Date: 24 November 1990
Opposition: Manchester City
Competition: League

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THE TIMES

Pressure tells on Liverpool

LIVERPOOL, out of sorts and out of character, could be coming back to the field with unforeseen speed. Their lead in the first division has been reduced to six points and, unless they undergo an extensive transformation, it promises to have been cut to three by the end of the televised fixture at Highbury next Sunday. By the end of the match at Anfield on Saturday, Liverpool's unbeaten League record was bent, buckled and all but broken in the 2-2 draw with Manchester City. "We were fortunate to get even a point," Kenny Dalglish conceded after his side's aura of invincibility had dissipated for the second time in a month by a Manchester club.

Arsenal might care to consider how Liverpool responded to their defeat by United in the Rumbelows Cup. Four days later, they visited north London and beat a club considered genuine contenders for the title, Tottenham Hotspur.

It was thought then that Liverpool's loss at Old Trafford might be merely a momentary lapse. Not so. City, during an occasion equally laced with emotion, again illustrated how vulnerable, incohesive and impotent Liverpool can be when they are subjected to sustained pressure.

As well as being thinly disguised as a Merseyside derby (there were no fewer than five Evertonians in City's line-up), the match was sprinkled with additional spice. Adrian Heath, speaking on behalf of his colleagues, revealed the spirit which has been formed instantly for the sake of the new player-manager.

"We were all so pleased that Peter Reid was given the job," he said. "We are going to keep working hard to make sure that he has a successful spell in charge." Their intentions were evident. City matched Liverpool for industry which, as Reid suggests, is their principal hidden strength. "People call them a great passing team and often overlook how hard they work off the ball," he said. Because City were prepared to expend all of their energy, they not only consistently disrupted Liverpool's rhythm, but also earned themselves an equaliser amid the extraordinary closing stages.

Liverpool, compelled to play unusually deep and hurriedly in their own territory, resembled a shadow of themselves even before they were struck down by injuries. The re-arrangements were so extensive that only half of the side finished in the position they started and one of them, Grobbelaar, was disabled. Having tweaked a groin muscle, he could not kick with his right foot. Gillespie limped off early in the second half with a dead leg and Dalglish admitted that Barnes, though physically fit, was short of match practice. Those difficulties cannot be used to diminish City's indisputable superiority.

They had hit a post and been denied one penalty before Ward put them ahead on the hour with his fifth penalty of the season. The source of their openings lay in Quinn. Since he is as aesthetically pleasing as a giraffe in full gallop, the elongated centre forward is often underrated.

Liverpool could convincingly contain him neither on the ground nor in the air, where inevitably he is supreme. After shaking an upright, he made a more substantial contribution with a header which Grobbelaar partially blocked. In the ensuing scramble Whelan, never comfortable as a converted right back, felled Ward.

During the week, Reid had urged his players to be positive. Yet they were forced to retreat by Liverpool's belated sense of urgency and by the introduction of the dangerous, albeit erratic, Rosenthal in the last ten minutes.

As soon as he came on, Rush equalised with an involuntary nod. The Israeli international, who played such a productive role towards the end of last season, subsequently completed a swift counter-attack with the most delicate of lobs and Liverpool were in command for the first time.

It did not last. In the dying seconds, Quinn, with another precise header, scored City's second goal to claim a moral victory. ``If they played like that every week," Dalglish said, ``they wouldn't be so far adrift." If Liverpool play like that on Sunday, they won't be so far ahead.

LIVERPOOL: B Grobbelaar; G Hysen, D Burrows, G Ablett, R Whelan, G Gillespie (sub: J Molby), P Beardsley, R Houghton, I Rush, J Barnes, S McMahon (sub: R Rocenthal)

MANCHESTER CITY: A Dibble; I Brightwell, N Pointon, P Reid, C Hendry, S Redmond, D White, A Heath (sub: C Allen), N Quinn, G Megson, M Ward. Referee: P Don.

theguardian

A Mancunian candidate

PETER REID for Prime Minister. He may not quite have toppled Liverpool, but his side gave the pedestal a good heave-ho and his was the inspiration behind a memorable City performance in a game that Liverpool would rather forget and Maine Road will talk about for years.

It is commonplace to see outstanding football at Anfield, but it usually comes in the form of a one-sided exhibition of skills. It is rare to see a good match. But this was a cracking, bullet-biting contest, the emotions played like a hooked salmon, as City took the lead, desperately tried to consolidate it, lost it with eight minutes left, went behind with four to go and equalised in 66 seconds of injury time. Liverpool were left knowing what it is like to be on the wrong end of the Anfield experience, and for that they can thank the experience of the former Evertonians Reid, Pointon and Heath in Merseyside derbies. For if there is one club for whom Anfield holds no terrors, it is Everton. Reid, three times a winner there, probably knows the Reds better than they know themselves.

Knowing the enemy is not enough, however. Reid drilled into his players the need to 'get at Liverpool up front and in their midfield'. Easier said than done, but a City side that has been euphoric about Reid's accession had the fitness, pace and skill to do it and the concentration and mental stamina to sustain it for 92 minutes. They refused to consider themselves beaten even when the 90 minutes was up, and it was that which gave Quinn the injury-time headed equaliser from Ward's corner

Ward put City into a deserved lead just after the hour with a penalty after Whelan brought him down. Liverpool had by then had only one true shot, albeit a close call when Barnes his black tights indicating that a Marseille winter might be more appealing than a Mersey one spun on a sixpence but saw his shot just miss. After that City kept Liverpool's chances to a minimum while creating a bagful of their own, hassling the opposition into uncharacteristic haste that produced faulty passes and clearances. Hansen was not back as expected in defence; how rare to see the calculating Gillespie harried into anxious defending before limping off, with Molby going on in midfield as Whelan dropped back.

But City's virtues were also their undoing, as speed of thought and action led to over-anxious snatching at chances, with Heath and Quinn guilty of miskicks and misheaders in front of goal. Yet time and again they were through Liverpool, and Grobbelaar was forced into more than one fingertip save.

Liverpool had the initiative for only two short spells, but in the last 10 minutes of ordinary time they did what City had long feared. Beardsley's corner found Hysen, who headed down for Barnes to volley; his shot hit Rush on its way in. City stayed calm, as though that were the least they had expected. But four minutes later Rosenthal, on for McMahon, nipped past Pointon to lob Liverpool into the lead. Then, when it seemed there was no justice, up popped Quinn. Formerly of Arsenal, he headed the equaliser for the draw that was the very least City deserved and which, ironically, reduced Liverpool's First Division lead over the Gunners.

'You should be happy leaving Anfield with a point,' said Reid, 'but we are disappointed. I think we deserved three.' The fact remains that Liverpool have not been beaten at home for 12 months. Kenny Dalglish was gracious enough to say afterwards: 'They deserved what they got. We can consider ourselves fortunate to have got even a point.' But he added the rider: 'The season doesn't finish when you play Liverpool. Teams raise their game when they come to Anfield. City have to play like this every week.'

Whether they can will depend greatly on Reid the manager's acumen in finding someone to replace Reid the player. For the only thing surer than Liverpool winning the title is that the 34-year-old's legs cannot keep up this pace for ever. SCORERS: Liverpool: Rush (82min), Rosenthal (86). Manchester City: Ward, pen (62), Quinn (89).

Liverpool: Grobbelaar; Hysen, Burrows, Ablett, Whelan, Gillespie (Molby, 53), Beardsley, Houghton, Rush, Barnes, McMahon (Rosenthal, 80).

Manchester City: Dibble; Brightwell, Pointon, Reid, Hendry, Redmond, White, Heath (Allen, 88), Quinn, Megson, Ward.

Referee: P Don (Middlesex).

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THE SUNDAY TIMES

Spirited City keep Liverpool breathless to the end

Liverpool 2 Manchester City 2

LIVERPOOL 2 (4-4-2): Grobbelaar; Burrows, Hysen, Gillespie (sub: Molby 54min), Ablett; Houghton, McMahon (sub: Rosenthal 80min), Whelan, Barnes; Rush, Beardsley. MANCHESTER CITY 2(4-4-2): Dibble; Brightwell, Hendry, Redmond, Pointon, White, Reid, Megson, Ward; Quinn, Heath (sub: Allen 88min). Goals: Ward (pen 63min) 0-1; Rush (82min) 1-1; Rosenthal (87min) 2-1; Quinn (90min) 2-2.

Weather: damp. Ground: yielding. Referee: P Don (Hanworth Park).

IN AN astonishing finish, Liverpool, whose unbeaten record seemed to be slipping away, first equalised, then went ahead, only for Quinn to head City's equaliser from Ward's corner in the last minute.

What a remarkable and heartening managerial beginning for Peter Reid. City, with exuberant wing play, forward defiance in midfield and a resilient defence inspired by Redmond, so nearly got away with it in the second half.

Liverpool will have few closer calls; from now on, no doubt, they will remember Rosenthal. Moreover, Barnes, after several weeks of absence with a pulled hamstring, returned to the Liverpool attack and quickly showed that he has not lost anything in the meantime. In the 11th minute, taking a short free-kick from Beardsley on the left, he spun splendidly to lose little Brightwell, who replaced Harper at right-back for City, then struck a low shot very close to City's right-hand post.

City, again deploying those two dangerous wingers White and Ward, each a natural right-footer, showed little early sign of alarm. With Quinn, their giant centre-forward, doing neat things and Pointon always ready to burst forward enthusiastically, Liverpool's defence had quite difficult tasks.

Burrows, now a Jack of all trades recently used in midfield, replaced Nicol at right-back; though Burrows is essentially left-footed.

Now and again, when Liverpool decided to raise their game, the City defence trembled. Nine minutes from the interval, Beardsley, receiving from Rush, glided by two bemused defenders on the left and crossed for McMahon to let fly a shot which seemed to ricochet endlessly, even off Dibble, the goalkeeper, before it reached relative safety.

But if Heath, on a couple of occasions, had not lost his bearings in the Liverpool penalty area, Grobbelaar might have had difficult things to perform. City would certainly not lie down.

Having survived the first half, City grew increasingly confident and at the opening of the second gave Liverpool quite a chasing down their defensive left flank. White, long-legged, skilful, and tremendously quick, was a hot handful for Ablett, beating him when, on the half-volley, he at once collected a ball in his stride and took it past Ablett. Gillespie had to overstretch to intercept, and a few minutes later hobbled off, giving way to Molby.

Ward followed White's dashing progress down the right wing, ending a sustained run with a ball to Quinn. An accurate lay-off must have meant a goal, but Quinn could not provide it, and Grobbelaar thankfully scooped up the ball. Next down the right came Heath, and Quinn struck his cross against the outside of the right-hand Liverpool post. What effrontery]

For Liverpool, there would be much worse quickly to follow. Now Ward wriggled his way in from the left for White to head just over the bar.

No respite. Down the right again, White flew away, finishing with a perfect cross to which Quinn got a ferocious header. Grobbelaar did wonderfully well to claw it away in full flight, but it only fell to Ward, who was brought down by the desperate Whelan.

Ward hammered the penalty kick himself. Grobbelaar touched it, but he couldn't stop it. Sixty-three minutes gone and City, against all expectations and probabilities, were ahead.

Liverpool reshuffled desperately. Now Whelan was at right-back, Molby in midfield. Then Rosenthal replaced McMahon. It was Rush, with a deadly deflection, who finally equalised. A corner by Beardsley, a head down, then a spin and a shot by Barnes, and the ball was diverted home.

Cruelly, the powerful Rosenthal sank City's hopes. An error by Brightwell, and the Israeli striker was away like a charging bull; but with far more control. No one could catch him, and he lobbed his shot wide of Dibble and into the top left-hand corner.

There was still time for Ward to let fly a fearsome free-kick, but Grobbelaar turned it over the bar. Ward took the corner, and there was Quinn to head the equaliser that City so thoroughly deserved.