

Date: 23 April 1991  
 Opposition: Crystal Palace  
 Competition: League

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## THE TIMES

Liverpool maintain their title challenge

Liverpool 3 Crystal Palace 0

LIVERPOOL, even if they fail to retain the championship, will finish with some compensation.

Four days after their European ban was lifted in London, they assured themselves of a place in at least the Uefa Cup next season by beating Crystal Palace at Anfield last night.

Goals from Ian Rush, John Barnes and Eddie McGoldrick, chosen unexpectedly as Palace's sweeper, also determined that the title will be decided in the closing week, as was the case two years ago.

Arsenal, dramatically triumphant then, remain three points clear and, with a vastly superior goal difference, retain their position as favourites.

Graeme Souness had asked for Arsenal's opponents "to do us a few favours", but he hardly have expected his own club's visitors to have been more accommodating.

Norwich City allowed Liverpool to mark the arrival of their new manager with a comfortable 3-0 win last Saturday. Crystal Palace's line-up suggested that they might yield as easily.

Excluding five regular members of the first team, it included two young debutantes, Osborne, aged 20, a midfielder player, and Southgate, aged 19, given the unnerving task of marking Rush and featured McGoldrick, usually seen tracing a path along the touchline, as a sweeper.

Barber, Bright, Gray, Thorn and Young were all missing either through injury or suspension. The absence of Bright, the recognised focus of their long-ball game, was significant because they had to attack with more thought than has been their custom.

The unavailability of Thorn and Young, the central defenders, appeared to be equally ominous.

On their last visit to Anfield, Palace had been humiliated 9-0, the worst defeat in their history. Although they have since beaten Liverpool in the FA Cup semi-final and in their own home, another dispiriting experience seemed possible.

That prospect disappeared within half an hour during which, surprisingly enough, they were the more threatening.

Although Souness retained the same formation as against Norwich, Liverpool's start again lacked conviction.

All of their inspirational figures were closely shadowed, Pardew followed Barnes and Shaw, on his return from injury, stayed with Beardsley and only when their three central defenders moved forward did they apply genuine pressure on the unit patrolled by the admirable McGoldrick.

A Salako corner, a Bodin cross and a McGoldrick drive had all alarmed Grobbelaar before Liverpool's anxieties began to ease. It was significant that Molby, Ablett and Gillespie in turn left their duties at the rear to fashion the move which lifted the belief of their colleagues and propelled them towards victory.

Palace, leaving Salako and Wright largely isolated up front, conceded midfield but restricted the space around the confines of their own area. Once Liverpool's trio had offered additional alternatives, though, gaps became evident and the eventual outcome was predictable when Rush claimed the 300th goal of his club career.

It was superlative. A pass by Barnes, curled in from the left in the 41st minute, was headed by Rush to Beardsley and the instant nodded return was struck from the edge of the area as though the prolific Welshman had packed a stick of dynamite inside his right boot.

Nicol, appointed as captain in place of Hysen, who was again overlooked, created both the second and third goals. Barnes, timing his run perfectly as Palace pushed out, was left free to dive and head home a chip in the 55th minute and McGoldrick, shepherding a through ball, closed the evening by inadvertently turning the ball into his own net.

LIVERPOOL: B Grobbelaar; G Ablett, D Burrows, S Nicol, J Molby, S Staunton, P Beardsley, R Houghton, I Rush, J Barnes, G Gillespie.

CRYSTAL PALACE: N Martyn; J Humphrey, P Bodin, (sub: S Collymore), A Pardew, G Southgate, R Shaw, J Salako, G Thomas, S Osborn (sub: G Thompson), I Wright, E McGoldrick.

Referee: K Barrett.

## the guardian

Liverpool book Euro ticket

THE almighty cheer by the Crystal Palace supporters when they heard Arsenal were 20 up was a touch unkind, but perhaps understandable. After all, last season they had suffered intolerably as Liverpool put nine goals past their newly promoted team at Anfield.

Liverpool won again last night with goals from Rush, an absolute beauty, Barnes and an own goal by McGoldrick thus ensuring European football on Merseyside again next season. The result at Highbury means that in all probability it will be the Uefa Cup. With no First Division games this Saturday, the momentum Liverpool have gained over the last few days since the arrival of Souness must go on hold.

Liverpool made an edgy start. In recent times they have found Palace a fiery dragon and for 25 minutes or more the home side looked for a suitable St George to rescue them. In the end it was a Welshman who did the trick.

Palace, with McGoldrick in the unaccustomed role of sweeper, smothered Liverpool's best attacks, while Bodin posed early problems along the left. From one of Bodin's crosses Salako challenged Grobbelaar and the ball broke invitingly into the path of Wright. Fortunately for Liverpool the England striker was a little off balance and shot high.

Gradually, despite much wayward passing, Liverpool improved, with Gillespie frequently joining the attack. In one move he headed down from Ablett to Rush only for Southgate, making his League debut, to whip the ball off Rush's big toe. Previously the young Crystal Palace defender had been booked for flattening the Liverpool striker.

With half-time beckoning Rush and Beardsley interchanged passes as finally the Palace cover fell around its ankles. Rush struck the ball on the half-volley, a shot of the highest quality and worthy of the Welshman's 300th goal for League clubs. In the second half Nicol crossed for Barnes to score with a close-range header - his second headed goal in consecutive matches - an outstanding rarity. The news from Highbury dulled the Kop's delight, although there was another goal to come. Nicol drove the ball into the penalty area and the unlucky McGoldrick turned it beyond Martyn, with Houghton shepherding the ball over the line. 'An own goal,' said Coppell, the Palace manager, who felt Barnes had been offside for the second and that Southgate had been fouled during the course of the first.

Both Nicol and Houghton also claimed the third, leaving statisticians in a whirl. What mattered for Palace was that, with a side cobbled together because of injury and suspension, they had given Liverpool a 90-minute fight and 25-minute fright. What really mattered for Liverpool was that Arsenal had also won. Liverpool: Grobbelaar; Ablett, Burrows, Nicol, Molby, Staunton, Beardsley, Houghton, Rush, Barnes, Gillespie.

Crystal Palace: Martyn; Humphrey, Bodin, (Collymore, 76min), Pardew, Southgate, Shaw, Salako, Thomas, Osborn (Thompson, 57), Wright, McGoldrick. Referee: K Barratt (Coventry).

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# PRESS ASSOCIATION

## 300th for Rush

The last time these two clubs met at Anfield Liverpool ran up a rather convincing 9-0 scoreline.

There was no question of a repeat result given the vast improvement that Palace have enjoyed since that humiliating night. Palace were without five first team players and so elected to play with Eddie McGoldrick as sweeper with five midfielders.

The tactical changes used by Eagles boss Steve Coppell did stifle the home team as they were not allowed a great deal of time on the ball.

While the match charted the rapid change in fortune for the Anfield club, it was also notable for the historic occasion of Ian Rush netting his 300th competitive goal in 532 games for Chester, Juventus and Liverpool.

Four minutes before the break the 29-year-old Welshman darted inside and twice linked up with Peter Beardsley before receiving the final pass and shooting with his right foot past Nigel Martyn's outstretched left hand.

It was a typical opportunist strike from Rush.

Liverpool killed the game as a contest in the second half in the 55th minute and this time the Eagles defence was sleeping when John Barnes headed in Steve Nicol's cross. Three minutes from the end Nicol drove the ball forward and McGoldrick touched it on, but past his own keeper with Ray Houghton harrying him.