

Date: 2 March 2016

Opposition: Manchester City

Competition: League

Times	Telegraph	BBC
Guardian	Mirror	MEN
Independent	Mail	Echo

2 March 2016

THE TIMES

Liverpool gain revenge to puncture City's hopes

Liverpool 3 Lallana 34, Milner 41, Firmino 57 Manchester City 0 Manchester City would not get in a Sunday League on this wretched showing, let alone a European Super League. They lacked ambition, cutting edge and defensive concentration, deservedly losing to a vibrant Liverpool side inspired by the skilful, energetic, two-footed Adam Lallana. City gave no impression of wanting to be involved in the Barclays Premier League title race and are now ten points behind Leicester City, the leaders (with a game in hand). It was a pathetic performance, a surprise given that they had defeated Liverpool to win the Capital One Cup on Sunday. They simply had no response to the attacking moves which brought goals for Lallana, James Milner and Roberto Firmino. City simply did not come close to matching Liverpool's supreme work rate. As at the Etihad Stadium, Liverpool dominated, again winning by a three-goal margin.

This felt partly like atonement by the Liverpool players to their fans for Sunday's disappointment. This was also a response from proud players to stories about Jurgen Klopp having a clear-out in the summer. This was clearly a group of players relishing playing under the inspiring Klopp, and delivering for their fans.

The Kop had a message for their players, a banner declaring "Unity Is Strength", a theme echoed by Klopp in his programme notes. Liverpool's manager had called on his team to fight back from the "pain" and "hurt" suffered in the Capital One Cup. They responded strongly, flying into City, their Wembley nemesis, taking a deserved two-goal lead at the break through Lallana and Milner with Firmino deepening the visiting team's anguish after the break.

City were bizarrely sluggish, seemingly forgetting they were in the title race, much less than the sum of their individual parts. They were too slow to the ball, too vapid when the home side attacked.

Jordan Henderson, Emre Can and Milner pressed relentlessly. To the Kop's huge delight, Jon Flanagan immediately went in hard on Raheem Sterling. Henderson, Liverpool's captain, applauded Flanagan's commitment. The Kop chorused "one greedy b*****" at the returning Sterling. Flanagan versus Sterling was one of the duels of the first half, comfortably won by the Liverpool full back and the City winger departed at the break. Klopp's men edged their battles all over the pitch before the interval. With Daniel Sturridge rested after his Wembley exertions, Divock Origi fully occupied Nicolas Otamendi and Vincent Kompany.

Firmino and Lallana buzzed around, finding space patrolled by Fernandinho and Fernando. City had rested Yaya Toure, who converted the winning penalty at Wembley, while Willy Caballero, who made three saves in the shoot-out, returned to the bench with Joe Hart starting. Even with Kompany shielding him, Hart endured a tough half. He started with a routine save from Firmino but his night got worse. The attention turned back briefly to the Sterling-Flanagan show. There were cheers from Liverpoolfans as Sterling lost out to Flanagan. Mocking jeers ensued as Sterling's shot found only a crowing Kop not the back of Simon Mignolet's net. The focus switched down the Anfield Road End. Lallana made the breakthrough, advancing with the ball as City generously and inexplicably stood off. Lallana accepted the invitation to shoot and let fly with a left-footed strike that bobbed a couple of times before progressing almost sheepishly past Hart. The City keeper may have been initially unsighted but somebody of his quality should have got closer. Klopp seemed surprised by the goal, laughing as he turned towards the fans. Hart was soon beaten again by another England team-mate. With four minutes of the half remaining, Liverpool doubled their lead. Again the attack stemmed from the right side. Lallana backheeled the ball into the path of Firmino, who advanced before picking out Milner's run. The England player raced on and stabbed the ball past Hart. Milner ran off, twirling an imaginary lasso or scarf above his head. Klopp punched the air.

Milner's arm was soon in focus. As the half closed, Sergio Aguero met a David Silva free kick with a firm header that caught Milner on the arm. City's appeals were modest and Milner escaped. The pain continued for City after the break. Liverpool fans raised the roof when the announcer revealed that Sterling was being replaced by Wilfried Bony. The Kop then saluted Hart, offering their usual courtesy to visiting keepers. They loved what was unfolding in front of them. Otamendi gifted Liverpool the ball with a hurried clearance. Henderson swiftly played the ball through to Origi, who worked it into the path of Lallana. He dribbled through, ripping City's defence to pieces, before placing the ball through for Firmino to finish emphatically past Hart. This was brilliant from Liverpool but shocking from City. Have they given up on the title? Hart then defied Milner, pushing a powerful strike away as the Kop sang "poetry in motion".

Klopp then made his first change, removing the hard-working Origi for Christian Benteke. Origi was applauded all the way to the bench. There was so much to admire in Liverpool's performance, from Can's hustling in midfield, to the way Kolo Toure sprinted back to dispossess Aguero. Lallana kept impressing, moving the ball past dark blue shirts. City supporters could have been forgiven for real anger by this supine performance. They chanted their backing but this bordered on a surrender. By the end, Pellegrini was just sitting on the bench shaking his head, surely waving goodbye to City's title hopes.

Liverpool: S Mignolet 6 -- J Flanagan 7, K Toure 6, D Lovren 7, N Clyne 7 -- J Henderson 7, E Can 7, J Milner 8 (sub: J Ibe, 88min), A Lallana 7, R Firmino 8 (sub: J Allen, 75) -- D Origi 6 (sub: C Benteke, 69 6). Substitutes not used: D Ward, P Coutinho, A Moreno, M Skrtel.

Manchester City: J Hart 6 -- P Zabaleta 6, V Kompany 6, N Otamendi 6, G Clichy 5

(sub: A Kolarov, 75) -- Fernandinho 5 (sub: K Iheanacho, 55 5), Fernando 5; J Navas 6, D Silva 6, R Sterling 5 (sub: W Bony, 45 6) -- S Aguero 6. Substitutes not used: W Caballero, B Sagna, E Mangala, M Demichelis. Booked: Navas. Referee: M Atkinson.

the **guardian**

Liverpool revenge is swift and sweet against all-at-sea Manchester City What might have been was the question on everyone's lips at Anfield. For Liverpool it was the thought of what could have transpired in the Capital One Cup final as Jürgen Klopp's side exacted swift revenge on Manchester City with a commanding Premier League display. For City it stemmed from the relief that Manuel Pellegrini's departure was not announced earlier.

A team with designs on the title were beaten comprehensively. Adam Lallana inspired Liverpool to a Premier League double over their Wembley conquerors and, somewhere in Leicester, Claudio Ranieri had another reason to toast his point against West Bromwich Albion 24 hours earlier. It is one win and three consecutive defeats in the league for City since Pep Guardiola was confirmed as Pellegrini's replacement on 1 February. Their endeavour has declined markedly and they were second best in every department as Liverpool won with something to spare courtesy of goals from the man of the match Lallana, James Milner and Roberto Firmino. Forget the title, Guardiola will not inherit a team in the Champions League on this form – unless City win the competition this season. Pellegrini, who made three changes to Sunday's starting lineup compared with Klopp's five, said: "I am not thinking about the title and not thinking about qualifying for the Champions League. The most important thing is to recover our performance in the next Premier League game because we have lost the last three. Of course we cannot play in the way we did today. We conceded three goals and did not shoot once at the Liverpool goal.

"But it was because we were not fresh. From the beginning I could see we were not fresh. Liverpool had more energy and played at a higher pace. They could make more changes. We didn't have any midfielders to change without Yaya Touré. We had just defenders or one striker to make the change."

That argument did not sit comfortably with Klopp, whose team also played 120 minutes on Sunday and had a European game last midweek. "Being tired at this moment of the season is absolutely nothing to talk about because everybody could be," he said. Liverpool's reaction to defeat in the Capital One Cup final, however, left their manager enthralled. "I am too old to say: 'Yes, we will play like this all the time' – but you saw what is possible. Everyone who loves Liverpool could watch this game and forget for 93 minutes that we lost on Sunday."

The excellent Jon Flanagan, making his first league start since May 2014, set the tone for a fast, aggressive display from Liverpool inside the first minute when he sent his former team-mate Raheem Sterling flying with a challenge from the hard but fair manual. Sterling was made aware of Flanagan's presence when barged over in front of the Kop 10 minutes later. The £49m winger wilted and was withdrawn at half-time with Anfield revelling in the ignominy.

Following an incident-free opening Liverpool took the lead with a goal that was greeted with a second's silence as the crowd, and Klopp, computed what had unfolded. Milner released Lallana into space inside the City half and, with no defender closing him down, the midfielder accepted the invitation to shoot from distance. Lallana's effort lacked pace but it had accuracy. It also found in Joe Hart a goalkeeper struggling to move his feet and the ball had nestled inside the near post before Anfield erupted. "My only surprise was that he shot," Klopp said. The second was immediately acclaimed for the fine team goal it was. Lallana was again involved, back-heeling Flanagan's pass down the right inside to Firmino who opened the City defence with a first-time pass. The former City midfielder Milner was first to the ball and, before Pablo Zabaleta could intervene, Hart's goal had been pierced in the same place for a second time.

Pellegrini introduced the strikers Wilfried Bony and Kelechi Iheanacho but City's threat remained non-existent. Liverpool worked tirelessly to protect Simon Mignolet on his 100th league appearance for the club while working in packs to unnerve City's defence. Milner, Lallana and Firmino provided constant support to the industrious Divock Origi and City were shredded for a third time before the hour.

Lallana was instrumental again but Nicolás Otamendi's role could not be ignored. The defender yielded possession to Jordan Henderson with a woeful touch and, despite Gaël Clichy's attempt to cut out the Liverpool captain's pass, Lallana reacted quickest, rode two half-hearted challenges and released Firmino for a convincing finish beyond the furious Hart.

Klopp said: "Take whatever you can get – that is the target for the league. The most important moment of the season is now. We have to stay angry and to strike back in each game."

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TheMail

RAMPAGING REDS DASH CITY HOPES; Klopp gains revenge for Cup agony

YOU would always rather have the cup than the revenge but as a response to disappointment, this was still spectacular from Liverpool.

After Sunday's shootout defeat in the Capital One Cup final, Liverpool would not have relished seeing Manchester City again. This morning, though, everything will not look quite so bad.

For City, this could be the defeat that ends their Barclays Premier League hopes. Other results went their way last night, as they had on Tuesday, so they are still in it. But they were awful here -- tired, and lacking in imagination and focus.

Liverpool, though, grew wonderfully into the game after a tepid opening half-hour and there were moments after their third goal in the 57th minute during which they looked as though they may thoroughly embarrass Manuel Pellegrini's team. This will do for Jurgen Klopp, though, as he looks to get his team going again. They were good goals, too, the type he must have imagined when he agreed to come here. The first, a low shot from the excellent Adam Lallana, embarrassed City goalkeeper Joe Hart a little. Maybe Wembley hero Willy Caballero would have saved it. But the two that followed -- from James Milner and the Brazilian Firmino -- were classic Liverpool goals that arrived on the back of clever passing, hard running and lovely finishing.

It's strange how fixtures fall sometimes, and this was one both sides would probably wish to have avoided. Nevertheless, there was much at stake. Sunday's outcome had left Liverpool looking forlorn in ninth place in the Barclays Premier League and needing some momentum going into next Thursday's Europa League tie with Manchester United.

City, meanwhile, had a title to contest and began this game still on the fringes of contention.

For a while, however, the hangover from Wembley seemed very real at a cold and blustery Anfield. The swirling wind was never going to encourage good football but the weather couldn't excuse the general sense of lethargy.

Happily for Liverpool, they were to break free from the torpor late in the first half but first we had to sit through half an hour of gentle poking and prodding from two teams who seemingly hadn't been told that the League Cup final doesn't signal the end of a season.

City were without Yaya Toure while Liverpool were missing Daniel Sturridge. Former Liverpoolforward Raheem Sterling did play, however, and his reception whenever he touched the ball contained even more ill-will than it had at Wembley -- or maybe we could just hear it better. Whatever the case, neither Sterling nor the hard-running Sergio Aguero nor the impish David Silva could inspire City early on. The central midfielder Fernandinho did send a header wide from a Silva free-kick in the 12th minute, and the overlapping Pablo Zabaleta stung Simon Mignolet's palms at the near post 10 minutes later.

Apart from a long-range Sterling shot that drifted shamefully wide just before the half-hour, however, that was about as good as it got for City. Liverpool were not exactly playing inspired football but they were more progressive than their opponents and eventually it paid off.

Only a low Firmino shot from 20 yards had exercised City goalkeeper Hart -- it was straight at him, as it happened -- before Liverpool took the lead in the 34th minute. Much of Liverpool's approach play had previously broken down 20 yards or so from goal but when Lallana decided to try his luck from distance, he scored when perhaps even he didn't really expect to.

Lallana's shot didn't even seem to be that well struck as it travelled low to Hart's left. But the England goalkeeper was either poorly positioned or slow to react, and the ball beat to him low to his left.

Suddenly, City were up against it. Goals can, of course, free teams from tension and inhibition and briefly that seemed to be the case with City as they sprang forward with greater focus.

Crucially, though, it was Liverpool who scored the second. Lallana's back heel played Firmino into space and his pass through to Milner was controlled with one foot and slipped past Hart with the other. It was a super goal and Milner, a former City player, celebrated with a hearty swish of his right fist.

City's need for an early secondhalf riposte was illustrated by the fact that centre forward Wilfried Bony spent the whole of the interval stripped for action and warming up. Pellegrini's team had come to Merseyside in need of three points. To lose at this stage of the season, meanwhile, was unthinkable. Bony, it turned out, was to replace Sterling and that seemed a fair call. The formerLiverpool player had endured a poor night.

Liverpool continued to press, though, and it wasn't long before Hart had to drop sharply to his left to push away a cross shot from Divock Origi after a rash -- and failed -- attempt at an interception by Nicolas Otamendi opened the door for the Belgian.

As the game progressed, there was always the feeling that City could find a way back if they could just score one. It was Liverpool who were to close the game out, though. A clumsy Otamendi touch was picked up by Jordan Henderson, played to Origi and then Lallana and finished emphatically in front of the Kop by Firmino.

The Daily Telegraph

Liverpool bounce back in style to put City on the ropes

Liverpool 3 Lallana 34, Milner 41, Firmino 57 Manchester City 0 Att: 43,597

The pre-match rally cry from Jurgen Klopp was an appeal to the disheartened. "Falling down is OK in life; it is expected. But you have to get up and keep going forward," he wrote, trying to raise morale after the Wembley woe.

Liverpool did not just lift themselves off the canvas against Manchester City, they did so by delivering three uppercuts that took the fizz out of Manuel Pellegrini's cup champagne. Four days after winning a trophy, the one City have come to expect most might now be beyond them. It was not that they were beaten at Anfield, but the emphatic nature of the loss that underlined the erratic nature of both sides. Pellegrini's side were woeful.

Liverpool were superb, goals from Adam Lallana, James Milner and Roberto Firmino making them unrecognisable from the side that has limped through most of the season. The tame display of a City team that should have had momentum was plain odd given the class in their line-up. Tiredness is no excuse since it was Liverpool who went into the evening so deflated.

The predictable gag since photographs emerged of leading executives of the 'elite' clubs engaged in secret meetings was 'How did Liverpool get an invitation?'

Certainly no contemporary achievements warrant the Merseyside club's presence at the top table.

History still counts for plenty even if the current league table makes sobering reading, the energy and charisma of Klopp's press conferences too rarely replicated on the pitch. It is often said a manager's team reflect his personality. That alone tells us how much work needs to be done.

Insipid is not a phrase to springs to mind when assessing Klopp, so how comforted he would have been by a first half that was his side's most impressive on home soil since taking over. Lest we forget, he had only won in front of the Kop in the league twice prior to City's arrival.

A first trophy at Anfield was Klopp's ambition four days ago. Escaping mid-table is the more modest Premier League ambition for the rest of this season. Not that City arrived having exploited the huge gulf in class that was evident at Wembley. Pellegrini could argue a treble was still possible, but a mustwin league fixture in the first week of March was inconceivable when his side sprinted from the blocks in August. As Lallana and Milner put Liverpool ahead - a deserved lead at half-time - all the flaws that explain why City were so eager to recruit Pep Guardiola were evident. City have so many great players but they need shaping into a unit. Their lifeless start on Merseyside was all the more surprising since Pellegrini had resisted mass changes, the absence of Yaya Toure in midfield enforced.

Joe Hart for Willy Caballero was expected, although the England's keeper's strange lack of positioning made him culpable when Lallana's hopeful strike bounced beyond him on 34 minutes.

Klopp made several changes to his Wembley line-up sensing the need for refreshment. The absence of Daniel Sturridge was not a surprise after he limped away on Sunday, while the trust in left-back Alberto Moreno may be wearing thin. His absence allowed Jon Flanagan to start a league game for the first time in 18 months.

Still Christian Benteke awaited proof the manager's supportive public words are not hollow. It is tough to see in precisely what circumstances the PS32.5 million striker will start again since Divock Origi was preferred up front.

Pellegrini's inclusion of Raheem Sterling at least ensured plenty of invective and what could easily have been a night when the Kop needed to rouse itself.

Flanagan's robust challenge on Sterling within 60 seconds set the tone, the former Liverpool winger jeered every time he chased the ball, let alone touched it. Sterling did get a cheer at half-time when he suffered the humiliation of being substituted. Roberto Firmino was full of tricks and confidence, Emre Can was demonstrating his considerable potential and Lallana gave one of those displays that made you want to grab him and ask why he doesn't do this every week.

Origi also forced a series of late lunges from the City defence that had looked so comfortable a few days ago - although it was the young Belgian's introduction at Wembley that also shifted momentum.

Hart's error was a gift. Liverpool's best work took them to the edge of the box but the last pass was too often lacking, but Lallana's decision to take aim was rewarded. Milner's five minutes later was more beautifully crafted, Lallana's back-heel freeing Firmino whose pass found the ex-City man as he timed he run perfectly. For a moment Milner hesitated as he assessed whether to celebrate. Perhaps the frustration of the cup final loss got the better of him as the clenched fist duly arrived. The removal of Sterling for Wilfried Bony made City as open to further strikes as add to their potency in attack and Origi forced Hart into action two minutes into the second half.

A third on the counter-attack - again crafted by Firmino - underlined the dual personality of Klopp's side. It was brilliant again, the Brazilian picking his spot after Lallana was again a menace.

Origi, who was exceptional, departed to a standing ovation granting Benteke a rare opportunity. The away fans were left only to celebrate the League Cup and chant about the title at Liverpool's expense two years ago. These teams have gone toe-to-toe in this last few days as they did then, but are a long way off from showing the same consistent quality.

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INDEPENDENT

Milner makes mark as City stay 10 points behind leaders

On a night when the monied clubs that would catch Leicester lay in a collective heap, nobody fell harder than Manchester City.

If Manuel Pellegrini is to take his leave of the Etihad Stadium by regaining the league title, he will have to oversee an electric finish. Before the game his captain, Vincent Kompany, had argued they would use their greater experience to hunt Leicester down. Now, 10 points adrift of the Premier League's most surprising leaders, Manchester City look like they have let the Foxes bolt.

With Manchester United and West Ham uncomfortably close, Pellegrini's main task would appear to be to finish in the top four.

If you judged them by their two league performances against Manchester City, won by a collective scoreline of 7-1, you might ask why Liverpool are unlikely to finish in the Champions League places. Had they played to this level in Sunday's Capital One Cup final, they would not have needed to lose to City in a penalty shoot-out.

"Falling down is okay in life," said Jrgen Klopp after the defeat at Wembley. "It is expected but you have to move forward." This was a giant stride but in the league Manchester City's only direction seems to be backwards.

When they thrashed Manchester City at the Etihad Stadium, Liverpool did so with a series of quick, harsh hammer blows. Here they took control of the night almost by stealth. Liverpool did not threaten anyone until suddenly they were two and then three up.

Nobody in Manchester City's back four seemed particularly aware of any danger when Adam Lallana moved forward with Roberto Firmino to his left. Kompany retreated and only too late did Nicolas Otamendi realise the danger and attempt to close Lallana down. The shot was low and hard and should probably have been saved by Joe Hart. Most of the stadium seemed to think it had gone wide. For a second there was almost no reaction, then an eruption of emotion followed.

Seven minutes later, there was another as Liverpool's second worthwhile attack of the evening produced a second goal. If there is a criticism of the way Pellegrini has handled Manchester City, it would lie in central midfield. Gareth Barry and James Milner, the two Englishmen he dispensed with, still seem an obviously better combination than the Brazilian pairing of Fernando and Fernandinho.

Now Milner seized on Firmino's ball that bisected Kompany and Pablo Zabaleta and drove his shot past Hart before Zabaleta could make the tackle.

Just before the interval Milner displayed another side to his game, chesting down what would have been Manchester City's first attempt on target - a header from Sergio Aguero.

Manchester City have seldom enjoyed their journeys to the red half of Merseyside. They had won just one of their previous 34 games at Anfield and that was courtesy of goals from a former Liverpoolplayer, Nicolas Anelka. However, it seems hard to imagine they had performed as insipidly as they did now.

After the interval, Otamendi, who seemed to have forged something of a partnership with Kompany in the victory over Dynamo Kiev, gave the ball away with a sloppy touch and Firmino burst through to finish as emphatically as he had at the Etihad. The game was not an hour old and Manchester City had lost.

And yet, until Liverpool's breakthrough, the night was still languishing in the shadow of Wembley. Klopp's remark that "the championship is not so interesting for us" - a damning admission for aLiverpool manager to make at the beginning of March - seemed to have spread to the pitch.

There was a flatness. Kompany, who had been absent in November when Manchester City's defence had been slashed apart in their stadium by Firmino and Philippe Coutinho, seemed in control. Even the booing of Raheem Sterling, making his first return to Anfield since he forced his way out of the club, was pantomime-like, lacking real spite.

It was not, however, an occasion Sterling would want to linger over. He was facing Jon Flanagan, who had last played for Liverpool in May 2014 when Sterling was a team-mate, the team-talks were delivered by Brendan Rodgers and Luis Suarez spearheaded the attack.

Flanagan, who grew up within earshot of the Kop, played astonishingly well. His first touch was to bundle Sterling off the ball, which provoked a wave of laughter around Anfield and, towards the end of the first half, he deftly took a pass from Aguero off Sterling's feet.

Then, as the teams prepared for the second half, Sterling's number was held up by the fourth official. The "greedy bastard", as they called him, would not be reappearing for the second half.

It was almost enough to erase the pain of Wembley. Almost but not quite.

DAILY

Mirror

LEAGUE KLOPP! No silverware.. but Jurgen does the double over City in the Prem

THIS wasn't so much a defeat as a surrender, with the white flag raised at Anfield a symbol of everything that is rotten about this Manchester City team.

Sunday's Wembley triumph was supposed to provide inspiration, a springboard for a sustained title challenge.

It was also supposed to demoralise and dismiss their Liverpool opponents.

Yet what happened in the intervening three days casts nothing but shame on the Blues' players. They have a title at stake, Liverpool nothing but pride.

Yet all the desire, all the heart and all the commitment came from the home side.

City, in comparison, were feeble, and they will not win the Premier League with such an absence of spirit. Do they even want to win it? That is a serious question on this insipid, pathetic display with so much at stake.

They have downed tools in the league, their third straight defeat - for the first time since their Abu Dhabi revolution - signifying no matter what platitudes they utter to the contrary, their manager's departure has exposed a lack of professionalism and pride.

Two words sum up perfectly City's lack of desire: John Flanagan. His incredible, passionate display offered such a stark contrast to the visitors that it embarrassed them. He set the tone for an admirable display by the Reds, that could - and should - have delivered a bigger thrashing than Liverpool's fine 4-1 victory at the Etihad.

They scored two goals at the end of the first half through Adam Lallana and the amazing James Milner, and sealed the rout just after the break when City's total lack of a midfield was exposed by a slick move involving Jordan Henderson, Divock Origi, Lallana, and then Roberto Firmino, who finished in style.

It was a breathless display from the Reds at times, but Flanagan still deserves most credit for his game-changing start to the contest.

Boss Jurgen Klopp spoke of the "pain and hurt" Liverpool felt at their Capital One Cup final penalty shoot-out misery, and he asked his players to redress the balance against the same opponents.

It was clear Flanagan was intent on taking that literally... on Raheem Sterling, in fact, which delighted the Kop who accompanied the defender's efforts with a raucous chant of "one greedy ba*****".

It was 661 days since the young England star last played a league game for the Reds, yet as he flew into a ferocious, bone-crunching challenge on his former teammate, it seemed as though he had never been away.

With Nathaniel Clyne and Flanagan more capable at the back, and with Dejan Lovren also returning,Liverpool had a more secure platform on which to launch what was a dogged and aggressive pursuit of their rivals, which eventually led to Lallana's goal.

A Firmino tackle on halfway give Lallana the ball, and as he advanced with City's defence retreating, the winger shot through the legs of Nicolas Otamendi, and somehow, that unsighted Joe Hart to allow the ball to creep into the net.

Perhaps the keeper should have done better.

But Hart had no chance on halftime, as City's defence parted like the Red Sea to allow Lallana's backheel to be worked by Firmino into the path of Milner, and the finish was as exquisite as the celebration against his former club.

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LIVERPOOL

ECHO

The banner on the Kop summed up the mood perfectly: 'Unity is strength.' There was no wallowing in self-pity either on the pitch or in the stands. No dwelling on that Wembley heartache 72 hours earlier.

Instead Liverpool took out their frustration in the best possible fashion as they demolished Manchester City.

Jurgen Klopp got the response he had demanded in the wake of the Reds' Capital One Cup final defeat. It was a morale-boosting show of togetherness.

Of course an emphatic victory over Manuel Pellegrini's men only represented a modicum of revenge considering the stakes had been considerably higher in the capital.

But this was about more than simply paying City back by derailing their title hopes. This was about proving that Liverpool's cup final agony wouldn't be a terminal blow to Klopp's first season at the helm.

This was about the Reds showing they had the stomach for the fight ahead by dusting themselves off and going again.

This was about gaining momentum ahead of the crunch Europa League showdown with Manchester United. All those boxes were ticked in style.

“You always have to strike back,” Klopp said pre-match.

He urged his players to channel that hurt and pain into “something positive” and they did that impressively.

It was City who suffered Wembley hangover

It was City rather than Liverpool who suffered the mother of all Wembley hangovers.

The only tinge of regret was that Klopp's men hadn't been able to attack with this kind of fluency and vibrancy under that giant arch.

There were dominant performances all over the field but none bigger than Adam Lallana's.

This was one of those nights when the England international, who was making his first start for a month after recovering from a calf problem, looked like a £25million footballer.

Lallana epitomised Liverpool's work ethic as he ran himself into the ground. Having scored the first, he was then heavily involved in goals for James Milner and Roberto Firmino. The Kop chanted his name vociferously.

What a sweet evening it was for Milner. Unable to hold down a starting spot under Pellegrini, he haunted his former club with his best display for the Reds and earned a richly deserved ovation late on.

It proved to be a humiliating return to Anfield for Raheem Sterling. Booed mercilessly as a result of the sour taste left by his exit last summer, Sterling was expertly shackled by Jon Flanagan before being hauled off at half-time.

Handed his first league start since May 2014, Flanagan grasped the opportunity with both hands.

After all the recent talk about his contract situation, the tough-tackling full-back simply let his boots do the talking. He didn't put a foot wrong.

It's a no-brainer. Liverpool are a better team with Flanagan in it and a new deal needs sorting out quickly.

With Lucas Leiva and Mamadou Sakho injured, Daniel Sturridge and Philippe Coutinho rested and Alberto Moreno dropped, Klopp made five changes from the starting line up at Wembley.

The centre-back duo of Kolo Toure and the fit-again Dejan Lovren barely gave Sergio Aguero a sniff.

Brimming with heart and desire

It was an opening 45 minutes brimming with heart and desire as Liverpool stamped their authority on proceedings.

Flanagan welcomed Sterling back to Anfield with a crunching challenge inside 30 seconds. The hosts repeatedly shut down space and won back possession.

Divock Origi, who was making his first league start since he limped off against Leicester City on Boxing Day, epitomised that endeavour.

The young Belgian has deservedly jumped above Christian Benteke in the pecking order and after a slow start to his Liverpool career he's blossoming.

Origi led from the front – chasing down lost causes, holding it up intelligently and always making himself available.

His pace and power stretched the City backline with Nicolas Otamendi and Vincent Kompany reduced to kicking lumps out of him.

For half an hour Liverpool were better without the ball than they were with it. They found themselves in some glorious positions but failed to make it count.

Klopp, sensing that City were there for the taking, grew increasingly animated on the touchline. Waving his arms furiously, he urged his players to move the ball quicker.

Firmino, who raised his game significantly after being so off the pace at Wembley, belatedly tested Joe Hart.

City's attacking threat was minimal. Pablo Zabaleta's cross-shot was beaten away by Simon Mignolet but it was a rare moment of concern.

Nightmare return for Sterling

Sterling endured a nightmare. Having got no change out of Nathaniel Clyne at Wembley, he found Flanagan in similarly combative mood. When the former Reds winger did work his way into space he curled tamely wide.

Liverpool's central midfield axis of Jordan Henderson and Emre Can worked better than it has done for weeks. It's difficult to make sense of Can. The young German is a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma.

He can be horribly erratic yet there is clearly some serious talent there.

There are flaws for Klopp to iron out but Can clearly has an unswerving belief in his own ability and this was a night when he shone brightly.

Eleven minutes before the break Liverpool were in front.

City backed off, inviting Lallana to try his luck. His bobbling 25-yarder didn't appear to have enough power behind it but Hart went down in instalments and it nestled in the bottom corner. Energised by the breakthrough, Liverpool tore forward in search of greater reward and soon doubled their advantage.

Lallana was involved again as his back heel found Firmino, whose sweeping cross picked out Milner. The former City midfielder's first touch took him clear and he finished in style. Briefly, City flickered into life. Flanagan tracked back brilliantly to deny Sterling in front of the Kop before Milner blocked Aguero's goal-bound header. The Kop erupted before a ball had even been kicked at the start of the second half at news of Sterling's substitution.

Rampant Reds kept carving visitors open

Liverpool were rampant as they repeatedly carved City open. Origi was thwarted by Hart before the Reds made it 3-0 in the 57 minute.

Henderson's pass into Origi's feet was cut out by Gael Clichy but Lallana pounced, picking his pocket and surging forward. He unselfishly teed up Firmino, who swept it clinically past Hart for his seventh of the campaign.

Liverpool could and should have had more with Milner's fierce strike tipped over. Klopp brought on Benteke for Origi and Joe Allen soon followed for Firmino.

Toure was a rock. When the veteran Ivorian shrugged off Aguero inside the box, Klopp celebrated like Liverpool had added a fourth.

Henderson's free-kick curled just wide before Allen went close with a dipping volley. Klopp's Liverpool are back on their feet.

MATCH FACTS

Liverpool: Mignolet, Clyne, Toure, Lovren, Flanagan, Henderson, Can, Milner (Ibe 88), Lallana, Firmino (Allen 75), Origi (Benteke 69).

Not used: Ward, Skrtel, Moreno, Coutinho.

Manchester City: Hart, Zabaleta, Clichy (Kolarov 75), Kompany, Otamendi, Fernando, Fernandinho (Iheanacho 55), Navas, Silva, Sterling (Bony 45), Aguero

Not used: Caballero, Sagna, Demichelis, Mangala

Referee: Martin Atkinson Attendance: 43,597 Goals: Lallana 34, Milner 41, Firmino 57 Bookings: Navas.

Man of the match: Adam Lallana. Scored the first and involved in the second and third goals. One of his best nights in a Liverpool shirt.

Times

Guardian

Independent

Telegraph

Mirror

Mail

BBC

MEN

Echo

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Match ends, Liverpool 3, Manchester City 0.

90'+4' Second Half ends, Liverpool 3, Manchester City 0.

90'+3' Attempt saved. Nathaniel Clyne (Liverpool right footed shot from long range on the left is saved in the bottom left corner. Assisted by Emre Can.

90'+2' Nicolás Otamendi (Manchester City wins a free kick in the defensive half.

90'+2' Foul by Joe Allen (Liverpool.

90'+1' Attempt missed. Joe Allen (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is just a bit too high. Assisted by Christian Benteke with a headed pass.

90' Attempt saved. Wilfried Bony (Manchester City right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom left corner. Assisted by Vincent Kompany.

89' Corner, Manchester City. Conceded by Jordan Henderson.

88' Substitution, Liverpool. Jordon Ibe replaces James Milner.

88' Delay over. They are ready to continue.

87' Delay in match Jon Flanagan (Liverpool because of an injury.

85' Attempt missed. Jordan Henderson (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is close, but misses to the left from a direct free kick.

83' Christian Benteke (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.

83' Foul by Vincent Kompany (Manchester City.

83' James Milner (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.

83' Foul by Aleksandar Kolarov (Manchester City.

81' Christian Benteke (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing.

81' Foul by Vincent Kompany (Manchester City.

80' Nathaniel Clyne (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.

80' Foul by Sergio Agüero (Manchester City.

80' Foul by Christian Benteke (Liverpool.

80' Nicolás Otamendi (Manchester City wins a free kick in the defensive half.

79' James Milner (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.

79' Foul by Wilfried Bony (Manchester City.

75' Emre Can (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.

75' Foul by Wilfried Bony (Manchester City.

75' Substitution, Liverpool. Joe Allen replaces Roberto Firmino.

74' Substitution, Manchester City. Aleksandar Kolarov replaces Gaël Clichy.

74' Foul by Adam Lallana (Liverpool.

74' Wilfried Bony (Manchester City wins a free kick in the attacking half.

73' Foul by James Milner (Liverpool.

73' Pablo Zabaleta (Manchester City wins a free kick in the defensive half.

69' Substitution, Liverpool. Christian Benteke replaces Divock Origi.

68' Adam Lallana (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing.

68' Foul by Fernando (Manchester City.

68' Jesús Navas (Manchester City is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.

67' Foul by Jesús Navas (Manchester City.

67' Adam Lallana (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.

64' Emre Can (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.

64' Foul by David Silva (Manchester City.

64' Attempt missed. James Milner (Liverpool left footed shot from the left side of the box is close, but misses the top left corner. Assisted by Nathaniel Clyne.

61' Foul by Adam Lallana (Liverpool.

61' David Silva (Manchester City wins a free kick in the defensive half.

60' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Jesús Navas.

60' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Joe Hart.

60' Attempt saved. James Milner (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the top centre of the goal.

57' Goal! Liverpool 3, Manchester City 0. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box to the bottom right corner. Assisted by Adam Lallana.

55' Substitution, Manchester City. Kelechi Iheanacho replaces Fernandinho.

51' Foul by Divock Origi (Liverpool.

51' Nicolás Otamendi (Manchester City wins a free kick in the defensive half.

49' Foul by Adam Lallana (Liverpool.

49' Fernandinho (Manchester City wins a free kick on the left wing.

48' Attempt saved. Divock Origi (Liverpool right footed shot from a difficult angle on the right is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by James Milner with a through ball.

47' Offside, Liverpool. Kolo Touré tries a through ball, but Divock Origi is caught offside.

Second Half begins Liverpool 2, Manchester City 0.

45' Substitution, Manchester City. Wilfried Bony replaces Raheem Sterling.

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

45'+1' James Milner (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.

45'+1' Foul by Raheem Sterling (Manchester City.

45'+1' Attempt blocked. Sergio Agüero (Manchester City header from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by David Silva with a cross.

45'+1' Foul by Roberto Firmino (Liverpool.

45'+1' David Silva (Manchester City wins a free kick on the left wing.

44' Offside, Liverpool. Nathaniel Clyne tries a through ball, but Roberto Firmino is caught offside.

42' Foul by Emre Can (Liverpool.

42' David Silva (Manchester City wins a free kick in the attacking half.

41' Goal! Liverpool 2, Manchester City 0. James Milner (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box to the bottom right corner. Assisted by Roberto Firmino.

40' Offside, Manchester City. Gaël Clichy tries a through ball, but Sergio Agüero is caught offside.

40' Offside, Liverpool. Nathaniel Clyne tries a through ball, but Divock Origi is caught offside.

37' Corner, Manchester City. Conceded by Nathaniel Clyne.

36' Offside, Liverpool. James Milner tries a through ball, but Roberto Firmino is caught offside.

34' Goal! Liverpool 1, Manchester City 0. Adam Lallana (Liverpool left footed shot from

outside the box to the bottom right corner. Assisted by James Milner.

28' Attempt missed. Raheem Sterling (Manchester City right footed shot from outside the box misses to the left. Assisted by David Silva.

24' Foul by Roberto Firmino (Liverpool.

24' Jesús Navas (Manchester City wins a free kick in the defensive half.

22' Attempt saved. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Adam Lallana.

19' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Gaël Clichy.

17' Attempt blocked. James Milner (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Adam Lallana.

16' Foul by Adam Lallana (Liverpool.

16' Pablo Zabaleta (Manchester City wins a free kick in the defensive half.

13' Emre Can (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.

13' Foul by Fernandinho (Manchester City.

12' Attempt missed. Fernandinho (Manchester City header from the centre of the box misses to the right. Assisted by David Silva with a cross following a set piece situation.

11' Foul by Jon Flanagan (Liverpool.

11' Raheem Sterling (Manchester City wins a free kick on the left wing.

8' Foul by Adam Lallana (Liverpool.

8' Vincent Kompany (Manchester City wins a free kick in the defensive half.

6' Divock Origi (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.

6' Foul by Vincent Kompany (Manchester City.

4' Divock Origi (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.

4' Foul by Nicolás Otamendi (Manchester City.

4' Foul by Roberto Firmino (Liverpool.

4' Raheem Sterling (Manchester City wins a free kick in the defensive half.

1' Foul by Raheem Sterling (Manchester City.

1' Divock Origi (Liverpool wins a free kick on the right wing.

First Half begins.

Lineups are announced and players are warming up.