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## THE TIMES

Wimbledon the great levellers - Liverpool find themselves dragged down as the FA Cup is won and lost in two dramatic minutes  
 Liverpool .....0 Wimbledon .....1

Fate, so often an intruder at Wembley, ran on to the pitch this year with a blue and yellow scarf draped around its neck. Embracing Wimbledon in its powerful arms, it carried the heaviest of underdogs all the way up the famous steps to the FA Cup.

Had Brian Hill, the referee, not instantly blown his whistle for a free kick as Thorn nudged Beardsley, Liverpool would probably now be celebrating their own historic victory. Hill himself concedes that Beardsley's goal was mistakenly disallowed through his haste.

Almost immediately he was persuaded by one of his linesmen that Nicol had challenged Phelan unfairly. From Wise's free kick, Sanchez glanced in the winner off the top of his head. Kenny Dalglish, Liverpool's player-manager, is not alone in believing that 'the destiny of the Cup was decided within those two minutes', the 35th and 36th.

Bobby Gould was also convinced then that his Wimbledon side would overcome the unrealistic odds. As long as fortune continued to accompany his plans, formed throughout the week with Don Howe, Liverpool would never begin to resemble 4-1 on favourites, the clearest since the war.

Wise, moved only on Thursday from the left to the right flank, protected Good-year, a full back who might otherwise have seen the dangerous Barnes merely as a dark blur. The central defenders, Thorn and Young, were shielded against penetrative runs from midfield by Cork, Jones and Sanchez.

Without diminishing their limited and unsophisticated attack, Wimbledon had designed a web in which to trap any number of red spiders, with Beasant always at hand to repair any damage. Apart from Gillespie's long pass to release Beardsley, only two other holes appeared.

Houghton cut them both before the interval, but for somehow clawing away Aldridge's effort and blocking Hansen's drive with his knees, Beasant deserved to be the first goalkeeper in the history of the competition to claim the honour of lifting the Cup.

On the hour he confirmed his right to be considered the decisive figure by saving a penalty, apparently awarded by the referee to compensate for his earlier error. In striking it hard-heartedly, Aldridge seemed to acknowledge that Goodyear had tackled him cleanly inside the area.

In falling for the first time for Liverpool from the spot, Aldridge also stepped into the record books. Never before had anyone missed a penalty in the FA Cup final. The unusual and contrasting feats of Aldridge and Beasant will at least refresh the memory of a sunlit afternoon.

Little else will. Wimbledon, playing in the Southern League 11 years ago, have inspired every small club in the land with their achievements, not, though, by the manner in which they play. Surely no one with even a modicum of talent would choose to indulge in the long-ball game.

Wimbledon's only hope of victory was to apply a tourniquet around Liverpool's vastly superior gifts and keep the ball flying around the stratosphere for as long as possible. If they succeeded in the play, it was inevitable that the final would become one of the poorest for quality.

Wimbledon dragged their opponents down to their level. Rather than constructing their own ideas, they destroyed Liverpool's. 'We didn't play to our strengths,' Dalglish said, 'or to our full potential.' They were not allowed to.

An attack which has on more than a few occasions been utterly irresistible in front of a million spectators this season was largely hidden from an audience a thousand times bigger. Given an opportunity to see one of the finest of sides, the world was denied all but a glimpse.

Instead they watched them being frustrated by a side that fashioned only one move of five passes or more (as opposed to Liverpool's total of 25). It happened to end, incidentally, with a Fashanu half-volley that almost grazed the foot of a post.

Although more than one observer unaccustomed to Wimbledon's tactics was surprised by their crudity, they never resorted to brutality. Since they have proved they need not to be so physically intimidating, there can be even fewer excuses if their disciplinary record does not show an improvement next season. Wimbledon's season will open in the same arena with a return fixture against the champions. If they prepare as diligently as last week and work as hard as on Saturday, no one should be surprised if the Charity Shield is not taken back to Plough Lane as well.

Howe, recalling England's methods of combating the heat in Mexico, arranged for ice-cold towels to be ready for Wimbledon's players in the dressing room at half-time. 'You threw in the towel,' someone suggested to Gould. He chuckled. His side, though open to criticism, can never be accused of yielding.

----- WIMBLEDON: ----- D  
 Beasant; C Goodyear, T Phelan, V Jones, E Young, A Thorn, T Gibson (sub: J Scales), A Cork (sub: L Cunningham), J Fashanu, L Sanchez, D Wise. -----  
 ----- LIVERPOOL: ----- B Grobbelaar; G  
 Gillespie, G Ablett, S Nicol, N Spackman (sub: J Molby), A Hansen, P Beardsley, J Aldridge (sub: C Johnston), R Houghton, J Barnes, S McMahon. -----  
 ----- Referee: B Hill.

## THE SUNDAY TIMES

Wimbledon's achievement of a lifetime - Beasant leads from the back to pull it off for the Dons

Liverpool .....0 Wimbledon .....1

IF Cleopatra's nose had been an inch longer. If Brian Hill, the referee, were only accustomed to letting his whistle hang loose from a lanyard. On such freaks of chance does history and the Cup Final hang. Yesterday, Beasant, giving a performance which put even that of Sunderland's Montgomery, 15 years ago against Leeds, in the shade, ensured that his team won the Cup. He has been with them since Fourth Division days, Sanchez, a Pounds 30,000 buy from Reading, splendidly headed the only goal; as three years ago, he had scored the goal which put Wimbledon into the First Division. Wimbledon worked furiously for one another. Fashanu made crucial tackles in midfield. Jones committed only a couple of displeasing fouls in the match, the first on McMahon, who was guilty of a bad one himself and never got hold of the game. Houghton, after early promise, faded. Barnes found it hard to penetrate a massed defence.

In three brief, dramatic minutes in the first half, the game changed, changed utterly. Thirty-five minutes gone and we had Beardsley putting the ball, right-footed, into the Wimbledon net, raising his arms in joy, then turning round to find the referee, Brian Hill, had disallowed the goal. What for, you might well ask.

Why, for a foul against Beardsley himself by Thorn! Though possibly justifiable by the rules, the decision must, in fact, rank among the most inept yet given in a Cup Final. After 38 minutes, Wise, playing mostly on the right flank, where Wimbledon had sensibly put him against the vulnerable Ablett, took a free-kick on the left.

Liverpool's larger defenders must surely have been worrying about the Wimbledon big men, Fashanu, Young and company. For it was Sanchez, with no effective opposition, who rose on the near post to direct a splendid header wide of Grobbelaar and into the top right-hand corner.

On chances made, the half-time score was a parody. But for this parody none was more responsible than the huge Wimbledon goalkeeper Beasant, playing not only a captain's game, but the game of his life.

The first of his many saves came after 13 minutes. A clever exchange between Beardsley and Houghton saw Houghton dart through the middle for a shot which Beasant held only at the second attempt.

Fifteen minutes later, Beasant made a far more remarkable stop, and even he may not have known quite how he did it. This time, Beardsley came boring in from the right, to find Aldridge. Aldridge, point-blank, shot and a goal seemed inevitable, but somehow Beasant got between the ball and the line, pawing it away with a last desperate effort when Barnes closed in as he lay on the ground. A Liverpool boot seemed sure to do final execution, but in fact it was Jones who got there first, banging the ball away. Wimbledon awoke. A minute before Mr Hill made his over-hasty decision against Beardsley, employing what you might almost call the Disadvantage Law, Wimbledon themselves nearly scored.

Sanchez began the trouble with a good cross from the left. Cork headed onwards, Wise crossed again from the right, and Fashanu's shot was only a little wide of the post. Four minutes from the interval Wimbledon threatened again when Grobbelaar lost a cross from Jones on the right and Gibson beat him to the ball as he scrambled desperately after it, only to shoot high and wide.

Then, just before the break, it was Beasant again, this time gallantly saving with his feet as Hansen unexpectedly roared-full-pelt on to an inspired pass by Houghton. When Liverpool had a penalty, 17 minutes into the second half, what, by now, was more predictable than that the astonishing Beasant should save that as well! It was given when Aldridge, exchanging passes with Beardsley, ran alone through the middle. Well, not quite alone, since Goodyear stretched out and brought him down, although there was a strong case for believing that Goodyear had played the ball first. Aldridge himself took the spot kick, aiming low for the right-hand corner. Beasant gymnastically got there, turning the ball around the post. Wimbledon, now with the goal in their pockets, were able to get behind the ball and counter-attack when they could. Indeed, until Nicol headed just over the bar from Molby's throw in the last minute, the most dangerous strike we saw was Young's powerful headed out Wise's corner. Wise had forced the corner himself.

All afternoon, his unselfish, often skilful running was a feature of his team's success. Indeed, Goodyear, who had started with a suicidal pass back to Beasant, who inevitably saved his side, had super-abundant help from Wise in his battle with Barnes. Substitutes came on. Could Cunningham, once an England player here so long ago, have thought he ever would come back to Wembley? Johnston and Molby, fine footballers both, might with advantage have been brought on earlier by a Liverpool team among whom, as we know, there are one or two pedestrian players. That is the adjective so often levelled at Wimbledon. But yesterday was theirs, and nobody, in the end, could grudge the Cup to them: and Beasant.

----- Weather: Warm, sunny, Ground: firm and grassy. ----- Goal: Sanchez (38min). -----

----- Liverpool ----- (4-4-2): Grobbelaar; Nicol, Gillespie, Hansen, Ablett; Houghton, McMahon, Spackman (sub: Molby 73min), Barnes; Beardsley, Aldridge (sub: Johnston 64min). -----

----- Wimbledon ----- (4-4-2): Beasant; Good-year, Young, Thorn, Phelan; Wise, Jones, Sanchez, Cork (sub: Cunningham 58min); Fashanu, Gibson (sub: Scales Referee: B Hill (Kettering). ----- Attendance: 98,203.