

Date: 11 May 1991

Opposition: Tottenham Hotspur

Competition: League

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A Rush job

Liverpool won their final game of the season to finish as League runners-up and qualify for the UEFA Cup.

But it was an anti-climactic affair. Defeat at Nottingham Forest last Monday meant that the League Championship was out of Liverpool's reach, and on its way to Arsenal for the second time in the last three years.

But there was a glimpse of what may be the future of Liverpool, as youngsters Mike Marsh and Steve McManaman were given their chances against a Tottenham side whose minds were elsewhere.

So it was little surprise that Spurs offered no more than token resistance.

Ian Rush has been Tottenham's destroyer more than once, and so he proved again. The Welsh striker opened the scoring for Liverpool shortly before half-time after John Barnes and Steve Staunton had created the opening. And he would surely have added to that total but for the inspired goalkeeping of Erik Thorstvedt, Spurs' giant Norwegian international.

Thorstvedt kept out Rush time and time again, but he could not prevent David Speedie from scoring Liverpool's second goal, early in the second half.

the guardian

Spurs conceal true colours

AT LAST Tottenham can see the towers for the takeovers. They came through their last game before the FA Cup final unscathed and, though the future remains obscure, Terry Venables, after months playing a possession game without the ball, must now attend to the present.

In view of their new kit deal the main thing to decide is what to wear (the Gazza strip?) - an annual problem for ladies who will occupy posh seats for their only game of the season. As usual genuine fans are unhappy. Some who did not think twice about travelling to a meaningless match at Liverpool are jibbing at the pounds 175 agency price for the cheapest Wembley tickets.

Though Venables denied he had decided on his starting line-up at Wembley he almost certainly fielded it at Anfield. The only difference from the formation that beat Arsenal in the semi-final was that Howells played furthest forward of the midfield five.

He and Lineker were substituted - precautionary withdrawals after knocks to shin and knee - but Venables expects no anxious fitness tests. Nayim, already nursing a knock, and Walsh are his probable substitutes.

P Gascoigne Esq completed his second full game since his operation, involving himself at whim - clownishly, continually, decreasingly, anywhere. He was so excited before the semi-final that he had to be sedated, and he still roared like a picture-book lion. A stronger tranquilising dart may be prescribed this week. On Saturday he and Stewart, through dissent, both introduced themselves to Roger Milford, who will referee at Wembley too.

Spurs' full strength largely played at three-quarters commitment, except for Mabbutt and Allen, who cannot help themselves. Even with Hysen recalled for the injured Molby, Liverpool's defence was untroubled. Beardsley celebrated his recall to the England squad on the Anfield bench - a fitting end to a puzzling season.

Graeme Souness introduced Marsh and McManaman, his first move 'to freshen things up'. Both are English, which is handy in view of Liverpool's return to Europe, and both impressed. But both also are attackers. The sureness of touch which has characterised their most successful sides stemmed from a sound defence. The search is on.

Sharp goals by Rush and Speedie ensured that a season which began as champions with eight wins under Dalglish did not end with three defeats under Souness; but it was a low-key finale for Liverpool. Whatever Venables says about 'normal preparation' this week, it will hardly be that for Spurs.

SCORERS: Liverpool: Rush (41min), Speedie (48).

Liverpool: Grobbelaar; Ablett, Burrows (McManaman, 71), Nicol, Hysen, Staunton, Marsh, Houghton, Rush, Barnes (Beardsley, 74), Speedie.

Tottenham Hotspur: Thorstvedt; Edinburgh, Van den Hauwe, Sedgley, Howells (Walsh, h-t), Mabbutt, Stewart, Gascoigne, Samways, Lineker (Hendry, 58), Allen.

Referee: R Milford (Bristol).