

Date: 26 August 2010
 Opposition: Trabzonspor
 Competition: Europa League

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26 August
2010

The Daily Telegraph

Trabzonspor 1 Liverpool 2; agg 1-3: match report
 Read a full match report of the Europa League second-leg qualifying game between Trabzonspor and Liverpool at the Hüseyin Avni Aker Stadium in Turkey on Thursday Aug 26, 2010.

Crisis averted. Five years ago, everything was coming up red in Monte Carlo as [Liverpool](#), the reigning kings of Europe, added yet another trophy to their glittering list of continental honours, beating CSKA Moscow 3-1 to claim the Super Cup. Victory deep in Turkey on Thursday night was vital solely to prevent everything going black. How the mighty fall.

For 83 long minutes, until Giray Kacar diverted Glen Johnson's low cross past his own goalkeeper to hand Liverpool an insurmountable advantage, Roy Hodgson's side teetered on the edge. Their nerve had failed them almost immediately, allowing Teofilo Gutierrez to flick Trabzonspor ahead on the night and level on aggregate after only three minutes. Liverpool stood on the brink of humiliation. Five-time European champions simply do not fail to reach the group stage of Europe's secondary competition, its consolation prize. Liverpool's managers do not find themselves eliminated from continental combat as early as August. Until Kacar's error, and Dirk Kuyt's late strike to add gloss to the scoreline, Hodgson's reign risked getting underway in the utmost ignominy.

By deciding not to risk Fernando Torres, by naming a side without as many as five first-team regulars, Hodgson made clear here that Europe is not a priority in his first season at Anfield. The puff of his cheeks, the look of relief, when referee Ivan Bebek signalled Liverpool's safe passage to the group stage, though, spoke volumes. Hodgson knew he had danced with despair.

"We were looking down the barrel," said Hodgson. "You saw their incredible support and how fanatical their fans are. To get a result here is something important that will stand us in good stead."

That might be an understatement. There is a frailty, a fragility about this Liverpool side, a hangover from last season, the sort of campaign where everything that can go wrong, does go wrong. It is exacerbated when Steven Gerrard and Torres are absent. Rather than attempt to shoulder their burden, for too long Liverpool's foot-soldiers have chosen to wilt.

If that was Trabzonspor's best hope, they could not have wished for a better setting. This was hardly the sort of welcome to hell for which Turkish clubs have made their name, but the noise was incessant, deafening, the pitch dreadful and the rain torrential. One banner, unfurled as Liverpool's players took up their stations before kick-off, starkly read: "You are alone here."

For the opening exchanges, Liverpool's played like they were. Kuyt was caught in possession by Gustavo Colman, a relentless jolt of Argentine energy, who skimmed a cross into the path of Gutierrez. The Colombian, a traditional, almost anachronistic poacher, duly turned the ball past Pepe Reina.

The Avni Aker stadium exploded. Trabzonspor poured forward, scenting a kill. Ibrahima Yattara, taking a break from the 45 minutes of torment he afforded the stand-in left-back Martin Kelly, might have converted Selcuk Inan's free kick. Reina denied a fierce drive from Colman low to his left. Liverpool rocked.

Slowly, though, they asserted their authority. For all the criticism of this Liverpool squad, for all that some players seem not to care enough and, all too often, those that do lack the quality to warrant a place in the side, it still boasts a core of European experience. Jamie Carragher marshalled his troops, Lucas Leiva and Christian Poulsen harried and harassed.

But, in the absence of Torres and Gerrard, deprived of the crown jewels, Liverpool are all but toothless. They scarcely drew a save out of Onur Kivrak in the opening period - a weak effort from Lucas which drew only the most derisory save all that brought him into action before the break.

After the interval - and perhaps a few choice words from an irate Hodgson - the visitors improved. Twice David Ngog should have secured Liverpool's safe passage, first heading Joe Cole's teased cross wide from four yards, then placing his shot the wrong side of the post after twisting past Kacar. Fabio Aurelio saw a free-kick deflected just wide.

In the end, they required a slice of good fortune - one which they might, given the year they have endured, they may feel they deserve - to erase the threat of extra-time, the spectre of embarrassment and secure their place in the group stages.

Glen Johnson, otherwise an instantly forgettable presence, burst down the right, producing the sort of dynamism Liverpool had sadly lacked all evening and which his £17 million move was supposed to provide. His low cross was aimed at Ngog, but found only the boot of Kacar. Relief all round.

Kuyt's strike, following up Daniel Pacheco's fierce drive, secured Liverpool's victory. There will be no attempts to paint this as a triumph, though. It is enough, for now, simply to halt the descent, to avoid the shame of a dark night on the shores of the Black Sea.

the guardian

[Andy Hunter](#) at the Hüseyin Avni Aker Stadium

Dirk Kuyt is congratulated by his team-mates after the forward scored Liverpool's second goal. Photograph: Carl Recine/Action Images

The portents were not encouraging for Roy Hodgson and [Liverpool](#) on the Black Sea coast. Absences had complicated their interest in a competition the manager conceded fell a distant second to the Premier League and, as Trabzonspor led and the thunderstorms rolled off the Kackar Mountains, the watershed Hodgson denied had occurred at Manchester City threatened to follow. His reaction showed the importance of averting one.

With a clenched fist salute, a yelp that pierced the night air and a bear-hug for his assistant Sammy Lee, Hodgson confirmed that no Liverpool manager can afford a European exit while attempting to steady a ship in August. "You're Alone Here" taunted the fanatical home fans on one banner. All that mattered to Hodgson was joining 47 other names in today's group stage draw.

"Liverpool are a team with remarkable European pedigree so it would have been very sad to go out in the qualifying stages," said Hodgson. "I think this is a very good victory. We were looking down the barrel here coming down to Trabzon. You saw their incredible support, you saw how fanatical their fans are. To get a result here was something important that will stand us in good stead for plenty of other matches throughout the coming season."

Liverpool matured as the game progressed, but then they could hardly have started worse. Only poor finishing by Trabzonspor and their goalkeeper José Reina kept the visitors in the tie before the opening 25 minutes had elapsed.

The Liverpool manager was hamstrung to some extent in his selection but, having declined to risk Steven Gerrard, Daniel Agger and Maxi Rodríguez due to various yet slight ailments (all are expected to be fit for Sunday's league game with West Bromwich Albion) he took a major gamble in sparing Fernando Torres and Milan Jovanovic the journey.

A Kop zealot would hesitate to show as much faith in the remainder of this Liverpool squad than Hodgson did in both encounters with the Turkish Cup winners. In fairness, his early days as manager are complicated by having to assess all options during an unrelenting, demanding sequence of matches. Most importantly, his decisions and his faith were vindicated.

It was the absence of Javier Mascherano that had the most detrimental effect on Liverpool's fragile start. The displays at Manchester City on Monday and here in Trabzon, where the hosts frequently by-passed a ponderous, rigid and soft midfield centre of Lucas Leiva and Christian Poulsen, have demonstrated the importance of the Argentinian. An anticipated move to Barcelona would leave a sizable void but his replacements did eventually wrestle the tie in Liverpool's favour.

Trabzonspor levelled the tie on aggregate with just four minutes on the clock as Liverpool's midfield struggled. Dirk Kuyt was dispossessed deep inside his own half by Gustavo Colman. The Argentinian's shot-cross dissected the centre of the Liverpool defence and the unmarked Teofilo Gutiérrez prodded past Reina. Alarmingly simple, and the tone of the night did not alter until Trabzonspor's energy and adventure drained late in the first half and anxiety plus Liverpool took over.

A characteristic block from an airborne Jamie Carragher prevented Ibrahima Yattara finding the target after the visitors were caught on the break from their own corner. Reina, targeted by lasers from the crowd, tipped a low drive from Colman wide seconds later and Yattara, the captain, squandered a glorious chance when he headed Burak Yilmaz's free-kick wide when unmarked in front of goal. Liverpool did not respond with an accurate shot of their own until the 43rd minute, when Lucas drove straight at Onur Kivrak, but they had at least stemmed the tide.

Poulsen and Lucas gradually imposed themselves, Glen Johnson started to find space down the right, Joe Cole, on the receiving end of several fouls, improved the supply to the previously isolated David Ngog and Trabzonspor players and crowd alike were suddenly afflicted by doubt. They were silenced completely when Liverpool capped a vastly improved second-half display with two goals in the final seven minutes.

Ngog had gone close twice before helping to secure Liverpool's passage when, after Johnson had easily beaten the left back Hrovje Cale and crossed low, he pressured Remzi Kacar into slicing the ball in off his own near post.

With two minutes remaining the impressive substitute, Dani Pacheco, forced Kivrak into a desperate low save and Kuyt's predatory instincts took over. The Dutch international converted into an empty net from close range. His Liverpool career, and his club's involvement in Europe this season, is far from over.

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The Mail

Trabzonspor 1 Liverpool 2 (agg 1-3): Green light for Roy Hodgson as laser lout can't halt Reds progress in Turkey

Roy Hodgson heaved a sigh of relief after seeing Liverpool survive a freak storm and laser beams shone in keeper Pepe Reina's eyes to reach the Europa League group stage the hard way here last night.

Liverpool were heading for extra time after going behind in only the fourth minute but ended up celebrating another European triumph after finally silencing a raucous Huseyin Avni Aker Stadium crowd courtesy of an 84th-minute own goal and Dirk Kuyt's strike four minutes later.

It was Kuyt's 14th Liverpool goal in Europe, and Hodgson had extra cause for celebration after the Holland midfielder made it clear he had no intention of linking up again with his former Anfield boss, Rafa Benitez, at Inter Milan.

The current Reds manager said: 'Dirk recovered well from his early mistake for their goal. I've always said he is an important part of my plans. I made it perfectly clear we would not welcome any offers and that he's not for sale.

'That doesn't mean in the background there have not been talks between his agent and the club. Isn't that what agents do?

'There has been no offer for Dirk, he is not for sale, so, therefore, excuse me for not understanding the situation or for being particularly happy about the fact he scored because I never doubted he would be staying.

'If we'd have lost the game 1-0 you'd probably have said he was playing for a move because he cost us the first goal. But, as far as I'm concerned, he is someone I believe in and count on.

'It's important we improve the team around the likes of Steven Gerrard, Pepe Reina, Fernando Torres and Kuyt.'

Instead of earning the unwanted distinction of being the first Liverpool manager to crash out of Europe before the end of August, Hodgson headed out of this bustling Turkish city with a record that should suit him far better.

Kuyt's close-range finish secured a fourth straight win in Europe for the former Fulham boss, equalling a feat by Bill Shankly in 1964.

'I think it would be remarkably immodest for me to claim any credit for that,' he said.

'I don't think Bill Shankly played too many matches in the first qualifying round against Macedonian teams.

'I was relieved at the end, because, when you play as well as we did and create as many chances in the second half, you deserve to win.'

With the home crowd reinforcing Turkish fans' reputation for exuberance, roaring their team on from the first whistle, Liverpool knew what was required in the early stages — a solid, error-free start to dampen spirits among home supporters.

Instead, they went behind in the fourth minute after Kuyt surrendered possession. An inexplicable failure to control the ball was punished by Gustavo Colman, who advanced a couple of paces before setting his sights 20 yards out.

The midfielder's mis-hit drive was sailing harmlessly wide until the alert Teofilo Gutierrez arrived unnoticed to steer it past Reina.

They are renowned for being vociferous in these parts, and the goal had a predictable effect on the 20,000 capacity stadium, which erupted in a manner that further galvanised Trabzonspor and could have put the tie out of reach by half-time.

The industrious Colman set up Ibrahim Yattara for a mazy run in which he went past one challenge and evaded another that nearly upended him in the area before a deflected shot slammed into the side-netting.

The rain showed no sign of easing, and neither did Trabzonspor's attacking as Selcuk Inan had a shot turned round a post and delivered a free-kick that Remzi Kacar headed wide with the goal at his mercy.

Hodgson must have demanded more urgency, after such a listless first-half performance, and there were belated signs of Liverpool's tempo quickening as they finally carved out a clear scoring chance in the 52nd minute.

Joe Cole had found it hard going but at last posed a threat as he twisted one way then another before hoisting a deep cross that David Ngog should have headed in, rather than wide, from close range.

Ngog has often promised to blossom into a striker worthy of a starting place, but shortcomings have held him back and were evident again as two more chances went unconverted in quick succession.

MATCH STATS

TRABZONSPOR (4-3-3): Kivrak 6; Balci 7, Korkmaz 6, Kacar 6, Cale 7 (Coelho 86min, 6); Gulselam 6 (Atas 65, 6), Inan 7, Colman 8; Yilmaz 6, Gutierrez 7, Yattara 6 (Alanzinho 46). Subs (not used): Zengin, Baytar, Badur, Ozturun.

Booked: Gulselam, Yilmaz, Korkmaz.

LIVERPOOL (4-4-1-1): Reina 6; Johnson 6, Carragher 7, Kyrgiakos 6, Kelly 6; Kuyt 6, Poulsen 7 (Skrstel 90), Lucas 6, Aurelio 5 (Pacheco 77); Cole 7; Ngog 6 (Babel 86).

Subs (not used): Gulacsi, Spearing, Shelvey, Eccleston.

Man of the match: Gustavo Colman.

Referee: Ivan Bebek (Croatia) 8.

An unconvincing finish marred enterprising approach work in the 57th minute, and he failed to work an opening after being set up by Fabio Aurelio five minutes later.

Even so, Hodgson's side were getting the measure of their hosts, and they scored in the 84th minute to level proceedings on the night.

Glen Johnson, also subdued for so long, ventured forward and expertly slipped the challenge of Egemen Korkmaz before pulling the ball towards a pack of players on the edge of the six-yard area.

Cole and Ngog both tried to reach it first, but Kacar beat them to it with an outstretched boot that diverted the ball over the line.

There was no way back for the hosts, and Liverpool punished tiring legs in the 88th minute, Ryan Babel teeing up fellow substitute Daniel Pacheco for a low drive that was parried into the path of Kuyt, who could not miss from six yards.



Trabzonspor
Teofilo Gutierrez (4 mins)

1-2

Liverpool

own(Remiz Giray Kacar) (84 mins)

Dirk Kuyt (88 mins)

UEFA Europa League Play-Off Round - Second Leg , Aug 26, 2010

Ground: H. Avni Aker Stadium , Kickoff: 18:30 , Att 21,065

Team news

Gerrard and Torres miss Trabzonspor test Liverpool will be without captain Steven Gerrard and striker Fernando Torres for their Europa League play-off second leg against Trabzonspor in Turkey.

Gerrard has a back problem while manager Roy Hodgson has decided not to risk Torres in a third successive game following his injury problems last season.

However, both are expected to be fit for Sunday's Barclays Premier League clash with West Brom.

"Steven Gerrard unfortunately has had a recurrence of the back problem which he gets from time to time," said Hodgson.

"Hopefully it won't stop him playing on Sunday.

"With Fernando Torres we've made the decision that we don't wish to risk him three games in a row at this stage of the season with him having done so well to get back this quickly." Wantaway midfielder Javier Mascherano was again omitted from the squad which travelled to Turkey this morning with a 1-0 lead from the first leg, while defender Daniel Agger (concussion) and Maxi Rodriguez (illness) were also missing.

"Agger played in the game on Monday (the 3-0 defeat to Manchester City) which was to some extent against medical advice," said Hodgson.

"He wanted to play but felt a bit sick after the game. That's mainly due to the concussion he suffered (against Arsenal), so it would be foolish for us to risk him.

"Maxi is sick. He's in bed at the moment with a bit of gastroenteritis, so he's out of the question." Hodgson admits his side face a tough challenge against

Trabzonspor after failing to put the match beyond reach at Anfield last week, with Joe Cole missing a penalty.

"We missed a golden opportunity to kill the game off at Anfield and now we've got it all to do," added the 62-year-old.

"It's going to be a very tough ask for the players in a difficult place.

"They are one of the two or three best teams in Turkey at the moment and Turkish football is of a very high standard.

"Everyone who's been to Trabzon tells me it's a remarkably difficult place to play.

"They're a hostile and fanatic crowd and it's a difficult pitch.

Trabzonspor vs Liverpool

Daily Mirror match report by David Anderson

Liverpool's second win in Turkey will hardly rank alongside their first in Istanbul five years ago.

But in the context of Roy Hodgson's Anfield reign, this victory cannot be underestimated.

He has averted his first mini crisis and the cracks, which opened up at Eastlands would only have widened if he had become the first Reds boss ever to exit Europe in August.

Hodgson gambled big time by taking such a weakened squad to this footballing outpost on the shores of the Black Sea and his decision paid off handsomely.

He claimed the Europa League was a distant second to the Premier League in his list of priorities this season, but make no mistake, this win meant everything to win. At the final whistle he clenched his fist and beamed a huge smile to his No 2 Sammy Lee. He was delighted by the character his patched-up side displayed, not just after their humiliating defeat at Manchester City, but by the way they came back from conceding an early goal down to record their first-ever win away against Turkish opposition.

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They tamed Turkish Cup winners Trabzonspor with all the skill of an experienced matador and by the end the only noise that could be heard was the distant strains of 'You'll Never Walk Alone' from the 100 hardy away fans stuck up in one corner. Liverpool were able to draw on their buckets of European experience and Joe Cole again showed he is settling in well in his role in the hole.

The Reds made a dreadful start when Trabzonspor, roared on by the raucous home fans in their red and blue plastic macs to shield them from heavy rain, cancelled out their first-leg lead in the fourth minute.

Dirk Kuyt lost the ball to Gustavo Colman in midfield and he played a diagonal ball to the unmarked Teofilo Gutierrez who scored past Pepe Reina.

The Reds were rocking and Ibrahim Yattara broke down the right, beating Christian Poulsen in the box, before Mr Reliable Jamie Carragher threw himself in front of the ball to deflect his shot wide.

Colman's shot from the corner was well saved by Reina, who was being targeted by a Trabzonspor fan with a laser pen.

Referee Ivan Bebek was unimpressed by the stunt and stopped play to warn Trabzonspor officials that he would call off the game if they didn't root out the culprit.

Liverpool slowly began to pass their way back into the game on the rain-soaked pitch and after Glen Johnson had an effort disallowed for offside, Lucas managed their first shot on target on 43 minutes with a 30-yard low drive, which was saved by Onur Kivrak.

The momentum had shifted and now it was the Reds who liked more likely to score the decisive second goal.

David Ngog had two great chances in the space of five minutes to put Liverpool through.

From the first one, he headed wide from Joe Cole's great left-wing cross to the back post and a drenched Hodgson could not believe it as he held his head in his hands.

The French striker then showed great trickery to turn Egemen Korkmaz as he weaved his way into the box, only to plant his shot agonisingly wide of the right-hand post.

Liverpool kept up the pressure and Aurelio had a free-kick deflected wide before Liverpool scored their killer away goal on 82 minutes.

Glen Johnson did well down the right, beating Korkmaz, and then crossed for Ngog and his shot went in off Remzi Giray for an own goal.

Trabzonspor were deflated and Liverpool rubber-stamped their place in today's draw for the Europa League group stages when Kivrak spilt substitute Dani Pacheco's shot and Kuyt knocked home the rebound.

Trabzonspor: Kivrak 5; Balci 6, Kacar 6, Korkmaz 4, Cale 6 (Coelho 87mins 5); Gulselam 6 (Atas 65mins 5), Inan 7, Colman 7, Yattara 6 (Alanzinho 46mins 6), Yilmaz 6; Gutierrez 7. Subs not used: Zengin, Badur, Baytur, Ozturun.

Liverpool: Reina 6; Johnson 6, Kyrgiakos 6, Carragher 8, Kelly 6; Kuyt 7, Lucas 6, Poulsen 6 (Skrテル 90mins 5), Aurelio 6 (Pacheco 77mins 6); Cole 7; Ngog 7 (Babel 86mins 5). Subs not used: Gulacsi, Spearing, Shelvey, Ecclestone.

Referee: Ivan Bebek

HERO Jamie Carragher: Typical gutsy performance from the Reds stalwart.

VILLAIN Egemen Korkmaz: Turned all ends up and booked for cheating.

ANORAK Liverpool had never beaten a Turkish side away in Europe in five attempts.



Dominic King sees a late Reds rally avoid a Europa leak

THEY stood in the teeming rain, 91 hardy souls, barely able to comprehend the events which were unfolding in front of them, fearing their world was about to cave in.

On the opposite side of the ground, a bedraggled and sodden Roy Hodgson would have known exactly how Liverpool's suffering band of supporters were feeling; being on the cusp of elimination from Europe before the August Bank Holiday week tends to induce such dark emotions.

In a candid moment, long after the Croatian referee Ivan Bebek had brought a dramatic night to an end, Dirk Kuyt was able to describe in two, short words just what the ramifications of suffering the earliest exit in the club's history – "a disaster".

Fortunately, a catastrophe was averted. After it appeared as if this season's European odyssey was over before it had even started – Hodgson referred to it as "looking down the barrel" – Liverpool hauled themselves off the canvas in thrilling fashion.

This was a win that was needed as much to settle nerves as it was to preserve a reputation, for when they trailed with 10 minutes remaining, crisis headlines were being written – do not underestimate the importance of this triumph, achieved so soon after the chastening Manchester City experience.

Heading into the tight, functional stadium, rolling grey clouds could be seen gathering over the hills that flank the Black Sea city of Trabzon and, in many ways, it was hugely symbolic as a storm was brewing on and off the pitch.

Long before kick-off, the locals had been singing, waving flags and bouncing in anticipation, the atmosphere everything it had been built up to be, and within four minutes, Liverpool's leaden-footed start gave Trabzonspor's followers the goal they so desperately craved.

Dirk Kuyt lost possession on the right flank, Gustavo Colman took charge and though he scuffed his shot, it turned out to be the perfect cross as Teofilo Gutierrez – Trabzonspor's lethal weapon – pounced to fire past Pepe Reina. Fortunately, a catastrophe was averted. After it appeared as if this season's European odyssey was over before it had even started – Hodgson referred to it as "looking down the barrel" – Liverpool hauled themselves off the canvas in thrilling fashion.

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Dirk Kuyt lost possession on the right flank, Gustavo Colman took charge and though he scuffed his shot, it turned out to be the perfect cross as Teofilo Gutierrez – Trabzonspor's lethal weapon – pounced to fire past Pepe Reina. Having been so abject, things could only improve and while it would be pushing it to say Hodgson's men were transformed for the re-start, they had more opportunities to score in the first 10 minutes than they mustered in the opening 45.

David Ngog really should have given Liverpool some breathing space but he somehow contrived to head wide from eight yards after good work by Joe Cole then, moments later, his shot squirmed the wrong side of the post when he took the bull by the horns and went alone.

Suddenly, Liverpool had some confidence again and found themselves in a position where they could attempt to dictate the tempo of proceedings; Fabio Aurelio and Martin Kelly, especially, figured prominently, refusing to accept they would fall at this hurdle.

Aurelio departed after 77 minutes, exhausted after running himself into the ground; he was unlucky not to have a goal to his name at that point, as one precise free-kick drifted just past Onur Kivrak's post after taking a deflection off the wall.

With Trabzonspor becoming frustrated, leaving gaps at the back, Liverpool had the tools to take advantage and one Glen Johnson raid led to Remzy Kacar putting through his own net under pressure from Cole and Ngog.

They were hit with another sucker punch when two substitutes, Ryan Babel and Dani Pacheco, combined to provide Kuyt with the simplest of opportunities – running down the touchline, punching the air in delight, the ever enthusiastic Sammy Lee captured the mood of Reds everywhere. Redemption had been found.



Ian Doyle sees a welcome change of luck for Roy Hodgson in Turkey

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They were hit with another sucker punch when two substitutes, Ryan Babel and Dani Pacheco, combined to provide Kuyt with the simplest of opportunities – running down the touchline, punching the air in delight, the ever enthusiastic Sammy Lee captured the mood of Reds everywhere. Redemption had been found. It's stretching credibility to suggest Hodgson alone made such a choice, given the fact his progress to the final of the competition last season with Fulham was a major reason for his appointment as successor to Rafael Benitez.

And Liverpool can count their blessings the absence of Fernando Torres, Steven Gerrard et al did not ultimately prove decisive, even though Hodgson has intimated it is a policy with which he will persist.

Liverpool have discovered on their European travels in recent years there are few supporters more passionate than those found in Turkey – witness the unforgettable atmosphere at Besiktas three years ago – and Trabzonspor's followers were keen to maintain that tradition last night.

Although three sides of the intimate Huseyin Avni Aker Stadium were open to the downpour that greeted the players at kick-off, it failed to dampen the enthusiasm of a raucous home crowd, resplendent in their blue and orange macs.

Trabzonspor head the embryonic Turkish league table and demonstrated at Anfield seven days earlier their threat in attack and willingness to scrap. What they didn't need, then, was a helping hand from Liverpool as the visitors suffered the worst possible start by gifting their hosts a fourth-minute lead.

A dawdling Kuyt lost possession inside his own half and Trabzonspor capitalised in a flash, Gustavo Colman advancing into the area before striking a mishit shot that fell invitingly for Teofilo Gutierrez to prod beyond Pepe Reina from a central position. Liverpool, dishevelled and disorganised, were then left no option but to dig in as Trabzonspor went for the jugular.

Carragher made a crucial block to deny Gutierrez snatching a second after the Turkish side broke with pace and purpose from a poor Liverpool corner, while Reina was forced to turn behind a deflected Colman shot from 20 yards.

And Trabzonspor should have been ahead in the tie midway through the half. After Glen Johnson fouled left-winger Burak Yilmaz, Selcuk Inan curled a free-kick into the six-yard box that Remzi Kacar somehow failed to convert with his head. Liverpool, so poor in the opening quarter, finally worked their way into the game as the home side's initial adrenaline rush subsided, Lucas Leiva and Christian Poulsen at last stemming the tide that was flowing through the visitors' porous central midfield.

Fabio Aurelio, an impressive performer in an unaccustomed left midfield role on his first start in his second stint at Liverpool, fired a 25-yard shot wide and Lucas shot tamely at underemployed Trabzonspor goalkeeper Onur Kivrak from a similar position, while in between Johnson had the ball in the net but was correctly flagged offside.

But Liverpool were the stronger after the interval as a tiring Trabzonspor were caught between whether defending their lead or pressing for the goal that would see them progress.

And Ngog should have levelled on 52 minutes when, after feeding Joe Cole on the right, the striker made his way to the far post unmarked but headed his team-mate's cross wide from eight yards.

Ngog, though, almost made an equaliser for himself moments later when he twisted and turned away from the Trabzonspor defence but pulled his eventual shot narrowly wide.

Aurelio's free-kick from range struck the wall and looped the wrong side of the post from Liverpool's viewpoint before, with seven minutes remaining, the tie turned decisively.

Johnson danced beyond Trabzonspor left-back Hrvoje Cale and crossed low at the near post where, under pressure from Ngog and Cole, Kacar deflected the ball beyond his own goalkeeper Kivrak.

The Turkish side then needed to score twice, and their pressing inevitably led to gaps that Liverpool exploited five minutes later when, after being released by fellow substitute Ryan Babel, Dani Pacheco's shot was parried by Kivrak into the path of Kuyt to tap home.

The goal ensured Liverpool's first victory against Turkish opposition away from home. Indeed, before last night, their only victory in this part of the world remains the Champions League final of Istanbul five years ago.

It seems an awful lot longer than that right now. But at least Europe remains on the agenda this season.

THE TIMES

Late goals save Liverpool from inglorious exit after woeful first-half show

Trabzonspor 1 Liverpool 2 (Liverpool win 3-1 on agg)

For Liverpool, the Turkish city of Trabzon has long been synonymous with how even Europe's mightiest can stumble. Now it offers an alternative historical reference point - as the place where Roy Hodgson staved off a crisis that could have engulfed his Anfield reign only weeks after it began.

It was 34 years ago that Liverpool last visited Trabzon, a trip that Ray Clemence would later recall as his "worst ever trip". They lost that day but went on to lift their first European Cup. This time around, they stared defeat in the face again, only for two goals in the final ten minutes to guarantee them safe passage into the less salubrious surroundings of the Europa League and alleviate the pressure that was threatening to build around Hodgson at such an indecent stage in his Liverpool career.

By bringing the Champions League draw forward by a day, Uefa effectively played a cruel, if unintentional, trick on Liverpool, whose players took to the pitch at the Huseyin Avni Aker Stadium at the same time that their contemporaries at Europe's elite clubs learnt who they would face in the continent's premier competition.

Perhaps it was the inevitable feeling of loss induced by their exclusion from the big time that was at the root of a first-half performance of such desperation that it was hard to recall a worse one on their European travels. More likely, it was the logical result of a selection process that smacked more of a longing to exit the competition than a desire to win it and a lack of confidence after their mauling at the hands of Manchester City three nights earlier.

The risky strategy of leaving five first-team regulars, including Steven Gerrard and Fernando Torres, back on Merseyside with relatively trivial injury concerns illustrated that Hodgson's main priority for the season is not the Europa League. But it also guaranteed that a flirtation with failure was on the cards, an inescapable feeling that grew after Trabzonspor took the early lead that Senol Gunes, their coach, had demanded.

In his pre-match musings, Hodgson had insisted that Liverpool's three-goal hammering by City on Monday had not been the kind of "watershed result" that indicates a heavy fall from grace. But it felt like one when Teofilo Gutierrez fired beyond Pepe Reina in the fourth minute after Dirk Kuyt had surrendered possession to put the home side level on aggregate and a symbolic torrential downpour followed. "You are alone here" read the banner held aloft by the home fans. The pun on Liverpool's anthem was aimed - as with a laser shone into Reina's eyes prompting threats of abandoning the match - at the opposing team. But as he stood soaked to the skin on the touchline with a full-blown crisis staring him in the face, it was Hodgson, more than anyone else, who must have felt that way, particularly as his team continued to perform as if paralysed by the shortcomings of a club whom even their most ardent fans fear are in danger of losing their way altogether.

It took them 43 minutes to register their first shot on target and that was a tame effort by Lucas Leiva. By that point Trabzonspor could have doubled their advantage, but for wayward finishing by Ibrahima Yattara and a smart save by Reina from Gustavo Colman.

Listless to the point of inertia and so lacking in drive and determination that the red shirts they wore were all that characterised them as Liverpool, the only possible saving grace was that the second half could not be any worse. Glen Johnson, who had a goal correctly disallowed for offside, was the worst performer by some distance. Fortunately for Liverpool and the 91 intrepid followers who made the arduous journey to the Black Sea resort, not only did standards improve, they did considerably. Their recovery was not reflected in the scoreline until the final ten minutes but it soon was evident that a comeback was in the offing. What Hodgson said during half-time will probably not become public but it roused Liverpool from their stupor to the extent that it was they who were the dominant team. The only problem was that the longer proceedings went without an equaliser, the greater the chance of them being hit by a sucker punch to deny them progress.

It was the otherwise awful Johnson - the more he plays the more his critics have to support their argument that the [pounds sterling]17 million Liverpool paid for him last year was lacking a decimal point - who helped to ensure that would not be the case. He made a surging run into the box and delivered a cross that Giray Kacar could only divert into his own net, ending Turkish resistance and sparing Liverpool the embarrassment they had feared.

Kuyt's tap-in after Onur Kivrak had failed to hold a shot by Dani Pacheco, the lively Liverpool substitute, confirmed their progression and prevented their latest visit to Trabzon from being even worse than their previous one.

Trabzonspor (4-3-3): O Kivrak - S Balci, H Cale (sub: Jaja, 86min), G Kacar, E Korkmaz - G Colman, I Yattara (sub: Alanzinho, 46), C Gulselam (sub: B Atas, 66) - S Inan, B Yilmaz, T Gutierrez. Substitutes not used: T Zengin, S Badur, E Baytar, F Ozturun. Booked: Gulselam, Yilmaz, Korkmaz.

Liverpool (4-4-1-1): J M Reina - G Johnson, J Carragher, S Kyrgiakos, M Kelly - D Kuyt, C Poulsen (sub: M Skrtel, 90), Lucas Leiva, F Aurelio (sub: D Pacheco, 77) - J Cole - D Ngog (sub: R Babel, 86). Substitutes not used: P Gulacsi, J Spearing, J Shelvey, N Eccleston.

Referee: I Bebek (Croatia).