

Date: 17 October 1987

Opposition: Queens Park Rangers

Competition: League

Times	Sunday Times	

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# THE TIMES

Barnes stages a victory for matter over mind

Liverpool ..... 4 Queens Park Rangers ... 0

Queen's park Rangers were grabbed by the lapels, picked up, turned upside down and shaken until all of their title pretensions had fallen like loose change out of their pockets on Saturday. In spite of their unusually extensive preparations, they found they could defend neither themselves nor their position as the first divisional leaders.

If Rangers, whose sweeper system had been broken down only once before this season (at Oxford a month ago), cannot do so, who can? Ian Rush, who returned home for the first time since becoming a foreign exile, offered an immediate, objective and unequivocal answer to the question. No one.

Anyone naive enough to suggest that Liverpool could not be stronger without him and the player-manager, Kenny Dalglish, should listen to his view. 'I've heard stories of how well they've been playing and now I've seen it for myself,' he said. 'They are a better team than when I left them behind.'

The man so quick and so prolific that he was considered irreplaceable is not surprised. 'We didn't win the League last season so there was room for improvement. They are a big club. They know what they are doing and they have acquired two world class players in John Barnes and Peter Beardsley.

'Barnes has so much skill and he livens up the game. He scored two great goals and took the limelight away from Beardsley, who works so hard and makes openings for other people. With wingers, Liverpool have given themselves even more options and their opponents just don't know where to look.'

Rangers did but only for a quarter of an hour. parker and McDonald guarded Beardsley and Aldridge effectively enough but once Barnes had been released from Neill's prison cell he ran riot. He either created or claimed all four goals as well as an apparently legitimate fifth for Johnston.

The referee's whistle, lost amid the noise of a capacity audience of over 43,000 (an estimated 3,000 more were left outside the gates which were closed half an hour before the kick-off), had already been blown for a foul but against Rangers. The decision irritated the supporters of Liverpool.

It had a more profound effect on Dalglish's side. They unleashed all of their controlled power, stretched their opponents to beyond breaking point and took the lead through the unfortunate Johnston, before the interval. After it, they ruthlessly exploited the freedom afforded to them by the more adventurous Rangers.

Liverpool's manager dismissed arguments about the justification of the penalty after the hour. Jim Smith, his counterpart, feels that officials are influenced at Anfield but, in reference to his comment, Dalglish said that 'if players punch the ball in the area,' as Fenwick did, 'they are putting the referee under some pressure'.

Aldridge maintained his record of scoring in each of the 11 League games in which he has started but the subsequent contribution of the elusive Barnes was even more astonishing. If his first individual effort was spectacular, his second seven minutes later was even more breath-taking.

Before the match Smith took his players to a nearby hotel for two nights and even summoned a sports psychiatrist to accompany them. His tactics-talk? 'We got down on our knees and prayed.' The rest of the first division might as well join them.

LIVERPOOL: B Grobbelaar; G Gillespie, B Venison, S Nicol, R Whelan, A Hansen, P Beardsley, J Aldridge, C Johnston (sub: M Lawrenson), J Barnes, S McMahon. (Sub: P Walsh).

QUEEN'S PARK RANGERS: D Seaman; W Neill, I Dawes, P parker, A McDonald, T Fenwick, M Allen, D Coney (sub: G Maguire) G Bannister, J Byrne, K Brock (sub: B Pizante).

Referee: R Bridges.

# THE SUNDAY TIMES

Pacemakers QPR routed

Liverpool .....4 Queens Park Rangers .....0

NO TEAM has divine right to the League championship. But such hunger exists at Liverpool that when pretenders from the South come up to play more than 3,000 are locked outside. The determination which rolls from the stands containing close to 44,000 customers almost compels the destruction of the opposition.

So it proved, with Liverpool storming to a 4-0 victory which almost doubled the number of goals conceded by the ultra-defensive strategy on which Queens Park Rangers rely in their hope to lay a hand on the trophy.

Top-of-the-League Rangers may have been in the morning, but they came with a siege mentality, acknowledging from the kick-off that they were simply there to try to survive against the best in the land: they failed, and by the end of the game they had been discarded like pacemakers.

For long stretches there were 21 players camped in the Londoners' half.

Liverpool swarmed all over Rangers, sweeper and all. They were driven forward by McMahon, whose relish in the tackle no one from QPR could match and whose vision once despatched the ball with astonishing accuracy 50 yards from left to right to Johnston.

And yet Rangers were always capable of breaking with a telling sting. They created chances in the seventh and 11th minutes, first when Bannister, turning sharply away from Whelan 30 yards out, attempted to lob Grobbelaar. The goalkeeper was athleticism personified as he arched his back to palm the ball over.

Then Neill, QPR's rightback, raced to the corner flag and from his deep cross, the left-back Dawes connected with a flying header into the stomach of Grobbelaar. So much for the 'Continental' counter-attack. The rest was all Liverpool. Had Aldridge been his customary sharpness, it might have been all over by half-time. But Aldridge had the knowledge that Ian Rush was sitting in the stands in judgment and that weight of his mind seemed transmitted all the way down his body.

He missed two half-chances and it was Johnston who provided the cutting thrust, having one of those days when he resembled a grand prix motorcar, turbo-charged, of course. Johnston had what looked a perfectly legitimate goal ruled out after 13 minutes when he daringly ignored a foul by Dawes, but the referee saw no advantage in the advantage rule and pulled him back for a free kick outside the area.

Johnston was incensed and if anything moved even faster in the 41st minute when he rushed forward to kill off a chance created by Barnes, a sharp, stabbing, right-foot finish that gave Seaman, until then both a lucky and redoubtable goalkeeper, no chance.

After 65 minutes, from a Barnes free-kick, Fenwick handled the ball under pressure by Gillespie. Aldridge had been waiting for justice and he converted his seventh penalty and his 12th goal of the season, confirming, even on a bad day, that he scores whenever Liverpool play.

Barnes was now like some sleepy cat awakening. In the 78th minute he was the master of a one-two exchange with Aldridge after which Barnes hooked a right-foot shot against the stanchion inside Seaman's net.

Five minutes from the end Barnes did it all alone. Uplifted by the buzz from the Kop whenever he gets the ball, he won it 10 yards inside the Rangers' half, drifted away from one tackle, drew an utterly bewildered Fenwick and then bamboozled the goal-keeper with a low shot.

Weather: changeable. Ground: soft.

Goals: Johnston (41min) 1-0, Aldridge (pen 65min) 2-0; Barnes (78min) 3-0, Barnes (85min) 4-0.

Liverpool (4-4-2): Grobbelaar; Vension, Gillespie, Hansen, Nichol; Johnston (sub: Walsh 86min), Whelan, McMahon (sub: Lawrenson 86min), Barnes; Beardsley, Aldridge.

Queens Park Rangers (5-3-2): Seaman; Neill (sub: Pizanti 77min), Parker, Fenwick, McDonald, Dawes; Allen, Byrne, Brock; Coney (sub: Maguire 77min), Bannister. Referee: Mr R Bridges (North Wales).