

Date: 30 January 1991 Opposition: Brighton & Hove Albion Competition: FA Cup	Times	Guardian		30 January 1991

THETIMES

Liverpool steer an uneasy course into fifth round
Brighton 2 Liverpool 3. (aet, 1-1 after 90 min)
THE ghosts of 1983 and 1984 came back to frighten Liverpool at the Goldstone Ground last night. Seconds away from being eliminated from the FA Cup by Blackburn Rovers in the third round, they were 14 minutes away from being knocked out by Brighton for the third time in eight years.
Mike Small and John Byrne, who both scored at Anfield on Saturday, put the second division club within sight of another famous victory half-way through extra time. Only then did Ian Rush and Steve McMahon, with his second goal, lift Liverpool clear of further embarrassment.
For two months they have been drifting far below their usual standards of supreme excellence. A long list of casualties cannot wholly be held as the reason for their recent decline and talk of a crisis, which would be considered premature at any other club, is not unrealistic. The unease has spread throughout the side and particularly in the defence.
Their discomfort, evident within a mere 30 seconds, rose whenever the ball was floated towards Small's head. The tall, ebullient centre-forward, regularly climbing above Steve Nicol and Gary Ablett, caused anxiety on the ground as well.
So did Byrne, and Liverpool were so lacking in assurance that they occasionally inflicted panic amid their own colleagues. Ronnie Whelan, returning as captain after an absence of nine games, almost conceded an own goal when he sliced an intended clearance. He then had to nod the ensuing corner off the line.
Although two of their England internationals combined to bring them temporary relief in the tenth minute, they were never allowed to relax until the closing stages. After an angled drive from John Barnes was parried by Perry Digweed, McMahon beat Paul McCarthy in the race for the rebound.
Under normal circumstances, that might have signalled the end of Brighton's realistic ambitions of entertaining Everton in the fifth round in a fortnight. Always positive and frequently enterprising, they attacked instead with renewed purpose and were level in the 36th minute. Though their equaliser was deserved, there was an element of controversy about it. As Clive Walker miscued, Small was so free that Liverpool were convinced that he must have been offside. Official opinion differed and he bumbled in the seventeenth goal of the season.
But for the intervention, first of the referee and then of Nicol, he would have added others after the interval. Liverpool, though still anything but convincing at the back, gained a semblance of control and might have settled the tie in normal time when McMahon hooked the ball across the face of goal and beyond the other upright.
Yet they were damaged significantly with a largely self-inflicted wound in the 98th minute when Whelan left his back pass short. Byrne intercepted and Brighton prepared to celebrate another momentous occasion.
In the 106th minute Rush, released by Peter Beardsley who had been introduced during extra time, brought belated respectability to Liverpool's performance and he was responsible for ushering them towards a Merseyside derby which he so relishes. It was his astute pass which invited McMahon to claim the winner.
BRIGHTON: P Digweed; J Crumplin, S Gattling, D Wilkins, P McCarthy, G Chivers, M Barham, J Byrne, M Small, R Codner, C Walker.
LIVERPOOL: B Grobbelaar; B Venison, D Burrows, S Nicol, S Staunton, G Ablett, J Carter, R Whelan, I Rush, J Barnes, S McMahon.
Referee: B Hill.

the**guardian**

Liverpool recovery is an extra Rush job
LIVERPOOL continue to live on borrowed time in the FA Cup, and at the Goldstone Ground last night they nearly ran out of credit. Having survived in the third round on the strength of a last-minute own-goal at Blackburn, they staggered through the fourth with two goals in the last period of extra-time after Brighton had gone ahead and looked capable of achieving their third Cup victory over Liverpool in nine years.
That they did not was due to the attacking quality which Liverpool produced when they needed it most. Had Kenny Dalglish needed to rely on his defence, then Brighton would probably now be contemplating a televised fifth-round encounter at home to Everton on February 17.
Brighton knocked Liverpool out of the Cup in 1983, on their way to Wembley, and again in 1984. The difference between the teams looked as marginal last night as it did then.
Several times the champions were in danger of losing, much as they had lost to Crystal Palace in last season's semi-finals. Again they took an early lead, again poor defending at set pieces helped the opposition get back into the match.
In the air Liverpool's defence was often non-existent, which meant that almost every Brighton free-kick or corner created a crisis. For 90 minutes Grobbelaar's handling was well-nigh faultless but when he began to drop crosses in extra-time it looked as if Liverpool would do well to take the tie back to Anfield for another replay.
Brighton's defence had conceded six goals at Oldham in December, but after a shaky start they carried the game to Liverpool for long spells. Codner, back in midfield after suspension, provided the drive which gave Small, Byrne and Walker chances to run at the Liverpool back four.
However, the reappearance of McMahon, who had also missed the 2-2 draw at Anfield because of a ban, proved decisive. He gave Liverpool the lead in the ninth minute, following up at the far post after Digweed had only half-stopped a low drive from Barnes, and scored the winner seven minutes from time from Rush's through pass.
In between times Brighton matched their opponents move for move in an open-ended game. In the end it was Liverpool's superior finishing which ended the Second Division team's hopes.
Brighton drew level eight minutes before half-time after several near-misses, the closest coming when Byrne and Chivers found themselves on the Liverpool goal-line with only Grobbelaar and the ball for company but got in each other's way. Walker's shot through a thicket of legs took a couple of deflections and Small ran clear to score.
Afterwards Dalglish decried it as 'a goal in name only; it was miles offside'. But goals are the name of the game, even own-goals at Ewood Park.
Just before the hour Brighton had a back-header into the net disallowed because of a push on Grobbelaar. At one point Liverpool created enough chances to suggest they would win within 90 minutes, but extra-time brought fresh problems.
Molby replaced Carter, but Whelan, back after missing nine games through injury, was well below par and in the 98th minute his poor back-pass enabled Byrne to give Brighton the lead.
Whelan's replacement by Beardsley in the 102nd minute brought the Seagulls down to earth. In the first minute of the second period of extra-time Beardsley sent Rush in to level the scores once more and, with Brighton beginning to labour, McMahon ensured yet another Merseyside Cup derby.
Brighton: Digweed; Crumplin, Gattling, Wilkins, McCarthy, Chivers, Barham, Byrne, Small, Codner, Walker (Chapman, 112min).
Liverpool: Grobbelaar; Venison, Burrows, Nicol, Whelan (Beardsley, 102), Ablett, Carter (Molby, 90), Staunton, Rush, Barnes, McMahon.
Referee: B Hill (Kettering).