

Date: 29 October 1988  
 Opposition: West Ham United  
 Competition: League

Times	Sunday Times		29 October 1988

## THE TIMES

Liverpool stage a recovery

West Ham United 0 Liverpool 2

There were so many impersonations being done at Upton Park it seemed like the Christmas pantomime had begun a month early. Gary Ablett (Alan Hansen), Alan Dickens (Trevor Brooking) and Stuart Slater (Tony Cottee) all gave passable performances. John Barnes brought a creditable imitation of his England form down to club level and, for an hour, Ian Rush and John Aldridge gave forlorn interpretations of each other.

It was not that Liverpool ever looked like losing. Unfortunately for West Ham, Dickens does not have Brooking's vision nor Slater, as yet, Cottee's nose for goal. No, Liverpool always had an excellent match in their hand; they just took an unusually long time to put it in their pocket.

The quick, passing movements too often broke down before they had reached the halfway line, the final pass was unusually wayward and, for much of the first half, Liverpool's main weapon was the long boot by Venison, which twice caught Martin and Gale flat-footed.

But just as the critics, who had suggested that Liverpool were a shadow of their former selves, had begun to rub their hands, the play-acting ceased. In the 70th minute, Aldridge challenged for a long ball, Rush hovered, hooked the loose ball back with his right foot, and struck it instantly with his left past McKnight from 20 yards. There is, as the Liverpool fans were quick to point out, only one Ian Rush. To their credit, West Ham continued to strive for an elusive opening. Dickens' mazy dribble ended with a 25-yard shot past the post and Slater beat three defenders in a run across the penalty area only for his final shot to be blocked. But that all was just a prelude to the real punchline, delivered with perfect timing by Beardsley in the 80th minute. Ablett, half way inside his own half, fed Aldridge down the left, Burrows took his inside pass to the byline and Beardsley tucked the ball past McKnight to seal Liverpool's first League win of the month.

Arsenal, Norwich, Millwall and anyone else who fancy playing Cinderella at this year's League ball will surely need more than a fairy godmother to make their dreams come true.

WEST HAM UNITED: A McKnight; R Stewart, J Dicks, A Gale, A Martin, A Devonshire, M Ward, D Kelly (sub: L Rosenoir), S Slater, A Dickens, P Ince.

LIVERPOOL: M Hooper, B Venison, D Burrows, G Ablett, S Nicol, R Whelan (sub: N Spackman), P Beardsley, J Aldridge, I Rush, J Barnes, R Houghton.

Referee: R Milford.

Steve McMahan, the Liverpool and England midfielder, on Saturday began his comeback after almost two months out with a knee injury. He successfully played the full 90 minutes in the A team's 1-0 Lancashire League win over Marine Reserves.

## THE SUNDAY TIMES

Liverpool dine out on a little Rush delicacy

West Ham United 0 Liverpool 2

AN IMPORTANT away win for a previously ailing Liverpool; a very important, left-footed goal for a previously ailing Ian Rush. More than 30,000 spectators saw th is entertaining game, which was thoroughly satisfying and enjoyable even before the late goals. West Ham, truth to tell, never really looked likely to pierce the Liverpool defence after the hectic opening minutes in which a couple of possible chances were made. They needed, very badly, to have Trevor Brooking down on the field, rather than in the commentator's seat, from which he watched this game. But Slater, in particular, looks good for goals in the near future.

Much of the football matched the bright, brisk autumn afternoon. West Ham, after a depressing start to the season, have gained new confidence. Liverpool, most commendably, have shrugged aside their troubles, made light, or relatively light, of the fact they have no centre-half and are playing adventurous, incisive football.

Whatever happens to Liverpool at this difficult time, when so many first-choice players are unavailable for good or bad reasons, it would be very dangerous yet to bet against their holding on to their championship.

They could easily have gone ahead 10 minutes before the interval when Beardsley, so busy, intelligent and elusive in midfield, ended a movement he had begun with a left-footed hook shot from the left, which bounced back from a post. Houghton's chip was then deflected against the West Ham bar.

These events came in a sustained period of Liverpool superiority, but after West Ham had twice threatened to score in the opening minutes. Devonshire had a header saved by Hooper, who later dashed far out of his area with commendable anticipation to kick clear from Slater.

Ince yesterday was being used, not as a sweeper, but in midfield. Slater, at 19 years old, is showing high promise. Fast and fluent, he has shown West Ham that there's no place like home. Having looked so long for a centre-forward, they have now belatedly found him on their own doorstep, among their own reserves.

Liverpool began to turn the game when they started hitting long passes through the channel between West Ham's left-back and left centre-half. Venison, at right-back, did this particularly well. When he put Aldridge through the offside trap, the striker should have scored rather than bang the ball high over the top.

Subsequently, Venison launched Rush, and McKnight had to dive at Aldridge's feet. Perhaps Liverpool's plan was to take the game to West Ham, and away from their vulnerable central defence.

After half-time, the match continued fast, furious, but consistently intelligent. The return of Martin and Gale has settled the West Ham defence, which was just as well, since Beardsley, with abundant help from the tireless Houghton, continued to beaver away to excellent effect in midfield.

Barnes, perhaps, was still not giving what he should, while Rush had been what you might call suspiciously quiet. But for all that, and despite the occasional dashing run by little Slater, Liverpool were still calling the tune.

Then, suddenly, Rush awoke. Seventy minutes had gone when Aldridge challenged for a ball; it broke to Rush, just behind him, and the Welshman, without hesitating, struck it beautifully, with his left foot, wide of McKnight's left hand. For all those who have been doubting his powers since he came back from Turin (and Howard Kendall, of Bilbao, was doing just that in Turin last week), this was a majestic answer. For all their lively enterprise, it was clearly going to be difficult for West Ham to get that goal back. Dickens was simply not doing enough in midfield, where, despite the eager contribution of Devonshire, Liverpool were clearly having the best of the battle. Whelan was getting through a huge amount of work, much of it in front of his own back four. Liverpool must have been sorry to substitute him, just a minute or two, as it happened, after Dickens suddenly came to life, dribbled through Liverpool's defence, and shot only just wide of the post.

Scarcely had Whelan gone off than Liverpool had their second goal, though West Ham bitterly disputed it. A break down the left, and Burrows, Liverpool's promising new left-back, pulled the ball across for Beardsley to hook it home at point-blank range with his left foot. There were anxious moments for Liverpool as the referee spoke to his linesman, but the goal stood, and who deserved to score it more than Beardsley?

West Ham did not give up the ghost. They continued to push forward and to probe anxiously rather than penetratively at a defence which now clearly had the measure of them.

On those relatively few occasions when Slater was given a decent chance, or even half a chance, he carried something of a threat, but even when Kelly had been taken off to give way to the heftier Rosenior, there was no way through a back four in which Nicol, always so versatile, played such a dominant part.

Weather: bright. Ground: soft.

Goals: Rush (70min) 0-1; Beardsley (78min) 0-2.

West Ham United (4-4-2): McKnight; Stewart, Gale, Martin, Dicks; Ward, Ince, Dickens, Devonshire; Slater, Kelly (sub: Rosenior 76min).

Liverpool (4-4-2): Hooper; Venison, Nicol, Ablett, Burrows; Houghton, Beardsley, Whelan (sub: Spackman 76min), Barnes; Rush, Aldridge.

Referee: R Milford (Bristol).