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# THE TIMES

Liverpool's style converts even grudging admirers

Portsmouth ..... 0 Liverpool ..... 2

Defeat sits on Alan Ball like a heavy, black cloud. Losing invariably stirs the dark side of the fiery emotions of the Portsmouth manager and provokes scowls. Since his side was also the victim of misfortune, his reaction on Saturday was therefore uncommonly and laudably cheerful.

'Liverpool play my type of football,' he said. 'The way they work for each other, close down the opposition and pass the ball - fabulous stuff. They are a great side with right good players. If you have to get beaten, it is nice to enjoy it. I enjoyed watching that today.'

Ball admitted that he was envious of the season ticket-holders at Anfield, but they would have persuaded him that Liverpool's triumph was one of their least attractive and least convincing. So would Kenny Dalglish and he offered his own confirmation during an appraisal that was equally magnanimous.

Liverpool's customary early vulnerability might have been severely punished by Portsmouth, 'a better side than they have been given credit for'. Quinn allowed them to escape. Three times in the opening nine minutes, he re-enacted his youth and stood, as he once used to do on the Kop, frozen in admiration.

With 10 unbeaten games behind them, Portsmouth needed no more than an initial nudge of encouragement. Without it, the full momentum of their challenge lasted effectively until the interval. They were then pushed in the opposite direction, though one of their own men was inadvertently responsible.

Gilbert, stretching in vain throughout the afternoon to block the path of Barnes, had a foot in the first goal. 'A deflection changed the course of our game at Anfield,' Ball claimed, 'and a fluke had the same effect today.' Only half as much damage was subsequently inflicted as last October.

Barnes's second and, notably, his fifth in his last six appearances, could not have been comparatively cleaner. Ushered in by Beardsley and Houghton, he stroked in a goal which was hailed by Ball as 'a classic'. Dalglish conceded that the description did not fit the game itself.

Nor, doubtless, will it be applicable on Saturday. Queen's Park Rangers, who are now at the head of the queue of those waiting to be the first League club to beat Liverpool, have a unique advantage. Their artificial surface, less acceptable even than that of Luton Town, is despised by the leaders.

Liverpool's defence, whose efficiency tends to be overshadowed by the proficiency of their attack, must protect the club's sequence as well as their own. Their goalkeeper, who has remained unbeaten in more than two-thirds of their 34 fixtures, has conceded only one goal in the last 13.

----- PORTSMOUTH: A Knight; W Gilbert, L Sanford, K Dillon (sub: P Hardiman), N Blake, K Ball, B Horne, M Fillery, M Quinn, T Connor, V Hilaire. ----- LIVERPOOL: B Grobbelaar; G Ablett, B Venison, S Nicol, N Spackman, A Hansen, P Beardsley, J Aldridge, R Houghton, J Barnes, S McMahon. ----- Referee: R Lewis.



# THE SUNDAY TIMES

Barnes brace sinks Pompey

----- Portsmouth 0 Liverpool 2 -----

FOOTBALL, like history, should not, perhaps, be reduced to personalities. Yet it is tempting to see the way this game eventually went through he exchanges between Gilbert and Barnes.

An incident late in the first half, when Gilbert denied the England forward a goal, and one early in the second, when Barnes had the better, did much to decide the game.

Gilbert was really a little unlucky to have to face Barnes at all. Gilbert is, as those who remember him at Crystal Palace know, essentially a centre-back. But the absence of Whitehead from the Portsmouth defence obliged Gilbert to play on the flank.

Nine minutes from half-time, he had his moment of glory. Dillon carelessly lost the ball to McMahon, who sent Barnes through alone. Barnes eluded Knight, the Portsmouth goalkeeper, but was forced out to the left. When he shot, Gilbert cleared the ball off the line.

Five minutes into the second half, however, Gilbert was not so lucky. Indeed, this time he looked seriously out of position when McMahon gave Barnes the ball out on the left. Barnes cut in at a sharp angle, and when he shot, the unfortunate Gilbert saw the ball deflected off him, to curl into the air, away from Knight, and in at the far post. The goal was credited to Barnes.

It was exactly the kind of disheartening goal Portsmouth could least afford to give away. Until then, they had bravely kept in the game, chasing Liverpool vigorously but not unfairly. Indeed, in the first 10 minutes, they had contrived a couple of promising attacks of their own.

The second, in which Home and Fillery played a leading part, ended with a shot by Quinn, with Grobbelaar was glad to save. In the second half, after one of those strange, isolated moments of carelessness by Hansen, Quinn actually got the ball in the net, but the goal was disallowed, apparently for pushing.

For much of the first half particularly, Liverpool's exhibition was frankly dull. Indeed, though it may be sacrilege to say so as they went through their 27th League game without defeat, they rather reminded me of the Arsenal team of 40 years ago, which used to win away games by an odd goal, after a somewhat flat exhibition.

Houghton and Beardsley played most of the football we saw from Liverpool in that first period and Beardsley it was who splendidly set up the second goal for Barnes, six minutes from the end.

With sublime skill, he slipped between Ball and Hardyman, found Houghton, who in turn gave the ball to Barnes: and in it went.

Liverpool, it is true, were lacking several players, but anyone who expected them to bestride the muddy field was disappointed. Aldridge might have had another goal, when Knight blocked him in the goalmouth after Barnes had headed a free kick from Spackman, but few other true chances were created.

Portsmouth belatedly decided to bring in Fillery from the left wing. But there was nothing to be done by then.

Weather: Clear. Ground: Heavy.

Goals: Barnes (50 mins) 0-1; Barnes (84 mins) 0-2.

Portsmouth (4-4-2): Knight, Gilbert, Blake, Ball, Sandford, Dillon (sub Hardyman 74 min), Horne, Fillery, Hilaire, Quinn, Connor.

Liverpool (4-4-2): Grobbelaar, Venison, Nicol, Hansen, Ablett, Spackman, McMahon, Houghton, Barnes, Beardsley, Aldridge.

Referee: R Lewis (Great Bookham).