

Date: 4 December 1993
 Opposition: Sheffield Wednesday
 Competition: League

Sunday Times	Guardian	Daily Express

December 1993
 1



Nightmare for boss Souness

Graeme Souness promised an immediate recall for Ian Rush after dropping Liverpool's record goalscorer. And it was of scant consolation to Souness that Rush's absence had little bearing on a defeat born of defensive catastrophe. Neither was Souness appeased by emphatic evidence that Wednesday, after 12 unbeaten games, are finally emerging as a significant force. Their overall dominance deserved better than to be crowned by two own goals and a mad-cap moment from the otherwise inspired Bruce Grobbelaar. The game itself, brimming with high-speed skill from both sides, also merited a more dignified gallery of goals. But Souness said: "I didn't think it was possible for us to concede three goals like that in one match. We made things easy for Wednesday because of the way we defended. That's what upset me most." Neil Ruddock deflected Nigel Worthington's awkward low cross past a helpless Grobbelaar in the 29th minute.

Dropped
 And after Robbie Fowler's 12th goal in as many games, Ruddock's centre-back partner Mark Wright caught the disease. He stretched out a foot to a Waddle cross arrowed towards Mark Bright, and slid the ball into his own net. Barnes clipped the bar, and Wednesday's Graham Hyde almost followed Liverpool's lead when he hit his own post with a back header. All reasons why Wednesday boss, Trevor Francis said: "Although we deserved to win, there were times when we were a bit fortunate." If Francis was grateful for Rush's absence after four games without a goal, he wasn't saying, but he admitted: "I was surprised Rush wasn't playing." Souness, who restricted Rush to 22 minutes as substitute, explained: "Ian was jaded and needed a rest. This was done to get the best out of him, and he will play against QPR." Rush, who was dropped for the first time in his Liverpool career at the same ground ten months ago, said: "There must be something about this place. I expected to play, and naturally I'm disappointed." Rush, told of his axing by Souness in the team's hotel, added: "He has his own thoughts and ideas ..."

Bright sealed Wednesday's fourth successive win when he punished Grobbelaar's ill-judged charge from his area. The goal will have been of most relief to co-striker Nigel Jemson, who "could have had a first half hat-trick," according to his manager. Francis added: "It's always pleasing to beat Liverpool, because they still have something special about them." "The satisfying thing for me is that for the whole 90 minutes I always felt we could score goals."



Souness on his own
 TO CONCEDE one own goal, Mr Souness, may be regarded as a misfortune; to concede two looks like carelessness. To concede a third goal with one's goalkeeper 40 yards from his post is calamitous. Souness said afterwards: 'We defended far too deep.' After that there seemed only one honourable course for the manager. Perhaps he could not find the chairman or the Gents; or perhaps he did not want to steal Howard Kendall's thunder. It is ironic that, as the manager seems calmer and less abrasive, his players are a rattled rag-bag of talent without confidence, tentative in touch, frenzied in distribution, lost in common purpose. It may be significant that most of his discards have brought Liverpool's traditional virtues to bear in their new surroundings - Beardsley at Newcastle, Burrows and Marsh at West Ham, Houghton and Staunton with Villa - while those who remain, Grobbelaar and Fowler excepted, seem stunted by fear. Fowler, hopelessly served, scored his 12th goal in 13 games. Grobbelaar was true to his spectacular lights, outstanding and outlandish. The rest, unsure what he might do next, looked no more certain about what they were supposed to do. Barnes, back without gloves, was typical, jabbing the ball to opponents with almost involuntary action. He was into muffs instead. In particular the central axis spun out of control. Clough scarcely saw the ball. Molby, larger than ever, looked the part of Dame Goody Two Shoes - but the shoes were on the wrong feet. Ruddock and Wright kicked anywhere, sometimes into their own net. Notice: please replace pivots. As Jemson, lately resurgent, suffered a spate of close-range misses, Liverpool's gifts, born of wide exposure and sharp crosses, extended Wednesday's unbeaten run to 12 games. Earlier they, too, whinged about injuries. Then they fell into a rut of draws. Now they are sorting themselves out. Hyde and Jones have established themselves as of right in midfield, aided by experience fore and aft. In short Trevor Francis has managed. To manage, says the OED, is 'to succeed in one's aim, often with inadequate material'. With more than adequate material Souness is clearly failing. But then, for Merseyside to lose both managers . . .

SCORERS: Sheffield Wednesday: Ruddock (og, 30min), Wright (og, 58), Bright (80).
 Liverpool: Fowler (37).
 Sheffield Wednesday: Pressman; Nilsson, Worthington, Palmer, Walker, Jones, Hyde, Bart-Williams (Poric, 71), Waddle, Jemson, (Coleman, 79), Bright.
 Liverpool: Grobbelaar; Jones, Harkness, Nicol (Walters, 79), Wright, Ruddock, Molby, Matteo (Rush, 68), Barnes, Clough, Fowler.
 Referee: I Borrett (Ipswich).

Date: 4 December 1993

Opposition: Sheffield Wednesday

Competition: League

Sunday Times

Guardian

Daily Express

December 1993
1



THE SUNDAY TIMES

Liverpool throw it away

Sheffield Wed 3 Liverpool 1

SHEFFIELD WED 3 (Ruddock 30 og, Wright 58 og, Bright 80)

(4-4-2): Pressman; Nilsson, Walker, Palmer, Worthington; Waddle, Bart-Williams (Poric 71min), Jones, Hyde; Jemson, Bright.

LIVERPOOL 1 (Fowler 37)

(4-4-2): Grobbelaar; Jones, Wright, Ruddock, Harkness; Barnes, Molby, Nicol (Walter 79min), Matteo (Rush 68min); Fowler, Clough.

1-0 Worthington shot into the goalmouth and it bounced off Ruddock for an own goal.

1-1 Molby's free kick found Jones, who picked out Fowler who put it in the corner.

2-1 Waddle's cross was helped in by Wright, trying to clear, for own goal number two.

3-1 Substitute Poric picked out Bright who beat the advancing Grobbelaar to score.

Booked: Molby (42min), Palmer (44min)

Weather: windy. Ground: good. Referee: J Borrett (Ipswich).

LIVERPOOL scored three goals, conceded a bizarre fourth and left Hillsborough with nothing to show for only the second time in 28 years as Wednesday extended their unbeaten run to 12 games.

Both sides have extensive casualty lists but, in contrast to Wednesday, Liverpool have not won a League game away from Anfield since the second Saturday of the season; and the way their defence performed there may be a goodish wait for the next.

Ruddock, Wright and Jones gave the ball away too often and, despite the re-emergence of Barnes in midfield, most of Liverpool's problems were of their own making.

They left out Rush and played Clough up front with Fowler, leaving Matteo and Nicol to pick up midfield roles while Harkness marked Waddle on the right wing.

There was an interesting contrast in the two veteran jugglers; Barnes opted for the more direct route, making some adroit passes and runs, Waddle mainly sticking to the line and putting over a stream of crosses of variable quality.

A poor referee failed to penalise Ruddock adequately when he hauled Bright down and although the free kick appeared to have gone to waste, Worthington reached the ball on the byline, beat Wright and crossed low into the box. Somewhat appropriately the ball went in off Ruddock.

The Liverpool equaliser was a much better affair, Molby's ball into the box finding Jones, the full-back, who turned it to Fowler who finished accurately for his 12th goal in as many games. He had lifted Liverpool, who might have gone in front when Barnes flicked a Jones cross against the bar just before the interval and shot narrowly over on the turn soon after the restart.

Wednesday had a shaky period when Liverpool started to fire on all cylinders but it was all too brief and then the creaky defence made another gross error.

Waddle, as he did all afternoon, put in a low cross and Bright was threatening. But, with his goalkeeper behind him, Wright stretched to turn the ball into his own net. If the goal did not do much for Liverpool it seemed to unhinge Grobbelaar, that clown prince of goalkeepers, who chased another cross to the touchline, took the throw-in and then unaccountably raced 40 yards from his line to challenge Bright. The Sheffield striker nodded the ball past him and scored the simplest of goals.

Just to ensure that the moments of madness did not belong to Liverpool alone, Hyde then nodded the ball past Pressman but Sheffield were let off when it hit the post.

Rush, who was dropped from the fixture last year and not best pleased about it either, came on for Matteo but by now Barnes was running out of puff and the portly Molby was a spent force against a Sheffield midfield which might lack obvious class but is imbued with plenty of spirit.

Graeme Souness blamed his defence for the defeat and said: "We made life very easy for Sheffield and I was disappointed at the way we defended far too deep. I wouldn't have thought it possible to give away three goals like that but on the plus side John Barnes had a good first half and Robbie Fowler scored a good goal." Unlike last year, the Liverpool manager discussed the omission of Rush with the player. "He's played in every game as well as internationals and I thought he was a bit jaded and could do with a rest. I think we've been asking a bit too much of him."

Trevor Francis rightly feels pleased that his depleted team have done so well, taking as many points from 18 League games as last season. "The way we have responded to our difficulties has been remarkable and the record over the last dozen games is as good as we might have expected with everyone available," he said.

If they meet teams who defend as naively as Liverpool the run will continue.