

Date: 1 January 1988 Opposition: Coventry City Competition: League		Times				1 January 1988
THETIMES Liverpool smiling all the way to the trophy bank Liverpool4 Coventry City0 Liverpool showed the form that has set them apart this season. The Football League's engraver could confidently cut the club's name on the base of the new Barclays Trophy this morning and not lose a moment's sleep worrying about whether he would be called to book at a later stage. It was the eighth occasion since mid-August that Kenny Dalglish's side had plundered four goals in a match, and with Nottingham Forest - who must face Everton at Goodison Park tomorrow - surprisingly losing at home to Newcastle United, they have extended their advantage at the top to 13 points while stretching their unbeaten League run to 22 games. Of their other leading challengers, Everton lost and Arsenal and Manchester United drew. While the managers of an increasingly small band of genuine rivals will continue to pontificate about the likelihood of a mid-term dip in form, it would seem that on this occasion, at least, there is such a thing as a foregone conclusion in modern football. This may not be the most talented side in Liverpool's illustrious history but it is the most durable and the most effective. John Sillett, the Coventry team manager, was lavish in his praise. 'No one can beat them in the first division or touch them in terms of the championship,' he said. 'They are superb. We have gone the way of so many other teams. To play 22 matches in the first division without losing is brilliant. You simply have to take your hat off to them.' Coventry, the last side to inflict a League defeat on Liverpool back in early May, possible came with the intention of practising the age-old adage about attack being the best form of defence. Unfortunately, they were to discover at a relatively early stage that it is difficult to exert authority when opponents treat you with disdain. Coventry's problems were placed in perspective as an embarrassingly one-sided opening half neared its conclusion. With Liverpool for once reluctant to clear their lines, Phillips stole in with his side's first shot of the game. The effort succeeded only in dislodging raindrops from the roof of the famous Kop terracing. Such was the disproportionate distribution of power that Coventry presumably logged it as a near miss. Despite their constant inventiveness, Liverpool's passage towards another comprehensive victory was eased by Coventry's willingness to stab at the panic button whenever danger threatened. It is a familiar response at Anfield and one possibly born out of a feeling of inferiority. Liverpool are quite capable of winning games without the help of other sides and yet, as is often the case, it was a lamentable and avoidable defensive error which was to pave the way for the opening goal. A Barnes corner was partially cleared and in his desperation Smith nudged the ball wide of Ogrizovic, allowing Beardsley his first goal in two months. Countless chances were squandered before Liverpool double their advantage in the 53rd minute when Aldridge side-footed home a Nicol cross at the near post. With Coventry more intent on saving face rather than points, Liverpool gave full vent to their powers. Fourteen minutes from the end. Houghton stabbed home from 10 yards after a Barnes free kick had been neatly flicked on by Beardsley. It was brilliant but simple: the hallmark of Liverpool's play for more than 20 years. The rout was completed by Beardsley, who was allowed to amble forward before driving fiercely into the bottom corner. ----- LIVERPOOL: ----- -- B Grobbelaar; G Gillespie, B Venison (sub: G Ablett), S Nicol, R Whelan, A Hansen, P Beardsley, J Aldridge, R Houghton, J Barnes, S McMahon (sub: N Spackman). ----- COVENTRY CITY: ----- ----- S Ogrizovic; B Borrow, G Downs, L McGrath, B Kilcline, K Smtih, D Bennett (sub: S Livingstone), D Phillips, C Regis, D Speedie, M Gynn (sub: G Rodger). ----- Referee: D Phillips.						