

Date: 12 January 1988

Opposition: Stoke City

Competition: FA Cup

Times

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# THE TIMES

Liverpool surge on to meet Aston Villa

Liverpool ..... 1 Stoke City ..... 0

The problems Liverpool so often encounter in the early stages of domestic cup competitions re-surfaced at Anfield last night as Stoke City again underlined their rich potential.

Having held the Football League champions-elect to an honourable draw in Saturday's first game, the Potteries side bowed out of the FA Cup with their pride intact after a display of raw courage which possibly deserved more.

But as the pages of history will constantly remind Mick Mills and his players, quality and a solitary goal from Beardsley counted in the end, and Stoke became nothing more than another statistic as Liverpool, who now go to Villa Park in the fourth round, extended an unbeaten run which seemingly has no end.

If Stoke did arrive at Anfield harbouring a potentially damaging inferiority complex, they managed to keep it well secreted.

Despite the inhospitable weather, there was much to warm the hearts as a compelling spectacle liberally laced with moments of high drama and comic uncertainty unfolded. That a stirring opening half in which both sides played their part to the full was graced by a solitary goal was a travesty.

Inevitably the lion's share of the possession and with it the higher percentage of the chances fell to Liverpool, who played with such effortless ease that it was difficult to understand exactly how Stoke had managed to hold them in check for the duration of the game at the Victoria Ground on Saturday.

Whelan and Barnes had already missed the target by fractions of an inch before the decisive blow was struck by Beardsley in the ninth minute.

A corner by Barnes was returned to him by McMahan, and after Berry had effected only a partial clearance, Beardsley drove home from just outside the penalty area.

Stoke would have been for-given for capitulating completely in the minutes that followed, but they held their nerve, thanks in the main to Barrett, who heroically denied Whelan and Barnes.

After an hour a brilliant, lazy cross-field run by Beardsley provided the most inviting of openings for Houghton, but Liverpool's newest recruit could fire only tamely into the body of a much relieved goalkeeper. As the end drew near and the pace quickened, tempers became frayed and Parkin, Stoke's ebullient midfielder, was rightly cautioned by the referee.

----- LIVERPOOL: ----- M

Hooper; G Gillespie, M Lawrenson, S Nicol, R Whelan, A Hansen, P Beardsley, J Aldridge, R Houghton (sub: C Johnson), J Barnes, S McMahan. -----

----- STOKE CITY: ----- S Barrett; L Dixon, C

Carr, B Talbot, S Bould, G Berry, T Ford, T Henry, N Morgan, S Stainrod (sub: G Shaw), S Parkin.