

Date: 11 February 1987
 Opposition: Southampton
 Competition: League Cup

Times		

11 February
1987

THE TIMES

Liverpool hold out despite loss of Walsh

Southampton 0 Liverpool 0

Despite playing nearly half the time with 10 men because of the expulsion of Paul Walsh Liverpool moved inexorably towards their fifth final in seven years in this competition, now sponsored by Littlewoods, with a classic containing performance in the second round in their semi-final first leg at the Dell last night. Liverpool, still suffering from their early, miserable dismissal from the FA Cup two weeks ago by Luton Town, were in no mood for a repetition of what they considered an 'artificial' result. Back on their preferred playing surface the confidence flooded back into their game and they immediately took up more adventurous positions than normal in such two-legged affairs.

As they played intelligently and patiently waited for an opening it seemed only a matter of time before they would take that important early initiative. Gillespie, making a late run, hooked a volley narrowly over the crossbar and Molby stung the palms of Shilton with a nasty drive which the England goalkeeper pushed away impressively.

Southampton, able to field their strongest side for the first time this season, gradually overcame any inferiority complex which stemmed from two FA Cup semi-final defeats against Merseyside opposition in the last two seasons.

Cockerill, one of the few Southampton players to sustain his form during a run of just two wins in 12 matches, was presented with probably the best chance of the first half but he dallied and when he did unleash his shot Whelan blocked it painfully somewhere around the lower abdomen. Wallace did better with a snap volley which was cleared by Hansen. Then a minute before the interval Grobbelaar characteristically made a meal of a shot from Clark dropping it and then recovering it while Liverpool hearts skipped a beat.

From the early minutes there had been times of tension between some of the players. A belligerent Molby was warned by the referee after an unnecessarily severe tackle on the Liverpoolian Case, and was later booked for an equally unpleasant foul on Dennis. Whelan too, earned the crowd's wrath for unceremoniously cutting down Wallace in a promising situation for Southampton. Once again a stern lecture seemed to suffice.

In the first minute of the second half, though, such behaviour could be tolerated no longer when Walsh, clearly in reply to something said or done, flattened Bond with a right hook, which some might say was the best shot he had unleashed all evening.

His dismissal was automatic and if this was not adequate punishment enough for Liverpool, Bond sought his own retribution and a minute later fouled Rush, an act for which he quickly found himself the focal point of a Liverpool mob. The referee saved his neck with a booking.

It left Liverpool with only one striker, Rush, but since the Welshman had scored or made just about all Liverpool's meagre collection of six goals in the last 11 games, the departure of Walsh was not as damaging as it might one might have imagined. Southampton, with Lawrence on for Holmes, in the second half, found it no easier to breakdown the disciplined and stubborn Liverpool defence which has been their saving grace during these recent unproductive weeks in attack.

SOUTHAMPTON: P Shilton; G Forrest, M Dennis, J Case, M Wright, K Bond, N Holmes, G Cockerill, C Clarke, D Armstrong (sub, A Townsend), D Wallace.

LIVERPOOL: B Grobbelaar; G Gillespie, B Venison, M Lawrenson, R Whelan, A Hansen, P Walsh, C Johnston, I Rush, J Molby, S McMahan.

Referee: R G Milford.