

Date: 28 December 1991

Opposition: Everton

Competition: League

Times	Guardian	Sunday Times	28 December 1991
British Soccer Wk			

# THE TIMES

Merseyside revels in derby full of the finest skills

Everton 1 Liverpool 1

LOCAL derbies are often moribund spectacles, lacking quality and sustained only by the passion generated by the occasion. Recent League fixtures between the two Merseyside clubs, for example, have tended to be not only disappointing but predictable, such as been Liverpool's ability to produce high-class performances against their neighbours.

Saturday's game, one of little genuine significance in terms of anything other than local pride, was, however, a glorious exception.

"There is no better advert for English football than that, is there?" Howard Kendall, the Everton manager, said afterwards. It was a rhetorical question, for those who had been fortunate enough to see it had delivered the answer a few minutes earlier when they afforded both sides a prolonged standing ovation as they left the pitch.

The fact that the result almost certainly caused irreparable damage to the fragile League championship aspirations of both clubs was of concern only to the managers: this was a feast to savour.

For long periods, it seemed probable that Everton's neat and incisive football would go unrewarded as unnecessarily did Beagrie and Warzycha attempt to embroider attacks whose beauty lay in simplicity. Everton's progress this season has undoubtedly been hindered by the lack of an orthodox target man to complement the subtlety of Beardsley and, once again, those traditionalists amid a talented midfield quartet too often directed final passes to head and not feet. Having survived several moments of unease, notably in the 35th minute when Warzycha's angled shot was cleared off the line by Wright, Liverpool underlined a marginal first-half supremacy with a goal shortly before the interval. A corner mystifyingly delivered by Saunders, the most expensive forward in British football, was turned into the penalty area by Thomas and promptly given fresh impetus and a differing trajectory by Tanner. The ball rolled through the legs of Southall and although Ebbrell and Ward were on hand, neither was able to prevent a weak shot from crossing the line. By resisting the obvious temptation to tamper with their tactical approach, Everton gradually overcame their frustration and worked their way back into the game, deservedly drawing level after 62 minutes when Jackson's wild and inaccurate shot was turned in by Johnston. Having regained the initiative, Everton's more fluent football should have provided further goals and victory, but their failure to defeat Liverpool in a League game for the first time since March 1988 was ultimately attributable to bad luck, for a high percentage of their more inviting chances fell to providers and not finishers.

The future of Glenn Hysen at Anfield may well have been shortened at the weekend, following the publication of an interview with the Liverpool player in a Scandinavian newspaper.

Hysen is quoted as saying: "Nobody is happy here but nobody talks about it. In the corridors, offices and changing-room, the climate is bad."

EVERTON: N Southall; M Jackson, A Harper, J Ebbrell, D Watson, M Keown, R Warzycha (sub: P Nevin), P Beardsley, M Johnston, M Ward, P Beagrie.

LIVERPOOL: B Grobbelaar; R Jones, G Ablett, S Nicol, M Wright (sub: S McManaman), N Tanner, D Saunders, R Houghton, M Marsh, J Molby, M Thomas. Referee: V Callow.

# the guardian

Fair result for the Mersey sideshow

AS entertaining as this vibrant and attractive local skirmish turned out to be, there was no escaping the feeling that its significance to the championship race, even at such a relatively early stage in the season, was virtually zero.

The stars have risen in the east, and the chants of 'Are you watching, Manchester?' have been temporarily expunged from Everton and Liverpool repertoires. Given their territorial dominance, Everton will feel aggrieved they did not win. But to the few neutrals here a draw seemed the appropriate result between two moderate teams undergoing considerable transitional problems. Souness hustled Liverpool out of Goodison with acerbic haste, leaving the old PR smoothie Kendall to wax lyrical about his team's attitude, quality and commitment. Indeed, there is much to admire about Everton, just as there is much to admire about a delicate lace handkerchief - lovely to look at but useless for blowing your nose.

Kendall insists he can do without a target man, although Beagrie and Warzycha continue to play their final balls as if a tall, dark stranger lurked in their mind's eye. Everton's cutting edge is the swift interplay between Johnston and Beardsley, an understanding that is growing match by match but as yet is not quite intuitive. For Liverpool this was their third successive draw, and their sixth in nine League matches. Those Liverpool fans who feel all this season's problems stem from injuries and ill-luck will console themselves with the thought that if Wright had lasted the full 90 minutes their team might have won.

As it was the England defender suffered what was afterwards described as a dead leg. Worryingly, this same diagnosis was offered at the beginning of the season and turned out to be a long-lasting Achilles tendon problem.

Tanner's goal just before half-time threatened to make a mockery of Everton's possession. Johnston's equaliser was a shade fortunate, but luck turned against him later when his carefully aimed shot hit the post.

Thereafter a Keown header, from Ward's free-kick, was deflected over by Houghton, although Molby and McManaman had chances to win the game for Liverpool, despite Everton's powerful second-half grip. 'Everyone gave their all,' said Kendall of his team. Souness, judging by his lack of post-match communication, was somewhat less happy.

SCORERS: Everton: Johnston (62min); Liverpool: Tanner (41).

Everton: Southall; Jackson, Harper, Ebbrell, Watson, Keown, Warzycha (Nevin, 84), Beardsley, Johnston, Ward, Beagrie.

Liverpool: Grobbelaar; Jones, Ablett, Nicol, Wright (McManaman, h-t), Tanner, Saunders, Houghton, Marsh, Molby, Thomas.

Referee: V Callow (Solihull)

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## THE SUNDAY TIMES

Lucky Liverpool scrape draw

EVERTON 1 LIVERPOOL 1

EVERTON 1(4-4-2): Southall; Jackson, Watson, Keown, Harper; Warzycha (sub: Nevin 86min), Ward, Ebbrell, Beagrie; Beardsley, Johnston.

LIVERPOOL 1(4-4-2): Grobbelaar; Jones, Wright (sub: McManaman 45min), Tanner, Ablett; Houghton, Thomas, Molby, Nicol; Marsh, Saunders.

Goals: Tanner (42min) 0-1; Johnston (62min) 1-1.

Weather: cold, clear. Ground: yielding.

Referee: V Callow (Solihull).

DON'T SAY Liverpool, say draw. The team has drawn six of its last nine League games, including this one, when a slightly fortuitous goal by Tanner in the first half was nullified by Everton, and Johnston, in the second. Everton, with Ward outstanding, had the better of it after the interval. All they seem to need now is a little luck, as Ward himself, who thought he had cleared Tanner's shot from the line, would agree.

Not surprisingly, Liverpool, with one enforced exception, decided to stick with the team which played so splendidly in the first half on Boxing Day against Queen's Park Rangers, only to be thwarted by the astonishing goalkeeping of the Czechoslovak, Stejskal.

No wonder, then, that Liverpool should confirm Marsh a local lad who began at Anfield as a centre-forward, moved to midfield but has latterly been operating successfully at right-back in the striking role next to Saunders.

Injury kept Burrows out of the left-back position, where he was replaced by Ablett, but Rob Jones continued in defence on the other flank. Jones, who is only 20 and was picked up not long ago from Crewe Alexandra for what these days can be called a mere Pounds 300,000, looks as if he might be one of the revelations of the season.

In a position ill-served for so long in the England team, he seems to have all the gifts you could ask for: speed, mobility and a pleasing spirit of adventure. He is always eager to get forward into attack, without being one of those full-backs who look, alas, more like pseudo wingers.

The good news for Liverpool was that John Barnes, sitting in the press box, said he should be ready to play again in a week. When he and Rush eventually return, Liverpool will have an embarrassment of riches.

Meanwhile, the acquisition of Michael Thomas from Arsenal to replace McMahon, who has gone to Manchester City, looks a much better transfer than it did at the time. Moving to Liverpool, against whom, in 1989, he scored the famous goal which decided the championship, seems to have put a new spring into Thomas's step. Everton, for their part, were doubtless much relieved that Southall, their irreplaceable goalkeeper, passed a late test on his ankle. Boldly, they decided to play with two natural wingers, Warzycha and the mercurial Beagrie, on the flanks, with a third, Ward, in the central right-hand position in midfield.

At Highbury a week earlier, in the absence of Keown, their defence had looked as wide open as a barn door. On Boxing Day, here at Goodison, they had carried the play to Sheffield Wednesday, but still lost 1-0. Full credit, then, to them and their manager, Howard Kendall, for being prepared to carry the battle to Liverpool.

Often this happened in the shape of Beagrie, a left-winger of outstanding natural gifts slightly marred by a tendency to over-elaboration, but always ready to take on his full-back, even if that man is as young and vigorous as Jones.

Liverpool, too, were happy to attack, but after an exciting few minutes in which each team in turn produced a flowing attack which might have brought a goal, there was little of consequence until a dozen minutes from half-time.

In the eighth minute a splendid, sustained attack by Liverpool, which began with a typically adroit pass by Molby, saw the ball move from Nicol to Saunders, who shot not far wide. Ward promptly began a five-man Everton move which ended with Beagrie shooting just too high.

In the closing minutes of the half, Grobbelaar stopped a sharp shot from the lively Johnston, then produced another of his strangely eccentric passages. A weak goal-kick went to Johnston, who instantly and shrewdly found Warzycha.

Grobbelaar came roaring out of goal, the Polish winger shot past him, but Wright thundered in, in his turn, to boot the ball to safety over the far side.

Less lucky at the other end was Ward, three minutes from the interval. A right-wing corner from Saunders, an intervention by Thomas, an angled shot by Tanner which beat Southall. Ward, on the line, kicked out, but the ball had already gone over and Liverpool, somewhat unexpectedly, were in front.

Wright had to give up at half-time, with McManaman going on as Liverpool's deep left-winger and Nicol moving to central defence.

Liverpool continued to move smoothly, but Everton deserved their well-worked equaliser after 62 minutes. Ward, passing well throughout, began it; Warzycha, taking a clever return from Beardsley, crossed low and Johnston turned it in. Five minutes later the irrepressible Johnston beat Grobbelaar again, but the ball rebounded from the post.

With Everton setting the pace and Ward looking better by the minute, there was much excitement to come. A poor backpass by Watson let Saunders in, but Southall saved. A header by Keown from Ward's free-kick seemed in, but Houghton leaped on the line to head to safety. Then Beardsley tested Grobbelaar. Altogether, a derby of distinction.

## BRITISH SOCCER WEEK

Mersey magic

Everton and Liverpool shook off their Christmas hangovers to serve up a cracker of a match at Goodison Park that earned both sides a standing ovation at the final whistle.

Defender Nick Tanner gave Liverpool the lead against the run of play after 41 minutes, Michael Thomas helping on a Dean Saunders corner for Tanner to force the ball over the line despite Mark Ward's desperate bid to block.

Everton struck back through Mo Johnston, whose shot after 61 minutes crept inside the post after Matthew Jackson scooped on Peter Beardsley's knock down from a Robert Warzycha cross.

They set up a thrilling last half hour with goalmouth action at both ends and the Merseyside crowd whipped up into a frenzy.

Johnston hit a post and Liverpool had another escape when Martin Keown headed Ward's free-kick towards goal, Ray Houghton springing up like a jack-in-the-box to head clear over his cross bar.

Liverpool could have won it when Saunders beat a hesitant Dave Watson to the ball, only to see Neville Southall race out to block his close range effort.

Everton had made most of the first half running but once again failed to find the killer touch - or the luck - their bright, inventive approach play deserved.

Ward saw a thunderous volley rebound to safety off Liverpool skipper Mark Wright, who was to go off injured at half time, and Warzycha's curling shot bounced off Steve Nicol's head.

Peter Beagrie flashed a shot just over from Warzycha's low cross and Beardsley's clever back-heel gave Johnston space for a shot which flew straight at Bruce Grobbelaar.

The Liverpool goalkeeper had a let off when he cleared poorly straight to Johnston, who swiftly threaded the ball through to the unmarked Warzycha. The pole rounded the keeper but saw his cross hammered to safety by Wright.

Everton manager Howard Kendall saluted his Merseyside derby goal hero Johnston with the verdict: "It was a dream for Mo Jo."

Kendall enthused: "To score in front of our supporters and hit a post was great for him. Like all the players out there he had a good first touch, it was a good advert for the game and one of our best performances of the season. Now we must look forward to 1992 and hope it is kinder to us."

Johnston, a regular scorer in Old Firm matches for both Celtic and Rangers before his 1.5 million pound move to Everton last month, said: "Down here you are allowed to play a bit more football. In Scotland it's 200 miles an hour and very frantic and intense. It was important to score in my first derby match. I feel I am starting to adapt to the quality of Everton's play and I've struck up a fair partnership with Peter Beardsley."

Liverpool manager Graeme Souness said: "I thought we were better in the first half and they were better in the second. I thought it was a really good game and a great advert for the British game."