

Date: 5 February 1992
 Opposition: Bristol Rovers
 Competition: FA Cup

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THE TIMES

Liverpool relieved to survive

Bristol Rovers 1 Liverpool 1

LIVERPOOL will not forget their first visit to Twerton Park in a hurry. Graham Souness's side departed grateful to have forced a replay at Anfield on Tuesday after Bristol Rovers enjoyed the better of much of last night's fourth-round FA Cup tie at Bath.

Second division strugglers they may be, but Denis Rofe's team never allowed Liverpool the luxury of looking forward to a fifth-round away match against Ipswich Town.

For their part, Rovers could rest assured that they had not let down those of their supporters who paid Pounds 50 a head to watch the match from the bedroom windows of houses overlooking Twerton.

An evening which began with a pre-match karaoke competition and a male stalker promised entertainment and so it proved.

Much of it was at Liverpool's expense and Rovers can count themselves extremely unlucky not to have been awarded a penalty shortly before half-time when David Burrows felled the inspirational David Mehew after Tanner's bad back-pass.

By then Rovers had fallen behind to a 38th-minute goal from Dean Saunders. It was converted from only Liverpool's second serious chance of the first half.

Despite being held by a defender and having his back to goal, Saunders somehow turned and unleashed a shot against the inside of a post which rebounded off Parkin's body and into the net.

Until then Rovers had disconcerted Liverpool with a series of long high balls, looping crosses and resolute defending, which had the effect of never allowing the visitors to settle into any sort of stride.

If the banner draped at one end of the ground proclaiming: "This is Twerton," did not daunt Liverpool, Mehew certainly did.

He and Carl Saunders had both stretched Grobbelaar to the limit on more than one occasion after dodgy defending by Burrows and Tanner in particular, before the pair combined to crucial effect. They did so in the 59th minute when Mehew sidestepped Burrows before crossing low and Carl Saunders drove his shot impressively past the helpless Liverpool goalkeeper. As the ball continued to be hoisted high into the Liverpool penalty area, memories of their Rumbelows Cup exit against Peterborough United were revived and it was small wonder that the contingent of travelling support from Merseyside eagerly anticipated the final whistle.

BRISTOL ROVERS: B Parkin; I Alexander, W Clark, S Yates, S Cross, J Skinner, D Mehew, A Reece, D White, C Saunders, A Pounder.

LIVERPOOL: B Grobbelaar; R Jones, D Burrows, M Marsh, M Wright, N Tanner, D Saunders, R Houghton, M Walters, J Molby, S McManaman.

Referee: B Hill.

the guardian

Twerton tale of two Saunders

LIVERPOOL were relieved to escape an FA Cup humiliation to add to their Rumbelows removal after being thoroughly examined by a rousing Bristol Rovers performance at Twerton Park last night.

A replay at Anfield next Tuesday is the least Dennis Rofe's spirited Second Division side deserve for their attacking efforts, which saw Carl Saunders' 60th-minute close-range goal answer the first-half opener for Liverpool by his more celebrated namesake, Dean.

The trip to Merseyside may be a financial boon to the exiles from Bristol, but nearly every Twerton loyalist - and most neutral observers - believe the journey an unnecessary one. Rovers would this morning be celebrating their most famous Cup feat since 1956 - when they destroyed Manchester United 4-0 - but for a very dubious decision by the referee, Brian Hill, just before half-time.

A penalty award seemed inevitable when Burrows, who had earlier been lucky to escape a booking for a foul on Carl Saunders, took away Mehew's legs three yards inside the area. The situation seemed to satisfy every requirement of the so-called professional-foul edict, with the Rovers midfielder having a clear scoring opportunity.

Yet Hill waved aside the vehement appeals. If the episode encapsulated Liverpool's first-half defensive uncertainties, it also reinforced the feeling that fortune would favour Graeme Souness's hard-pressed side.

Rovers felt they had already suffered injustice when Dean Saunders struck his 19th goal of the season cruelly against the run of play. The silence was eerie in the 38th minute when Wright flicked on a corner and Saunders cleverly held the ball up before releasing a shot that hit the inside of the post and rebounded in off Parkin.

Rovers persevered, encouraged by the central striking menace of White and Carl Saunders. On the hour Mehew, who was incisive down the right flank, held off Burrows, crossed from the right and Saunders placed his seven-yard shot past Grobbelaar's left hand for his 12th goal of the season.

Grobbelaar also sustained Rovers' hope. Once, when preoccupied with the aerial threat of the 6ft 4in White, Liverpool's goalkeeper fumbled his punch; then, as the home side mounted a long spell of second-half pressure, he hesitated badly as Mehew just failed to reach Pounder's cross. Both times an irate Wright cleared. As Rovers inevitably tired with their unstinting efforts, Liverpool's passing game threatened more and more. Yet, despite Molby's growing influence in midfield, only shots from Walters and the Dane himself worried Parkin late on.

Bristol Rovers: Parkin; Alexander, Clark, Yates, Cross, Skinner, Mehew, Reece, White, C Saunders, Pounder.

Liverpool: Grobbelaar; Jones, Burrows, Marsh, Wright, Tanner, D Saunders, Houghton, Walters, Molby, McManaman.

Referee: B Hill (Kettering).

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BRITISH SOCCER WEEK

Saunders on target at both ends!

Carl Saunders matched his big-money namesake to earn Bristol Rovers an FA Cup replay at Twerton Park.

Dean Saunders, the Welsh striker who cost Graeme Souness 2.9 million pounds, looked to have put Liverpool on course to a fifth round tie at Ipswich with the softest of the 20 goals with which he has lived up to his expensive price tag.

But Carl, a mere journeyman in comparison at 70,000 pounds, hit back after 59 minutes to earn a re-match at Anfield.

His goal revived Liverpool's early season nightmares when they were held by Port Vale and his previous club Stoke, before losing to Peterborough in the Rumbelows Cup.

They were shaken by a second division side fuelled by a sense of injustice.

Rovers were astonished to be denied what looked a clear-cut penalty just before the interval when David Burrows cut down Dave Mehew as he broke on to Nicky Tanner's woeful backpass.

The chants of "cheat" which greeted referee Brian Hill on his way to the dressing room inspired Dennis Rofe's side.

Mehew, who squandered a great chance in the 58th minute, quickly compensated by outsmarting Burrows and presenting a great chance for Carl Saunders, which he took neatly for his 12th goal of the season.

Rovers deserved their second chance, making the most of the advantage given by a capacity crowd cramped into the non-league ground. They had threatened several times, most notably through Reece, before Liverpool crept in front after 38 minutes. Mark Wright nodded down Mike Marsh's corner from the right and Dean Saunders held off Steve Yates before turning to crack a right-foot shot against the base of the near post. To the horror of Merseyside-born goalkeeper Brian Parkin, the ball flew back, hit the back of his head and dribbled over the line.

But he had the last laugh, saving well from Dean Saunders, who Rovers claimed should have been sent off in the 77th minute for taking his own revenge against Ian Alexander for an earlier foul.

Graeme Souness stormed out of Twerton Park, angered by the taunts of Bristol Rovers fans who claimed Liverpool were lucky to still be in the FA Cup.

Then the Liverpool manager was barely into his press conference on the pitch when a fan made an insulting reference to Jan Molby's weight and off went the Scot muttering equally uncomplimentary words about the baiting fan.

Just before that he had admitted: "We're happy to still be in the competition. It was always going to be hard here and so it proved. They worked very hard and they will be pleased with their performance."