

Date: 14 March 1989
 Opposition: Luton Town
 Competition: League

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THE TIMES

Liverpool sound a warning to League leaders

Liverpool 5 Luton Town 0

Liverpool, with typical arrogance, delivered a timely reminder to those who believe them to be incapable of retaining the Football League championship last night.

By overwhelming Luton Town, the Littlewoods Cup finalists, they moved to within 10 points of Arsenal, the leaders of the first division, and the fact that they still have two games in hand will not have been lost on those who may have been contemplating premature celebrations.

Liverpool, who defeated Middlesbrough 4-0 at the weekend, played magnificently in adverse conditions and will turn their attentions to Saturday's FA Cup sixth round tie against the third division side, Brentford, harbouring thoughts of another domestic double.

Luton, lacking the suspended Foster and the injured Wegerle, felt the full force of Liverpool's only recently realized rich potential in an embarrassingly one-sided match.

Liverpool have been often guilty this season of producing indifferent form at home but on this occasion it was only poor luck and the unsettling effect of an unpredictable wind which prevented them from reaping a far greater reward.

The appetite for confrontation has returned and with it the hunger for goals which has been absent since the latter stages of last season.

In the face of a ceaseless onslaught, Luton had little time to impress in attack and yet they almost stole the lead after 24 minutes when McDonough's shot was deflected wide after Grobbelaar had hopelessly mistimed a punch.

Liverpool underlined their supremacy after 34 minutes. Houghton's cross was turned home by Aldridge, who appeared to be offside. Three minutes before the interval the Republic of Ireland international doubled his side's advantage when he side-footed home from close range after Sealey had failed to grasp a Barnes shot.

In the second half, Liverpool's flowing football created numerous chances for forward and midfield players alike but it was not until the 69th minute that the inevitable third goal arrived. Ironically, it stemmed from a mistake, Beaumont allowing Aldridge to dispossess him before delivering a weighted pass which Beardsley arrogantly stroked through the legs of Sealey.

Beaumont's night of personal misery was complete five minutes later when a speculative drive from McMahon hit the heel of his boot and looped over the helpless Sealey and in off a post.

Luton's spirits dipped still further two minutes later when Aldridge completed his treble from the penalty spot after he had been fouled.

Ray Harford, the Luton Town manager, joined the growing band of people who believe that Liverpool are still capable of winning the title. "They must have a very good chance indeed. They are back on the road again. They played really, really well; I thought they were absolutely terrific," he said.

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LIVERPOOL: B Grobbelaar; G Ablett, S Staunton, S Nicol, R Whelan, G Gillespie (sub: A Watson), P Beardsley, J Aldridge, R Houghton, J Barnes (sub: D Burrows), S McMahon.

LUTON TOWN: L Sealey; T Breaker, A Grimes, D Preece (sub: I Dowie), M Johnson, D Beaumont, D Wilson, D McDonough, M Harford, R Hill, K Black.

Referee: A Seville.