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THE TIMES

Rush enters the gallery of legends with his sure-shot finishing
 Liverpool 3 Everton 1

The 136th Merseyside derby will feature in conversations for years to come and will be recalled as more than a glittering jewel of a match. Like a sepia photograph curled at the edges with nostalgia, it will provoke the memory of a significant moment in history.

Those who witnessed Saturday's event (Anfield was filled to capacity and thousands were locked outside) will talk about the lean, dark-haired figure whose final contribution to the local dispute earned him the right to be considered a legend. They may never see the like of Ian Rush again.

His name, which echoed thunderously around the stadium throughout the closing five minutes, is destined to be whispered on those same terraces for as long as the game is played there. It will be uttered, albeit less fondly, in the corridors of Goodison Park as well.

In lifting Liverpool above the ignominy of staging in their own home the crowning of their neighbours, Rush was as effective as an automatic camera. With a focus as instant as the shots that he took, he equalled Dixie Dean's record of 19 goals in fixtures between the two clubs.

Ratcliffe, the captain of Everton, was relieved that he will in future meet Rush only as a colleague in the Welsh national side. 'It was a great afternoon for him,' he said. 'His first touch is deadly, and there are times when he is impossible to control.'

Rush made three substantial imprints on a match that was otherwise a glorious exhibition beamed live to 45 countries across the globe. It offered European clubs in particular a frightening glimpse of the speed, the commitment and the quality that, apart from Tottenham Hotspur, represented the best of English football. Kenny Dalglish, who successfully introduced a system of three central defenders into last season's sparkling derby at Goodison Park, chose another new and winning formation. In copying Tottenham's pattern, he asked Rush, supported by a midfield line of five, to fill the lonely role of Clive Allen.

The opening could scarcely have been more dazzling. Almost every individual was involved in Liverpool's collective build-up before Rush invited McMahon to put them ahead with a stunning drive. Sheedy promptly pulled Everton level with a free kick of equally irresistible power and flawless accuracy.

The rest, accompanied by the shuddering sounds of earth-removers colliding in midfield, belonged to Everton as a whole. In the middle of the 'one of our best performances at Anfield', according to Howard Kendall, Heath nodded against a post and Hooper confirmed himself to be an adequate understudy for Grobbelaar. But Rush, bound for Juventus, would not be denied his appointment with fate.

With a close-range header from Johnston's flick moments before the interval, and a prod, as Ratcliffe failed to clear Ablett's cross, he stepped away from the rivalry on Merseyside and into the hall of immortal fame.

His achievement made little difference to the championship since Everton need to win only two of their remaining three homes games to regain it. Having seen the last of Rush, they can, as Sheedy admitted, 'sleep easier at night.' Until he finds a suitable replacement for his prolific forward, Dalglish may not.

LIVERPOOL: M Hooper; G Gillespie, B Venison, N Spackman, R Whelan, A Hansen, G Ablett, C Johnston, I Rush, J Molby, S McMahon.

EVERTON: N Southall; G Stevens, P Power, K Ratcliffe, D Watson, P Reid, T Steven, A Heath, W Clarke, I Snodin, K Sheedy.

Referee: N Midgley.

THE SUNDAY TIMES

Rush skill wins fierce classic
 Liverpool 3 Everton 1

IAN RUSH, equalling the derby-goals, record of Dixie Dean, claimed not only history but the winners' spoils in a performance which means the championship is not quite dead. But Everton, having lost the battle, should still win the war.

Watched by 44,827 in the stadium and by more than 40 nations via television outside the UK, the soul of English football, and of this city, was laid bare. The passion comes from the people who, despite the unemployment of one in four, still produce pounds 2m for wage bills per club per season to ensure Merseyside is a cut above the rest. This without doubt is the pulse of the English game: too fast to last, too fast for subtleties, but where in the world would you match the physical spectacle, the unrelenting effort? For 25 years Merseyside has so monopolised the championship that only seven other clubs have had a hand on the trophy, and of those only Nottingham Forest and Arsenal have not subsequently visited the Second Division. And in their own domestic war, Liverpool and Everton began yesterday's 136th derby equal with 47 wins apiece. The first two goals of a first half of almost frightening, clattering combat came from players who had changed their spots and crossed Stanley Park, which is something no true Liverpool or Everton supporter ever does.

After nine minutes Liverpool attacked up the left flank with the 21-year-old full-back Gary Ablett showing once again that he has the leggy pace to get behind even an opposing England full-back. He exchanged passes with Rush, and the Welsh centre-forward, with his back to goal, flicked a pass to McMahon which invited a full-blooded drive.

McMahon, once of course an Evertonian, unleashed a shot of merciless power with high foot which gave Southall not a ghost of chance. But Everton were on level terms after 16 minutes, when Liverpool this time felt the sting of a player they had allowed to change sides. Kevin Sheedy endured four wasted years in the Reds reserves because his phenomenal left foot was insufficient by Liverpool standards. It was more than sufficient when Everton were granted a freekick two yards outside the box after Hansen had climbed over Clarke. A sixman wall lined up in front of the nervous Mike Hooper, and Sheedy, with all the class of a Rivelino, curled the ball high into the far corner, where Hooper's right hand could not quite reach. The game inevitably was littered with moments of malevolence. Neil Midgley, who will referee the Cup final next month, operated with commendable quietness, lecturing both Clarke and Sheedy for unnecessary late tackles. They may have seemed unlikely culprits, but not so Peter Reid.

The man who has come back for Everton had to withdraw from England's game against Turkey because of a damaged shin received late in the game. With his appetite undulled after surgery, and his hair newly darkened, Reid picked his own private war with the 14-stone Dane, Jan Molby. Reid's boot caught Molby at indiscriminate heights until the 25th minute, when Liverpool exacted the revenge of a sandwich on Reid by Molby from the left, and McMahon from the right.

Back to the football. It survived in small pockets of calm footwork amid the frenzy. And on half-time, or rather into time added on for arguments, Liverpool went ahead. It was a simple, stunning reminder of what this great club will lose to Juventus this summer. Johnston took a corner out on the left, and Rush rose with immaculate timing and headed the ball into the goal before Southall could raise a hand. Liverpool bodies have broken like porcelain this year, but even with five reserves you still cannot quell their hearts or their habits. For 20 minutes of the second half Everton looked what they are, champions elect. After 61 minutes Ratcliffe came out of defence like a pure Continental, exchanged a deft one-two with Heath which was then denied by Hooper, rushing 30 yards off his goaline to block tackle. Moments later Heath once again exposed Liverpool's centre-back. This time he was in the centre of a move involving Sheedy and Clarke, and from Clarke's final lofted pass Heath headed against the crossbar. And much of Liverpool's remaining control of the game was due to Nigel Spackman, acclimatising to his first Merseyside derby with a commitment and perfection that few old stagers could match. In the 73rd minute Spackman threaded the ball through to allow Rush a one-against-one run at Southall. The big goalkeeper's nerve ruled supreme; he threw himself horizontally in front of Rush and prevented the shot. Eleven minutes later, Rush was bearing down on Southall once again, this time from a cross by Ablett. And this time Rush managed to force the ball over the goalkeeper, ending the scoring and prolonging, at least in mathematical terms, the championship. Rush can be forgiven by most of us, for he was running out of time: with this second goal, his 19th in 20 derby games; he equalled the record of Dixie Dean, who scored his goals in just 17 matches. Rush's move to Italy leaves them all square. History for Rush, but for Everton? 'It's like a morgue in our dressing-room', said their manager, Howard Kendall. 'But we're not relegated, we are top and it's entirely in our own hands.'

Weather: sultry. Ground: hard.

Goals: McMahon (9min) 1-0; Sheedy (16min) 1-1; Rush (45Min) 2-1; Rush (84min) 3-1.

Liverpool (4-5-1): Hooper; Venison, Gillespie, Hansen, Ablett; Johnston, Spackman, Molby, McMahon, Whelan; Rush.

Everton (4-4-2): Southall; Stevens Watson, Ratcliffe, Power; Steven, Reid, Snodin, Sheedy; Heath, Clarke.

Referee: N Midgley (Salford).