

Date: 18 March 1989
 Opposition: Brentford
 Competition: FA Cup

Times	Sunday Times	

18 March 1989

THE TIMES

Beardsley at heart of all ovations

Liverpool 4 Brentford 0

The prolonged, generous ovation that Brentford received from the Liverpool supporters at the end of an old-fashioned, sporting FA Cup tie seemed to make it almost worthwhile being a loser. It reminded me of an observation from Steve Perryman earlier in the week: "They do everything right by you at Anfield, except give you three points."

But while the Brentford manager was again impressed by the performance of both the Liverpool club and its team, he is too long in the tooth, even at 37, to be humoured or hoodwinked. "They probably applaud you like that even if you get hammered or don't show as much commitment as we did. As it happens, I think we deserved it," he said in a cracked voice that betrayed his own vociferous applause.

There was as much to admire about Perryman's strength of character on Saturday as there was of a Brentford team that made a thoroughly enjoyable contest of what should have been a thoroughly lopsided quarter-final. It was only after 65 minutes that the first division club's supreme individual ability began to tell. Perryman seems to have the knack of passing on his experience without weighing his players down with it. "Having been here as a 17-year-old with Tottenham, I realize the advantages of being naive," he said.

"Anfield is the sort of place you come away from saying, 'The next time I come here, I'm going to be better'. One thing I didn't want was a group of players coming here not prepared to make mistakes, to go out there and hide, and not be the one whose fault it was. I told them, 'Get out there and stand up for yourself, make your mistakes and out of it will come some good things'."

Brentford, roared on (or, should I say, buzzed on?) by a swarm of 7,000 supporters armed with obligatory inflatable bees, did not make many mistakes in that opening half when they repeatedly stung the champions with their neat, forthright football. Either side could have scored in a hectic opening spell when Houghton and Cadette were each frustrated by on-rushing goalkeepers, and Whelan volleyed against the crossbar.

Brentford were unlucky enough to have met Liverpool in the midst of a hot streak (13 goals in three games) which could lead all the way to Wembley if not the top of the League table. Perryman, whose attention, naturally, is focused lower down the League these days, must have wondered what all the fuss over Liverpool's form had been about.

"Sometimes they're happy to defend, which I like about them," he said. "They believe in their defending and they wait to break off you. Or they can play the pressure game which I've known many times when I've been here as a player." Whatever method Liverpool adopted, Beardsley was invariably at the heart of it. His faded pass, hit with the outside of his right foot, to Houghton in the sixteenth minute was as subtle as any Brazilian's. It gave Houghton time to make a calculated chip on to the diving head of McMahon for Liverpool's opening goal. It must have brought back to Barnes memories of his Maracana goal, because in the 65th minute he set forth on a beguiling run which beat Feeley, his marker, for pace and Evans for deception before lashing the ball past Parks. Brentford bravely fought back, only to leave their chin exposed and Beardsley, with delightful footwork and timing, fittingly delivered the old one-two.

LIVERPOOL: B Grobbelaar; G Ablett, S Staunton, S Nicol, R Whelan, G Gillespie, P Beardsley, J Aldridge, R Houghton, J Barnes, S McMahon.

BRENTFORD: A Parks; A Feeley (sub: J Bates), R Stanislaus, K Millen, T Evans, A Cockram, K Jones, A Sinton, R Cadette, G Blissett, K Godfrey (sub: A Sealy).

Referee: T J Holbrook.



THE SUNDAY TIMES

Liverpool the kindly killers

Liverpool 4 Brentford 0.

THE BEE BRIGADE from London were suitably proud. Liverpool saved their panache and goal-poaching until the end of the match, allowing little Brentford a few moments to treasure from their dice with floodlit fame.

The Kop cheered them, and a standing ovation sped them home savouring the memories along with the fish and chips. But Steve Perryman, Brentford's manager, was not going to get hysterical about it. "That was nice," he said, "but they probably always do that when they hammer someone. I thought our team actually deserved it, though. They were beaten, but not belted."

They were not indeed. Although the scoreline suggests otherwise Brentford were not cowed into knee-trembling submission by the famous "This Is Anfield" reminder that confronted them as they ran on to the drenched pitch.

Legs held firm and nerves were only marginally frayed when Parks, the Brentford goalkeeper, suddenly lost his senses and left his area in pursuit of McMahon upfield. The errant goalkeeper was saved by his defenders hastily back-peddalling to cover.

At this early stage, Grobbelaar, resplendent in lime-green gloves, was not exactly singing in the rain either. Liverpool's defence looked square and stunned after barely six minutes, when Sinton gave Cadette ample scope to shoot from just inside the box. He missed. But it proved the Bees were here to buzz and not to bumble.

But despite that encouraging start, there were moments when the Brentford defence appeared as exposed as the plastic skeletons being waved by some of their 7,000 supporters.

After Whelan had smashed a volley against the crossbar and Evans cleared off the line, Brentford were ready to send up distress flares. And just before they could light the blue touchpaper, Liverpool scored.

Beardsley made it with a through-ball to Houghton. He crossed to the far post, where McMahon flung himself forward regardless of puddles to send a header past Parks.

Undaunted, Brentford opted not to whimper like injured underdogs but to attack instead. It was a brave decision considering that the main source of noise at Griffin Park on soggy Saturdays is the whine of jets on the Heathrow flight path. Here they were cheered by thousands.

When they won a corner, the massed ranks behind the goal raised shouts and bananas in salute. When Godfrey succeeded in firing a shot over the bar, their joy knew no bounds. And when Whelan pulled down Cadette, charging down the left, the act was denounced with indignant boos.

Brentford of the Third were achieving greater equality, and commanding more respect, than many First Division outfits at Anfield.

They played one-tuos deftly and released both full-backs to shimmy up the wing when required, so Liverpool failed to bask in smug security.

Until Barnes struck ... and Beardsley ... then Beardsley again. The Barnes stroke was the most brutal, both in terms of his left-foot finish and its effect on the gallant struggle of the visitors. Brentford seemed to fade away slightly faced with certain defeat, and Beardsley put the last clinical touches to the scoreline, superbly accepting chances supplied first by Houghton and then by Barnes.

Dalglish, as inscrutable as Clint Eastwood in a spaghetti western, thought the result was the most important thing. It seemed a rather joyless tack to take, but then Liverpool were in the FA Cup semi-finals for the fourth time in five years; and Brentford were left to play Torquay in the Sherpa Van Trophy.

Weather: rain. Ground: soft.

Goals: McMahon (15min) 1-0; Barnes (65min) 2-0; Beardsley (79min) 3-0;

Beardsley (81min) 4-0.

Liverpool (4-4-2): Grobbelaar; Gillespie, Ablett, Staunton, Nicol; McMahon, Whelan, Houghton, Barnes; Beardsley, Aldridge.

Brentford (4-4-2): Parks; Feeley (sub: Bates 83min), Evans, Millen, Stanislaus; Sinton, Cockram, Jones, Godfrey (sub: Sealy 75min); Cadette, Blissett.

Referee: T Holbrook (Walsall).