Date: 7 March 1987
Opposition: Luton Town
Competition: League

Times	Sunday Times	

7 March 1987

THE TIMES

Liverpool sour Luton's sweet dream with a taste of reality

Liverpool ..... 2 Luton Town 0

Complex by nature and yet singularly incisive when given a platform upon which to unfurl his canny Scottish logic, Kenny Dalglish is a man who rarely ventures into the grey area of uncertainty when discussing football.

Twenty-four hours before this, the fifth meeting of the two clubs in just over four months, he boldly stated that Luton were not only a talented side but one with designs on the League title.

He went on to throw down a carefully disguised gauntlet by suggesting this seemingly outlandish dream could be perpetuated only by claiming victory at Anfield.

Well, bearing in mind that Dalglish is seldom wrong and that Liverpool's victory was embarrassingly easy, it would seem Luton's chances of climaxing a season of continued improvement with the seizure of the ultimate prize are, at best, slim.

Having avoided defeat in all four of those previous meetings and ended Liverpool's involvement in the FA Cup in the process, Luton must have arrived on Merseyside harbouring thoughts of underlining their obvious potential. They should have felt at home because the snow-covered pitch was every bit as artificial and treacherous as the one they have at Kenilworth Road.

But ultimately, on a day when even the most gifted of players struggled to appear anything other than ordinary, they were found to be lacking the basic, yet crucial, qualities of organization and composure.

They surrendered rather than lost a game which, bearing in mind the conditions, was draped around a framework of sheer farce and high drama. Having kept Liverpool at bay with a competent, yet at times over-physical display, Luton succumbed in the 16th minute, when the referee correctly adjudged that Foster had prevented Rush's shot entering the net by using an outstretched arm.

Molby rarely misses from the penalty spot and did not disappoint on this occasion. Five minutes before an interval Luton had been craving for some considerable time, the destiny of the points was assured.

McMahon, an orthodox and direct midfield player who at times made light of the atrocious surface, found Rush on the byline and after a cross had been duly delivered it fell to the luckless Donaghy to add the final touch, turning the ball into his own goal, much to the disgust of Sealey in goal.

In a forgettable second half, Luton succeeded only in annoying their manager by collecting five needless bookings.

LIVERPOOL: B Grobbelaar; N Spackman, B Venison, M Lawrenson, R Whelan, A Hansen, P Walsh, C Johnston, I Rush, J Molby, S McMahon (sub: J Aldridge).

LUTON TOWN: L Sealey; T Breacker, R Johnson, P Nicholas, S Foster, M Donaghy, R Hill, B Stein, M Newell, M Harford, A Grimes (sub: R Wilson).

Referee: T Mills.

THE SUNDAY TIMES

Sweet revenge

Liverpool .....2 Luton 0

INTO an Arctic blizzard, snow going sideways and the banshee yelp of the Kop, Luton stepped rather gingerly yesterday. And who can blame them? It was the worst kind of weather for a numbed 32,000 crowd and for football. Liverpool were in the worst kind of mood to accommodate visitors.

The Merseysiders were out to avenge the astounding fact that they had failed to beat these upstarts in four outings, one of which removed the holders from the FA Cup.

Revenge must have been sweet. Freezing, error-strewn, miserable but sweet. Two first-half goals put paid to Luton's rash of supremacy over Liverpool, who now proudly sit on top of Division One - at least until this afternoon when Everton play Watford.

Nevertheless, it was the sort of crazy, snow-swirling afternoon that should prompt every player with intelligence to put in a transfer request for Italy. Although Walsh, newly-restored to the Liverpool attack after suspension, was a conspicuous exception.

A gem of a goalmouth scramble brought Liverpool their first goal. Rush and Spackman had three attempts between them to foil Sealey, between Luton's igloo goal-posts, and eventually an unauthorised hand, belonging to Johnson, was judged to have made an illegal clearance. The referee, Trelford Hill, had no hesitation in awarding the penalty, which Jan Molby converted.

A host of botched passes later - not to mention sliding tackles that went on for miles - Rush popped up in the Luton area again, and Walsh's presence so disturbed Donaghy that he helped the ball into his own goal.

End of scoring, and so began an era of bookings. Five Luton players were booked to the rather ugly delight of the Kop. Apart from Luton's contribution to the referee's notebook, there was little else to remember them by. Harford was a lonely, dismal figure in the snow-bound far reaches of the Liverpool area. Grobbelaar was conspicuously untroubled throughout the match except by potential frostbite.

Weather: arctic. Ground: snow-covered.

Goals: Molby (pen, 17min) 1-0; Donaghy (og. 41min) 2-0.

Liverpool (4-4-2): Grobbelaar: Whelan, Venison, Lawrenson, Hansen; Spackman, Johnston, Molby, McMahon; Rush, Walsh.

Luton (4-4-2): Sealey; Breacker, Foster (sub: Wilson 69min), Donaghy, Johnson; Nicholas, Hill, Stein, Grimes; Newell, Harford.

Referee: T Hill (Barnsley).

Compiled by Graeme Riley