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Flo and Carr reverse Sheffield's downward course
LIVERPOOL 1, SHEFFIELD UTD 2
LIVERPOOL 1 (Rush 4)
SHEFFIELD UTD 2 (Flo 46, 72)
(4-4-2): James; Jones, Nicol, Ruddock, Dicks; McManaman, Redknapp, Whelan (Thomas 73min), Barnes (Hutchison 80min); Rush, Fowler.
(4-4-2): Tracey; Bradshaw, Gayle, Tuttle, Nilsen; Carr, Rogers, Gannon, Whitehouse; Flo, Littlejohn.
1-0 Redknapp played the ball in to Rush, who chested it down and shot home.
1-1 Littlejohn beat Nicol, collided with James, and Flo knocked home the loose ball.
1-2 Carr beat Nicol and crossed for the unmarked Flo to head home from eight yards.
Booked: Bradshaw (41min).
Weather: sunny. Ground: excellent. Referee: T Holbrook (Walsall).
If, and it remains a big if, Sheffield United stay up, Franz Carr's contribution should not be forgotten. It is no coincidence that Dave Bassett's side have perked up appreciably since Carr's comeback from six months in the stiff.
No matter that he was a fairly peripheral figure for much of this match, the right-winger created Sheffield's winner. By dodging Nicol before depositing the afternoon's best cross on to Flo's forehead, Carr helped to earn three potentially salvation-securing points. Privately, Bassett must be regretting leaving him languishing in the reserves for so long. Liverpool dominated this game for a long first-half stretch. Roy Evans's side should never have let it slip from their control and had they needed victory as badly as Bassett's boys, Liverpool surely would not have surrendered in such a laissez-faire fashion. As Evans said: ``I feel like I'm the manager of two different teams they changed at half-time." It is called an attitude problem. The signs seemed very different when Rush ghosted into space after four minutes. He made the most of his hard-won freedom, subduing Redknapp's ball with his chest before finishing in a single seamless movement.
Whitehouse must have wished for similarly instinctive control when Sheffield's only realistic first-half opening fell to his left foot. James did well to tip that swerving volley to safety. Whitehouse is one of Bassett's more skilful charges. But the first half's recurring theme involved Gayle and Tuttle twisting and turning in an effort to keep tabs on Rush and Fowler and their blindside runs. The otherwise impressive Tuttle was fortunate not to be booked for letting his frustration show in a clumsy challenge on Rush.
All this made anxious viewing for Tracey making his first appearance in Sheffield's goal since November in place of the injured Kelly. By the final whistle Tracey had fully vindicated his vocal claims to permanent tenure of the first-team jersey. One save from Barnes especially was worth a win bonus on its own.
Tracey did, however, have a close call when, unimpeded, Jones advanced deep into his penalty area from right-back, only to scoop a left-foot shot over the bar. That chance came about courtesy of the growing right-wing rapport between Jones and McManaman. Theirs is Liverpool's strongest flank and if McManaman could only use his left foot to better effect they might soon be England colleagues. This excessive reliance on his right peg let McManaman down when Fowler's pass left him one on one against Tracey. As he switched feet, the goalkeeper spread himself, using the precious seconds to blot out the danger. Even so, the degree to which McManaman stretched Sheffield's back line was reflected by Bradshaw's assassin's tackle and subsequent booking.
Little had been seen of Carr until that point but, as Sheffield finally rallied, his glorious cross-field ball to Whitehouse hinted of greater things to come.
Shown the door by Brian Clough at Nottingham Forest and Kevin Keegan at Newcastle, and still far from Bassett's favourite, Carr knows that impressing between now and May is imperative. If not, it will probably be curtains for his Premier League career.
Carr's commitment, physically in particular, has been queried by Bassett. He expects Sheffield's players to risk limb, if not life, for the cause and the equaliser was a case in point. Having badly exposed Nicol's waning powers of acceleration, the slight, deceptively frail-looking Littlejohn gamely ran at the 6ft-plus and bulky poundage of James.
Not surprisingly, Littlejohn needed treatment after their inevitable collision but he had forced Liverpool's goalkeeper to lose his grip on the ball, freeing Flo. The Norwegian, too, required the physio's services after forcing the ball home. A beaming Bassett explained: ``We were showing more personality." For that, read subjecting Liverpool to non-stop assault and battery.
It paid off. The chants of ``Going down" no longer rang round Anfield. They were replaced by groans when Nicol was again caught in possession by Littlejohn. No wonder a central defender is high on Evans's shopping list. Bolton's Alan Stubbs has been mentioned.
With Littlejohn now repeatedly licking Nicol for pace, events had turned full circle and Ruddock resorted to illegalities in an attempt to restrain Flo. To little avail. A centre from Carr, for once on the left, soon precipitated Flo's winner.
Sheffield had won away in the Premier League for the first time this season and it was also their first victory at Anfield in 26 years. Just to add to Bassett's joy, his daughter Carly obtained a signed photograph of her hero, Jamie Redknapp. ``That made our day," the winning manager declared.



Flo charts Liverpool
Liverpool 1
Rush 3
Sheffield United 2
Flo 46 72
Att: 36,642
IT IS 26 years since United last won at Anfield. And they will talk about the value of this victory for another 26.
When you consider the garbage they served up earlier in the season, this was an outstandingly brave performance. After giving away an early goal, they spent most of the first half looking as if they would be overrun by Rush and Fowler. But, kept in the game by courageous goalkeeping from Tracey and outstanding defence by skipper Gayle, they came back in the second period to win with a brace of goals from their Norwegian World Cup striker Flo.
Now, with just one defeat in their last dozen games, the Blades may feel they can pull off their Houdini trick.
Liverpool, playing towards the Kop, were in front after only three minutes.
Redknapp crossed from the right and the ball found its way to Rush. Standing on the penalty spot, he had no trouble sweeping the ball into the corner of the net. Then the giant Flo - six feet four and built like a Viking longboat - began to make his presence felt. Nicol was unable to stop him heading down to Carr and the little winger missed a good chance from five yards.
The Blades were back in the game within a minute of the restart. Littlejohn surged down the left wing, taking the ball past Jones and Nicol before laying it back to Flo who, although he looked surprised, hit the ball past James from the corner of the penalty box.
Sheffield were unlucky when Littlejohn had the ball in the net only to see his side pulled back to take a free-kick for an earlier foul on Flo.
Littlejohn's pace caused Liverpool untold problems. Flo hit one cross way off target. Rogers had James at full stretch from another.
A goal had to come, and in the 73rd minute Carr was allowed to turn Nicol twice before crossing to the unmarked Flo, who headed home from a couple of yards.
Ruddock, it has to be said, was absent without leave.
Just time for Tracey to prove his mettle with two more excellent saves as Liverpool threw the kitchen sink at him. He simply wasn't in the mood for handing out Easter eggs.