool, Suarez had given everything.

Indeed he should have been awarded a penalty when Robert Huth shoved him in the back with a handful of minutes remaining.

Who is ever going to award the Uruguayan anything when he falls over in the manner he did when challenged by Marc Wilson 10 minutes earlier? As acts of simulation go it wasn't even well executed. It was so obvious that even some of the home supporters chuckled.

'I didn't see it,' said Rodgers afterwards.

'Whatever Luis does will always be a problem, whether it's with the media or refs, but I thought he was terrific today.' One imagines that when Rodgers does see the incident on playback, he may speak to Suarez. TheLiverpool manager has enough to contend with as he tries to get his team's season off the ground.

Despite his team scoring five at Norwich a week earlier, Rodgers can't find a Barclays Premier League win in front of the Kop and his team rarely looked like delivering one here. One step forward, two steps back.

This was a poor game. Liverpool struck the frame of the goal four times and Stoke had six players booked. To suggest that Liverpool were unfortunate and Stoke too physical would not be accurate, though. The home team were no more deserving of three points than the visitors, while referee Lee Mason fell into the trap of believing that every time Pulis's team make a tackle it had to be a foul.

Stoke were the happier side at full time. Having enjoyed the better of the possession in the first half-hour, they were gradually pushed back by Liverpool but looked fairly comfortable.

This unfamiliar-looking Liverpool team has some promising footballers in it. Joe Allen looks a good player, even in a modest team, but they rely too heavily on Steven Gerrard and Suarez for energy and drive.

Rodgers is still being hampered by Liverpool's peculiar conclusion to the summer transfer window. His squad looks desperately thin and he will be glad to see January.

Stoke, on the other hand, continue to work to a clear strategy. They were very much in this game from the first moment to the last.

Rodgers likes to encourage his players to pass the ball inside their own half but Stoke's energetic pressing made that difficult and Liverpool goalkeeper Pepe Reina twice had to save in the first half, from Charlie Adam and Michael Kightly, when his back four gave away possession.

In the first half Liverpool found it hard to keep possession long enough to develop any momentum. Gerrard brought the best from Asmir Begovic in the Stoke goal in the 27th minute while Daniel Agger poked a chipped pass from Suso on to the outside of the far post two minutes later.

It wasn't until the second half that Liverpool caused Stoke sustained problems. Twice fullback No 1 fan: Brendan Rodgers backs Suarez PETER POWELL Glen Johnson came close -- once when working Begovic from distance and again when nudging a shot over the bar.

Occasionally, the game threatened to boil over. Liverpool were becoming agitated by what they thought was Stoke's reliance on the physical, while Suarez's dive did little for the atmosphere or his reputation.

Rodgers was sanguine after the game in how he saw it.

'Stoke are a team of big lads but we stood up to them,' he said. 'I have no complaints' Late in the game Raheem Sterling struck the post, Suarez hit the angle and Martin Skrtel hooked a shot across the face of the goal.

It was a relatively rousing conclusion to an uninspiring afternoon.

The Daily Telegraph

Frustrated Rodgers rues familiar Anfield flaws

Liverpool 0
Stoke City 0
Att: 44,531

The insurance premiums at Anfield must be astronomical given the number of accidents Liverpool are suffering at home. The worst run in 50 years last season, three consecutive defeats at the start of this one and now another frustrating draw, this time against Stoke City, a side adept at exposing any mental or physical fragilities.

This place used to be a fortress, now it is a tourist attraction, the visitors enjoying the hospitality far more than is healthy for local sensibilities. Brendan Rodgers listed the unwanted records himself. Two league wins at home in the calendar year. More than 12 months since Liverpool won two consecutive league fixtures here.

Stoke arrived as one of the few clubs yet to benefit from Liverpool's recent habit of rolling out the red carpet to guests. It is 53 years since they won at Anfield and their exceptional defensive performance rarely looked like producing victory here, but Tony Pulis would have relished the chance to puncture Rodgers' Kop makeover.

Rodgers said he would be happy for Liverpool to ditch some of the guile and embrace the ugly side of football to claim more victories. There was plenty of the unattractive on show on Merseyside - if you want the beautiful game when Stoke roll into town bring a DVD of someone else's matches - but the first home Premier League win of the season continues to elude the new manager.

Liverpool hit the post three times in the second half and dominated possession with a frequency which would have left those believing football is won with impressive stat-packs salivating, but these sob stories are starting to resemble the Mills and Boon back catalogue.

When Luis Suarez, Raheem Sterling and, in stoppage time, Martin Skrtel hit the woodwork they did so after opportunistic attempts rather than clear-cut opportunities. There were no sitters missed, just moments of individual brilliance - and a couple of breathtaking dives - from Suarez, and the impudence of Sterling offering hope of a winner.

It was no failure of tactics or systems undermining Liverpool, just the familiar lack of a finishing touch where it matters. Rodgers has inherited that flaw and has yet to be given the tools to remedy it, although it was suggested the lack of a Plan B - a tall striker to challenge for hopeful long balls (currently located at Upton Park, perhaps?) - could have offered a different option.

"I don't really do the desperation thing in the last 10 minutes where you're kicking it long," Rodgers said. "When January comes we will see if we can revisit that."

The real problem is this felt like a footballing cut and paste job. Whatever you have read about any homeLiverpool performance since 2010, nothing much has changed yet. The instruction to anyone coming to Anfield is sit tight, keep your discipline at the back and wait for your chance, which more often than not will come in Liver Bird decorated giftwrap.

Stoke had two first-half chances, courtesy of Pepe Reina's desire to prove he could deputise in the Spanish squad for Xavi rather than Iker Casillas.

Reina inexplicably passed his goalkick into a crowded midfield, Nuri Sahin's back pass was timid, and Charlie Adam blew his chance to inflict revenge for his summer sale by firing at the Spanish goalkeeper's legs.

Reina repeated the trick on 20 minutes, again casually kicking into the centre and having to scurry back to push Michael Kightly's 25-yard chip over the bar.

At that stage Stoke were imposing their physicality on a technical but lightweight Liverpool midfield, although the robust challenges tried the patience of referee Lee Mason.

There is no denying Stoke and Liverpool pursue vastly different football fashions. A subdued crowd was only provoked into passion when it demanded the referee adopt a tougher line against the robust Stoke tackling. There were six bookings, all for visiting players.

Robert Huth's was the most contentious because he was only shown yellow for preventing Suarez racing through on goal on 33 minutes. It could have been a red, although the Uruguayan still had some distance to the penalty area.

Pulis declined to comment on whether that was just, but he did appeal for Suarez's second-half dive to be highlighted. He was right too, the laments about the Uruguayan not getting penalties sound hollow when you see incidents such as this.

It was a reckless final act in the desperate pursuit of an elusive Anfield win, but one which merely accentuated Liverpool's lingering home discomforts.

Compiled by Graeme Riley

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THE INDEPENDENT

Liverpool's love affair with the woodwork continues

There is no club quite so much in thrall to its own history as Liverpool and on the final whistle record books were flicked through to ascertain when they had last started a season this badly. The answer was... two years ago, under Roy Hodgson. Hodgson was given a little over five months on Merseyside and Brendan Rodgers will expect and probably be allowed years to complete his rebuilding of Liverpool. However, if the Liverpool manager had any doubts that the club's American owners expect results, he only had to watch the Channel Five documentary in which John W Henry is seen chatting to the Boston Red Sox coach, Bobby Valentine, in the dressing rooms of Fenway Park during the summer. Valentine has just had his contract terminated by the men who also run Anfield.

Thursday night's 3-2 defeat by Udinese was the first of a series of seven straight matches Liverpool will play on Merseyside which will go a long way to shaping Rodgers' first season here. This was an afternoon that summed up his first couple of months; Liverpool dominated possession and struck or grazed the frame of the goal four times without ever looking like they were going to win the game or even score.

"The crowd pleased me more than anything. We have won only two home games in the calendar year and it is nearly a year since we last won consecutive league fixtures," said Rodgers. "To get that kind of constant support really means something." It was the kind of support Hodgson never really received.

Seeing Stoke wearing the red and blue stripes made famous by Barcelona provided the kind of double-take that would come from seeing Ray Winstone playing Lord Grantham in Downton Abbey. Stoke will be Barcelona only when Catalonia takes an interest in rugby league.

At half-time, one former Liverpool great remarked that had Jimmy Case still been in his pomp, he would have sorted out what he saw as Stoke's deliberate policy of roughing up Rodgers' younger players.

The Liverpool manager doubted this was what his opposite number, Tony Pulis, had instructed and, in any event, they came through it well. When Daniel Agger drove the ball across the face of the Stoke goal, Raheem Sterling struck it against the outside of the post. It was the closest Liverpool came to a breakthrough - Agger, Luis Suarez and Martin Skrtel all technically hit the post but this was the only one that seemed likely to finish in the net.

"There was a challenge in the first half when Glen Johnson and Jon Walters went up for a header," said Pulis, responding to charges of over-physicality. "It was a real, full-blooded challenge and I thought Glen did absolutely fantastically to bounce back up and get on with it.

"I went over to him and said 'well done', although I think the crowd thought I was having a go at him, but his behaviour was first class. Then, you have Suarez falling over in the box. That was really, really disappointing and should be highlighted. "Retrospective decisions are made on a Monday and Suarez should be punished. The dive in the penalty area was an embarrassment. How he wasn't booked, I don't know."

The Uruguayan had worked tirelessly but his dive would not have fooled a five-year-old. He had slipped under pressure and then thrown himself to the ground. It was laughable and until this issue is addressed Suarez, who was fouled relentlessly, will be looked at with disbelief every time he appeals to a referee. In the second half, he had a reasonable appeal for a penalty when pushed in the back by Robert Huth, who was one of six Stoke players to be booked. It was ignored.

So, too, was Stewart Downing, although Rodgers denied his omission had anything to do with Downing's comments that he had had plenty of conversations with his manager as to why he was not being played. Rodgers' own comment that players at Liverpool "who do not put their bodies on the line stand out like a sore thumb" was generally thought to refer to the winger. Downing had played well against Udinese but the defeat had been condemned by Rodgers as "lazy" and "sloppy" and, during the opening exchanges against Stoke, lazy and sloppy were what Liverpool were.

First, Nuri Sahin passed straight to Charlie Adam, who might have scored had Pepe Reina not blocked his shot. Then the Liverpool keeper gave the ball straight to Steven N'Zonzi, who set up Michael Kightly for a beautifully aimed chip that would have been the day's only goal had Reina not spectacularly atoned for his error by tipping the shot into the Kop.

It was only when Steven Gerrard delivered a fabulous drive that was pushed away at full stretch by Asmir Begovic that Liverpool began to settle and control the match.

It would have been fascinating to have seen Michael Owen at Anfield against the club to which he had contributed so much. Owen, however, on a day when all the teams he has played for were in action -Liverpool, Real Madrid, Newcastle, Manchester United and Stoke - was unable to play because of a groin strain. You would have to be very cynical to point out that one of the highlights of the sport Owen is accused of preferring to football, the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe, was on television.

DAILY Mirror

Reds frustrated as woodwork gets in the way again

Liverpool endured a frustrating afternoon at Anfield as Stoke's renowned battlers fought their way to a goalless draw.

A stalwart defensive display made it five draws in seven matches by Tony Pulis' men, while a point will be scant consolation for Liverpool manager Brendan Rodgers.

It could have been worse for Liverpool, who twice almost pushed the self-destruct button, but ultimately this will be viewed as another disappointment in a stop-start season.

Rodgers made eight changes from the side beaten by Udinese on Thursday, after which he called his players "lazy", and one of his targets, Stewart Downing, was not even on the bench.

Liverpool had been on the receiving end of a kicking from their manager in midweek, and got another one at Anfield at the hands of Stoke, who took their renowned physical approach across the line of legality on plenty of occasions.

But if Liverpool were keen to escape the sharp edge of their manager's tongue, they hardly helped themselves.

Twice, goalkeeper Jose Reina attempted to pass the ball out to a midfielder; twice, Stoke scented a weakness and pounced, and twice it was only the reactions of the Spaniard which saved Liverpool.

Stoke had clearly anticipated Reina would refuse to launch the ball long, and the first time it was Nuri Sahin who conceded possession, giving Charlie Adam a chance to humiliate his former employees. The Scot advanced toward goal, but Reina was quickly out of the blocks to narrow the angle and parry the shot.

Liverpool committed the same mistake again soon afterward. This time it was Steven Nzonzi snapping into the challenge as another Reina pass went awry and Michael Kightly tried to flight the ball into the goal, but the keeper recovered to turn it over at full stretch.

Having passed up those chances, Stoke reverted to type, striking long balls and stopping their opponents by foul means as often as fair, and the game disintegrated as a spectacle.

Liverpool's frustration increased, while the away fans chanted 'You're not famous any more', and all that there was to give the Reds fans some hope before the break was a sweeping shot by Steven Gerrard turned aside by Asmir Begovic, and a toe-poke from Daniel Agger that bounced wide.

Proper football threatened to break out in patches in the second half, as Stoke toned down their challenges, and it was Liverpool who had just about all the chances, although none were clear-cut.

First, a terrific combination between Gerrard and Luis Suarez was just thwarted. Gerrard then picked out Glen Johnson's run with a pass of arrow-like precision, but his England team-mate, on the run, could not keep the shot down.

A run of genuine brilliance by Suarez, the most gifted person on the pitch by some distance, nearly brought a superb goal, but he just bent the shot wide of the angle.

Raheem Sterling was presented with perhaps Liverpool's best opportunity after Agger's driving run, but he tried to drill it inside the near post and only found the side-netting.

Suarez then showed the best and worst of his talents in the space of a couple of minutes, first with a dive in the penalty area that was embarrassingly obvious, then bursting down the right and powering a shot against the outside of a post from a tight angle.

Martin Skrtel nearly snatched a winner at the end when he hooked Joe Cole's ball back across goal, but it dropped, agonisingly for Liverpool, the wrong side of the post.

A dreary goalless draw at home will hardly provide much succour for Rodgers - and Michael Owen, missing an Anfield return due to injury, can only be thankful he was not playing.

LIVERPOOL ECHO

BRENDAN RODGERS wasted little time giving Anfield a makeover when he took over this summer. In tribute to Liverpool FC's glorious past, the manager ordered the restoration of the oldest surviving 'This is Anfield' sign in the tunnel and the re-fitting of the red nets which had disappeared back in the 1990s.

However, two months into a new era what's abundantly clear is that it's going to take more than mere window dressing to significantly alter the Reds' fortunes on home turf. Rodgers inherited a squad who won just six of their 19 league matches at Anfield last term and his hopes of masterminding Liverpool's revival are being hampered by painfully familiar failings.

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The wait for a first home league win of Rodgers' reign goes on after Stoke City doggedly held on to claim the share of the spoils they came from. Thirty points were squandered in L4 in 2011/12 and 10 have slipped through the Reds' grasp already this season.
Hopes that the thrashing of Norwich City a week earlier would act as a catalyst for the campaign ahead were dashed as Liverpool lacked the ruthless streak required to see off the Potters.
On the day when Pepe Reina belatedly kept a league clean sheet, there were no celebrations as the Reds lacked a spark at the other end.
The woodwork saved Stoke on no fewer than four occasions as some gilt-edged chances went begging. But for all their possession and territory, too often the Reds played in front of Tony Pulis' side rather than in behind them.
It's a damning statistic that visiting keeper Asmir Begovic only had two serious saves to make.
The air of frustration which hung around Anfield at the final whistle will now linger for a fortnight as the international break gives manager, players and fans alike the chance to take stock. There is plenty to admire about the style Rodgers has brought to Liverpool.
The work ethic is outstanding and the slick passing game is so pleasing on the eye. But too often it breaks down in the final third and that's why there's been such a discrepancy between performances and results. There are no points awarded for artistic impression and with every slip-up at home you fear that a psychological barrier grows.
This was the ultimate clash of styles as craft and guile battled against brute strength. Ultimately, the Reds dominated but they were fortunate to escape unscathed from a sloppy start to the contest.
Inside five minutes Nuri Sahin's wretched backpass gifted the ball to Charlie Adam but Reina was out quickly to make the block and deny his former team-mate.
Adam went on to show the Reds what they aren't missing with a succession of misplaced passes as the Scot was emphatically outshone by Joe Allen before being hauled off.
Liverpool had to stand firm amidst an aerial bombardment but centre-backs Daniel Agger and Martin Skrtel rose to the challenge.
Stoke set out to rough up the Reds and they were fortunate that referee Lee Mason left it so long before he got his cards out. By the end he had taken half a dozen names which will earn the Potters a £25,000 fine.
Luis Suarez provided his critics with more ammunition after the theatrical tumble he took in the second half, but in his post-match onslaught Pulis conveniently glossed over the fact that until that point the Uruguayan had been booted all over the place.
Robert Huth somehow got away with trampling all over Suarez early on and once again the striker was denied any kind of protection by the officials as Huth and Ryan Shawcross took it in turns to kick lumps out of him. Eventually, they were both cautioned for hacking him down.
Suarez ran the Potters ragged at times with some breathtaking close control and movement but this time there was no end product. Too often he was left isolated with Nuri Sahin, who failed to reach the heights he hit against Norwich, unable to get forward and provide sufficient support.
Reds trio Andre Wisdom, Raheem Sterling and Suso must have felt like they had been transported into the Land of the Giants, but the teenagers refused to be bullied.
Wisdom shone on his home debut, while Sterling and Suso could also be proud of their efforts down the flanks.
The only concerns the Reds endured were self-inflicted with Reina having to atone for a loose pass when he got back to tip Michael Kightly's lob over the bar.
As Stoke retreated and got 11 men behind the ball, Liverpool took control.
Begovic pushed Steven Gerrard's 30-yard piledriver behind and then just before the half hour mark Suso cleverly picked out Daniel Agger in the box. However, the Dane could only poke the ball against the outside of the post.
A succession of free-kicks conceded by the physical visitors ensured the Reds' rhythm was constantly broken.
At the start of the second half a sense of momentum finally built up. Glen Johnson's 25-yarder was gathered by Begovic at the second attempt before the full-back burst on to Gerrard's stunning pass but lashed high into the Kop.
Suarez embarked on a mazy run from halfway which left N'Zonzi trailing and Shawcross lying on his backside. With just Begovic to beat, the striker's composure deserted him and he blazed wide.
Agger marked his first appearance since signing a new long-term contract with an outstanding performance.
Rock solid defensively, he also needed no second invitation to venture forward. One burst took him into the penalty area and his cross picked out Sterling, who rifled a low drive against the outside of the post.
Having introduced Joe Cole for Suso, Oussama Assaidi replaced Sahin but too often the wrong option was taken as promising openings came to nothing.
Suarez clipped the post from an impossible angle and then Skrtel went agonisingly close to grabbing a late winner. Cole's cross dropped kindly to him at the far post but he hooked it back across goal and against the woodwork.
Another home game, another tale of regrets about could and should have been.

DAILY POST

More frustration at Anfield

AT least Liverpool got something right yesterday. After the completion of regular safety exercise Operation Anfield, it was announced the stadium exits were clear should there be any unexpected departures. The streams of disgruntled home supporters who marched out long before the final whistle would have appreciated the guarantee of a swift getaway. No wonder. This was yet another disappointing, frustrating and ultimately winless 90 minutes for Liverpool on their own turf. Yesterdays visit of Stoke City was always going to be the litmus test of the attractive passing game Brendan Rodgers is determined to drum into his players. They came up woefully short. Yes, Liverpool struck the woodwork four times. Yes, some of Stokes defending was borderline legitimate. Yes, referee Lee Mason continues to perplex with interpretation of the laws of the game.
But the bottom line is Rodgers side were simply neither good enough, creative enough nor cute enough to chisel out a way through Stokes characteristically robust rearguard. What should have been an intriguing clash of styles swiftly developed into a grim, ugly afternoon that risked matching the sheer awfulness of the Potters last top-flight visit back in the second week of January, a game that also ended goalless. Stokes approach may not win many admirers but it is effective. And while its also hugely predictable, such an accusation could be pointed at Liverpools forward efforts. Certainly, home supporters were left pining for the aerial threat of Andy Carroll as a succession of inviting crosses went begging. But with Rodgers making it clear that particular boat has long since sailed, the responsibility continues to rest on the shoulders of Luis Suarez.
Stoke know this. Lets face it, everyone knows this. And the lack of protection from the fierce treatment dished out by the visiting defenders served only to heighten the Uruguayans growing frustration. That, though, was no excuse for his lamentable dive midway through the second half, Suarez hitting the deck despite clear daylight between the striker and nearest Stoke players Marc Wilson and Dean Whitehead. So obvious was the simulation, it prompted an embarrassed grumble from the Anfield faithful. If Suarez wants to start earning the penalties he deserves, he must stop trying to win the ones he doesnt.
There were positives in the performance of home debutant Andre Wisdom while Suso, making his first Anfield start, and Raheem Sterling refused to be intimidated by the greater physical might of their giant opponents.
But these remain difficult first steps for Rodgers, the momentum of recent wins at West Bromwich Albion and Norwich City now lost. Not even a first Premier League clean sheet since April could relieve the growing sense of unease at Liverpools continued failure at Anfield, where they have won only two top-flight matches this calendar year. While injury to Michael Owen prevented the striker appearing against his old club, there was still former Anfield representation for the visitors with Peter Crouch and Charlie Adam both in the start line-up.
And the latter was almost provided a returning present in the fifth minute as Liverpool continued to press the self-destruct button in spectacular fashion.
A woefully misdirected backpass from Nuri Sahin put Adam in the clear in front of the Kop, but the onrushing Reina saved the midfielders hurried shot with his legs.
In the wake of Thursdays Europa League defeat to Udinese, Rodgers openly criticised his players for the first time, his frustration clearly boiling over at the succession of individual defensive mistake that have undermined come enterprising attacking. But Liverpool were at it again on 20 minutes, Steven NZonzi anticipating Reinas intended pass into midfield, although the goalkeeper made amends for his error by producing a sprightly leap to palm over Michael Kightlys chip. With referee Mason overseeing matters in trademark fashion, the first half was a fractious, forgettable affair, littered with misplaced passes, long balls, niggly fouls and, in the case of one free-kick against Sterling, non-existent ones. Mason was nevertheless happy to let Ryan Shawcross and Robert Huth kick lumps out of the opposition and Suarez in particular, the latter fortunate to escape censure early on for what appeared a stamp on the Uruguayan.
Liverpool found finally some rhythm to their play midway through the half, Stoke goalkeeper Asmir Begovic called into his first real action by turning behind a 30-yard piledriver from Steven Gerrard before Susos teasing 29th-minute cross was met by a stretching Daniel Agger whose effort brushed the outside of the post.
Stoke dispensed with any attacking notions after the interval and invited Liverpool to break down their obdurate rearguard. And while the Potters resistance racked up the yellow cards, it proved effective. A diagonal pass from Gerrard released Glen Johnson inside Stoke right-back Geoff Cameron but the Liverpool man couldnt keep his shot down from 16 yards, after which Suarezs magical 35-yard run into the heart of Stokes defence deserved a better finale than the hurried left-foot shot he eventually screwed wide. Liverpool struck the same post at the Kop end three times before Mason put everyone out of their misery by blowing for time. Sterling struck the outside of the woodwork with a side-footed effort, Suarez followed suit with an ambitious shot from an impossible angle before in the 90th minute a free-kick from substitute Joe Cole making his first Premier League appearance at Anfield since May 2011 was met at the far post by Martin Skrtel, whose effort agonisingly clipped the post.
But that supporters were already streaming towards the exits told its own story.
MAN OF THE MATCH. Daniel Agger. Solid in defence and looked to augment the attack at every opportunity

Compiled by Graeme Riley

Date: 7 October 2012
Opposition: Stoke City
Competition: League

BBC	Times	Telegraph	Echo
	Guardian	Mirror	Post
	Independent	Mail	Stoke Sentinel

7 October 2012

The Sentinel

LIVERPOOL 0
STOKE CITY 0
STOKE were given a standing ovation by their travelling supporters after holding Liverpool to a goalless draw at Anfield this afternoon.
The Potters rarely looked in trouble, and even had the best chance of the game when Pepe Reina saved from Charlie Adam after just five minutes.
Liverpool grew stronger as the game wore on, but Tony Pulis's well-organised side had few scares on their way to a point.
Pulis named the same side for the third successive game. `That meant former Liverpool players Adam and Peter Crouch lined up against their old club. However, another former Reds star, Michael Owen, was missing from the squad after picking up a slight injury.
Stoke started brightly and had a great chance to take the lead on five minutes, when Nuri Sahin attempted a back-pass to Pepe Reina, but played the ball straight to Adam.
The Stoke midfielder swept the ball goalwards but it was blocked by Reina who had stayed off his line.
Marc Wilson sent a 30-yard effort a yard over on seven minutes but, at the other end, Raheem Suarez had a shot blocked in the area after a strong run by Luis Suarez.
Steven Nzonzi sparked further danger when he gave the ball away to Suarez on the half way line. The striker raced towards the area, but his effort was blocked by Ryan Shawcross.
Stoke came close on 20 minutes when Reina's clearance was intercepted by Steven Nzonzi , 25 yards from goal.
He played the ball to Kightly whose chip would have dipped under the bar, but was touched over by the backpedalling Reina.
Glenn Whelan was forced out of the game after aggravating a hamstring injury. He was replaced by Dean Whitehead as Stoke stuck with their 4-5-1 line-up.
Michael Kightly was booked for a 25th-minute foul on Joe Allen before Steven Gerrard forced a flying save from Asmir Begovic with a 25-yard strike which was swerving away from the keeper.
Daniel Agger just failed to connect with Suso's chip into the area before the ball span inches wide. Huth went into the book for a trip on Suarez as the home side finished the half the stronger.
Half Time
Liverpool 0 Stoke 0
Begovic did well to save a swerving Glenn Johnson strike at the foot of his near post. However, Johnson, who was playing left back, had an even better chance on 52 minutes when Gerrard picked out his run into the area with a typical raking pass.
Johnson controlled the ball with his first touch, but then blasted it over the bar with just Begovic to beat.
Suarez came much closer on 59 minutes when he collected the ball 35 yards out and raced towards the area. He skipped between two defenders before drilling a shot inches wide from 12 yards.
Stoke made a change , on 63 minutes, as Kightly was replaced by Matthew Etherington. Liverpool boss Brendan Rodgers responded with a 67th-minute change as Suso was replaced by Joe Cole.
Shawcross went into the book for a 69th-minute foul on Suarez before Sterling fired just wide at the near post as Liverpool began to step up their efforts.
Charlie Adam was booked for a 73rd-minute foul on Allen, but Stoke's defence was holding firm.
Suarez attracted angry words from Huth and Wilson after falling theatrically, and ridiculously, in the area.
Walters became the fifth Stoke player to be booked when he was cautioned for time-wasting, on 77 minutes.
Sahin was replaced by Oussama Assaidi on 79 minutes as the home side struggled to create chances.
Pulis responded on 81 minutes as Adam came off and was replaced by debutant Maurice Edu.
Suarez rattled a shot into the side netting from a desperately difficult angle before Gerrard overhit a pass to Begovic as the Kop began to show their frustration.
Whitehead was booked for bringing down Sterling before Liverpool came close on 90 minutes when Martin Skrtel connected with a free kick to the back post. He hooked the ball across goal, but it clipped the edge of the far post and bounced out to safety.
However, a Liverpool winner would have been incredibly harsh on Stoke who were well worth their point.
LIVERPOOL: Reina, Wisdom, Agger, Skrtel, Johnson, Sahin (Assaidi, 79), Gerrard, Allen, Suarez, Suso (Cole, 67), Sterling.
Subs: Jones, Henderson, Coates, Carragher, Borini.
STOKE: Begovic, Cameron, Huth, Shawcross, Wilson, Nzonzi, Whelan (Whitehead, 20) Adam (Edu,81) Kightly (Etherington, 63), Crouch, Walters.
Subs: Sorensen, Jones, Upson, Jerome.
Referee: Lee Mason.
Attendance: 44,531

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90:00+4:26Full time The referee blows his whistle to end the game.
90:00+2:46 Joe Cole has a shot on goal from outside the area which misses right.
90:00+2:22 Corner taken by Luis Suarez from the right by-line, clearance made by Maurice Edu.
90:00+2:03 Glen Johnson produces a cross, clearance made by Marc Wilson.
90:00+0:32 Corner taken left-footed by Matthew Etherington.
89:46 Martin Skrtel has an effort at goal from close range which goes wide right of the goal.
89:09 Free kick taken by Steven Gerrard.
89:09Booking Dean Whitehead goes into the book for unsporting behaviour.
89:00 Dean Whitehead concedes a free kick for a foul on Raheem Sterling.
85:05 The ball is delivered by Steven Gerrard, save made by Asmir Begovic.
83:08 The ball is swung over by Steven Gerrard, save by Asmir Begovic.
82:49 A cross is delivered by Oussama Assaidi, clearance made by Marc Wilson.
82:07 Luis Suarez produces a right-footed shot from deep inside the penalty box which goes wide of the right-hand upright.
79:47SubstitutionCharlie Adam leaves the field to be replaced by Maurice Edu.
78:11SubstitutionOussama Assaidi joins the action as a substitute, replacing Nuri Sahin.
76:57 Nuri Sahin produces a left-footed shot from just outside the area that goes wide left of the goal.
76:27 Jose Reina restarts play with the free kick.
76:27Booking Jonathan Walters goes into the book.
76:18 The assistant referee flags for offside against Jonathan Walters.
74:27 Joe Cole takes a shot. Save by Asmir Begovic.
72:32 Free kick crossed right-footed by Steven Gerrard, clearance by Ryan Shawcross.
72:32Booking Caution for Charlie Adam.
72:12 Joe Allen fouled by Charlie Adam, the ref awards a free kick.
70:51 Effort from deep inside the area by Raheem Sterling misses to the right of the goal.
70:12 The ball is crossed by Steven Gerrard, clearance made by Robert Huth.
69:02 Strike on goal comes in from Daniel Agger from the free kick.
69:02Booking Ryan Shawcross is shown a yellow card for unsporting behaviour.
68:43 Ryan Shawcross challenges Luis Suarez unfairly and gives away a free kick.
6:44 Effort on goal by Marc Wilson from 35 yards went harmlessly over the net.
66:26SubstitutionJoe Cole replaces Jesus Fernandez Saez.
64:22 Marc Wilson takes a shot. Blocked by Andre Wisdom.
65:29 Unfair challenge on Jesus Fernandez Saez by Geoff Cameron results in a free kick. Nuri Sahin delivers the ball from the free kick left-footed from left channel, clearance by Peter Crouch.
64:22 Jonathan Walters takes a shot. Andre Wisdom gets a block in.
64:20 Shot from just outside the box by Steven Nzonzi misses to the right of the target.
62:48SubstitutionMichael Kightly leaves the field to be replaced by Matthew Etherington.
60:29 Jesus Fernandez Saez takes a inswinging corner to the near post, clearance made by Robert Huth.
59:33 Inswinging corner taken by Charlie Adam from the right by-line, clearance made by Nuri Sahin.
58:49 Luis Suarez produces a left-footed shot from deep inside the penalty box which goes wide of the left-hand upright.
57:53 Foul by Raheem Sterling on Geoff Cameron, free kick awarded. Asmir Begovic takes the direct free kick.
55:16 Glen Johnson fouled by Peter Crouch, the ref awards a free kick. Glen Johnson restarts play with the free kick.
53:05 Centre by Geoff Cameron, Martin Skrtel makes a clearance.
52:05 Unfair challenge on Jesus Fernandez Saez by Charlie Adam results in a free kick. Martin Skrtel takes the direct free kick.
51:08 Shot from deep inside the area by Glen Johnson clears the crossbar.
49:50 Glen Johnson takes a shot. Asmir Begovic makes a save.
48:26 Steven Gerrard delivers the ball, Marc Wilson makes a clearance. Corner taken by Nuri Sahin, Peter Crouch makes a clearance.
48:11 The ball is sent over by Steven Gerrard, clearance by Ryan Shawcross.
46:24 Andre Wisdom gives away a free kick for an unfair challenge on Michael Kightly. Asmir Begovic restarts play with the free kick.
45:29 Glen Johnson sends in a cross, Marc Wilson makes a clearance.
45:01 The game restarts for the second half.
45:00+2:03Half time The referee blows for half time.
45:00+0:38 Peter Crouch is adjudged to have handled the ball. Glen Johnson takes the free kick.
44:24 Free kick awarded for a foul by Luis Suarez on Asmir Begovic. Free kick taken by Asmir Begovic.
42:04 A cross is delivered by Luis Suarez, Charlie Adam manages to make a clearance.
39:19 Charlie Adam gives away a free kick for an unfair challenge on Raheem Sterling. The free kick is delivered right-footed by Steven Gerrard from left wing, save made by Asmir Begovic.
38:01 Unfair challenge on Glen Johnson by Jonathan Walters results in a free kick. Direct free kick taken by Glen Johnson.
36:53 Marc Wilson concedes a free kick for a foul on Jesus Fernandez Saez. Jose Reina takes the direct free kick.
35:53 Nuri Sahin concedes a free kick for a foul on Steven Nzonzi. Direct free kick taken by Asmir Begovic.
34:43 Nuri Sahin fouled by Steven Nzonzi, the ref awards a free kick. Free kick taken by Glen Johnson.
34:00 Steven Gerrard produces a right-footed shot from just outside the box that goes wide left of the goal.
32:19 Steven Gerrard delivers the ball from the free kick right-footed from right channel.
32:19Booking Robert Huth goes into the referee's book for unsporting behaviour.
32:11 Robert Huth gives away a free kick for an unfair challenge on Luis Suarez.
29:28 Raheem Sterling challenges Geoff Cameron unfairly and gives away a free kick. Robert Huth takes the free kick.
28:20 Jesus Fernandez Saez takes a shot. Robert Huth gets a block in. Effort from inside the six-yard box by Daniel Agger goes wide left of the target.
26:28 Steven Gerrard produces a drilled right-footed shot from 30 yards. Save made by Asmir Begovic. Corner taken short by Luis Suarez. Free kick awarded for a foul by Marc Wilson on Luis Suarez. Nuri Sahin restarts play with the free kick.
25:47 Charlie Adam is penalised for handball and concedes a free kick. Joe Allen takes the free kick.
24:01 Martin Skrtel restarts play with the free kick.
24:01Booking Michael Kightly goes into the referee's book.
23:45 Unfair challenge on Joe Allen by Michael Kightly results in a free kick.
22:19 Foul by Robert Huth on Luis Suarez, free kick awarded. Joe Allen takes the direct free kick.
21:38 Free kick awarded for a foul by Luis Suarez on Ryan Shawcross. Asmir Begovic restarts play with the free kick.
19:31 Corner taken left-footed by Charlie Adam from the right by-line to the near post, Glen Johnson manages to make a clearance. Inswinging corner taken by Charlie Adam, Jose Reina makes a save.
19:31SubstitutionDean Whitehead joins the action as a substitute, replacing Glenn Whelan.
19:31 Michael Kightly takes a shot. Jose Reina makes a save.
17:03 Luis Suarez takes a shot. Ryan Shawcross gets a block in. Corner from the left by-line taken by Steven Gerrard, Robert Huth makes a clearance.
16:41 The ball is sent over by Glenn Whelan, clearance made by Daniel Agger.
14:36 Peter Crouch concedes a free kick for a foul on Daniel Agger. Jose Reina restarts play with the free kick.
13:05 Unfair challenge on Peter Crouch by Daniel Agger results in a free kick. Glenn Whelan crosses the ball from the free kick right-footed from right wing, clearance by Martin Skrtel. Corner taken by Glenn Whelan played to the near post, Nuri Sahin manages to make a clearance.
10:47 Free kick awarded for an unfair challenge on Nuri Sahin by Steven Nzonzi. Steven Gerrard crosses the ball from the free kick right-footed from left wing, save by Asmir Begovic.
9:44 Peter Crouch is flagged offside by the assistant referee. Martin Skrtel restarts play with the free kick.
8:08 The ball is sent over by Daniel Agger, clearance made by Marc Wilson.
7:26 Nuri Sahin takes a shot. Blocked by Raheem Sterling.
6:44 Right-footed shot by Jonathan Walters went harmlessly over the bar.
4:09 Charlie Adam takes a shot. Save made by Jose Reina.
6:15 Free kick awarded for an unfair challenge on Robert Huth by Luis Suarez. Robert Huth takes the free kick.
4:09 Charlie Adam takes a shot. Save by Jose Reina.
3:14 Michael Kightly delivers the ball.
1:20 Free kick awarded for a foul by Nuri Sahin on Glenn Whelan. Asmir Begovic takes the free kick.
0:00 The referee gets the match started.

Compiled by Graeme Riley