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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.