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Daley deals Reds a blow

Tony Daley condemned Liverpool to a second defeat in four days - hardly the best preparation for their FA Cup semi-final replay.

He robbed emergency left back Mike Marsh and ran 60 yards as Steve Nicol retreated. Daley's shot lacked velocity but a diving Bruce Grobbelaar could only help the ball in.

Earlier Grobbelaar twice denied Ian Olney with quick reaction saves but was well beaten when the striker headed against a post on 66 minutes. Olney was the first to the rebound but tripped over the ball, allowing Nick Tanner to concede a corner which Kevin Richardson curled against the same post.

Despite their good fortune, Liverpool might have snatched a point when Michael Thomas was left unmarked to meet a Mark Walters cross. But Thomas' fierce volley was palmed away for a corner by Nigel Spink.

Liverpool began without Mark Wright, David Burrows, Ian Rush and John Barnes while England defender Rob Jones stayed in the dressing room at half-time following a collision with Kevin Richardson.

Caretaker boss Ronnie Moran refused to blame Grobbelaar for failing to stop Daley's shot.

He said: "It wasn't necessarily a goalkeeping error. The whole thing started well before that. But considering he took the ball off one of our players and ran a long way, you have to be disappointed with it. We scored what I thought was a good goal in the first half when Dean Saunders put the ball in but I believe it was chalked off for offside."

Moran said he had spoken to manager Graeme Souness, recovering from a triple by-pass heart operation in a Cheshire hospital. "Graeme is doing fine but he might be back in bed again after hearing this result."

Villa manager Ron Atkinson said: "It was a marvellous goal by Tony who did the difficult part robbing the defender. Then he only had to run 80 yards to score. This result is a real fillip for our supporters as we haven't beaten Liverpool for 11 years."

the guardian

Grobbelaar displays his gift of the gaffe

LONG OUT of the championship race and trailing in the chase for a Uefa Cup place, Liverpool must not let tonight's FA Cup semi-final replay, also at Villa Park, slip through their hands. Otherwise - and despite the mitigating factors - their season will be judged a rank failure.

That message must be most firmly grasped by Bruce Grobbelaar, who added another cameo to his collection of careless moments this season. Such habits are worthy of a health warning, so it was as well that one pair of critical eyes was not present on Saturday.

A fortnight ago Graeme Souness berated Liverpool for conceding 'comic strip' goals - with Grobbelaar the unnamed central character - and Ronnie Moran joined the refrain.

Yesterday Moran at first appeared to shield Grobbelaar from blame for the 65th-minute blunder which cost them defeat. Tony Daley dispossessed Mike Marsh deep in Aston Villa's half and surged 60 yards before delivering a half-hit shot that passed under the goalkeeper's hands.

'You always blame the last man,' said Moran, 'but you have to remember where the ball was lost.' Eventually, his guard dropped. Grobbelaar, he said, 'was expecting a more fierce shot and it was a trickler. He knows . . . but he's a good pro and he'll be ready for Monday.'

Moran thus effectively penned Grobbelaar's name on the team sheet to face Portsmouth. That insertion means further disappointment for the goalkeeper's patient and highly capable understudy Mike Hooper. Liverpool's caretaker manager saw no significance for the Cup in losing on the replay stage - 'I don't believe in omens like that' - and presumably he sees no dark portents in Grobbelaar's previous errors in knockout competitions this season.

However, even if Grobbelaar almost invited a second Villa goal, freezing at a corner that rebounded off the far post, there were examples of the finer side of his individualistic style. His alertness enabled saves early and late at the feet of Olney and Daley; and he reacted more rapidly than any of his defenders when he parried Olney's shot after Breikreutz's quickly taken free-kick.

If Hooper is almost certain to be disappointed tonight, so are several others who faced Villa. Barnes, Rush, Wright and Burrows were not risked and, according to Moran, have 'a good chance' of returning. Liverpool also wait on Jones, who was taken off at half-time after suffering a calf knock.

Moran has lost the first two games of his latest caretakership, just as he did last year. He will need no reminding that the second setback of his 1991 interregnum was inflicted by Everton . . . in an FA Cup replay.

SCORERS: Aston Villa: Daley (65min).

Aston Villa: Spink; Barrett, Small, Teale, Ehiogu, Richardson, Daley, Parker, Regis, Olney, Breikreutz (Cox, 80).

Liverpool: Grobbelaar; Jones (Marsh, h-t), Venison, Nicol, Whelan, Tanner, Saunders, Houghton, Walters (Kozma, 80), Molby, Thomas.

Referee: R Pawley (Cambridge).