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THETIMES

Rush hits Everton with coolness of an assassin

Everton1 Liverpool4 Liverpool win 7-2 on aggregate

Whatever the circumstances, Ian Rush's appetite for goals and Liverpool's appetite for trophies are alike insatiable. Denied the opportunity of competing in the European Cup. Liverpool showed that their enthusiasm for adding its comparatively tawdry English replacement, the Screen Sport Super Cup, to their trophy case was not dampened.

Rush's first two goals, struck with an assassin's coolness, ended any lingering hopes Everton cherished of recovering from the 3-1 deficit of the first leg, and they went down yesterday 4-1, to give Liverpool an aggregate 7-2 victory.

If Liverpool were delighted about that, so was Rush. When he added his third goal, once again beating the offside trap to race on to Molby's through ball, he took his tally against Everton to 16. With at least two more matches against them before he leaves for Italy. Dixie Dean's record of 19 in Merseyside derbies is under serious threat.

It was impossible not to have some sympathy for Everton, whose sadly weakened team has performed so admirably in adversity this season. Bravery against Liverpool is not enough, but they gave a much better account of themselves than the scoreline suggests, the resurgent Power and Wilkinson combining determindly down the left, and Sharp waging a ceaseless war against the Liverpool defence.

In the opening minutes they might have scored three times, and even though they were rocked by Rush's ruthless opportunism in the first half it was only when two further hammer blows came in quick succession around the hour - as Steven's missed penalty was quickly followed by Liverpool's third goal - that their heads dropped. Sharp's successful penalty two minutes from time came simply as a surprising interruption in Rush's unsuccessful attempt to gain a fourth.

Liverpool had been slow initially to reveal their hand but after 10 minutes' sparring they silenced the swelling Everton chorus as McMahon's clever pass and Wark's clever run defeated the offside trap. Ratcliffe recovered to hold up Wark, but the ball broke to Rush, who placed it precisely under Mimm's dive.

If that was a cruel blow to the home side, worse was to follow before the half hour. First, Sheedy saw his precise eight-yard drive deflected by Grobbelaar onto the underside of the bar and fly out. Then, Liverpool celebrated that escape crushingly as once again the offside trap proved Everton's undoing. This time Molby timed his pass exactly and the lurking Rush needed no further invitation, racing on to draw Mimms and slide the ball past him.

As if Everton's cup of woe was not already overflowing, further blows followed. Before half-time Heath limped from the fray to give Aspinall, the 19-year-old forward from Wigan, a second appearance as substitute.

Aspinall was quickly involved as Everton, with Wilkinson running strongly in his unaccustomed position in midfield, battled back bravely. But although Ratcliffe forced Grobbelaar to one arching save, and the one-twos of Aspinall and Sharp had Gillespie and Hansen in some disarray, they could not summon up Liverpool's cutting edge.

Even when Belgin was adjudged to have fouled Sharp in the penalty area, Everton were unable to find relief. Steven's penalty flew harmlessly away off a post.

Just after the hour Liverpool pointed up the difference between the two sides with their third goal. For once Rush was not involved, watching admiringly as Nicol's volley flew past Mimms.

EVERTON: R Mimms; P Billinge, P Power, K Ratcliffe D Mountfield, T Steven, N Adams, A Heath (sub: W Aspinall; sub: N Pointon), G Sharp, P Wilkinson, K Sheedy.

LIVERPOOL: B Grobbelaar; G Gillespie, J Belgin, M Lawrenson, R Whelan, A Hansen, J Wark, S Nicol (B Vension), I Rush, J Molby, S McMahon (sub: P Walsh).

Referee: K Walmsley (Blackpool).