

Date: 3 October 2010
 Opposition: Blackpool
 Competition: League

Times	Guardian	Mail
Mirror	Independent	Telegraph
Echo		



3 October
 2010

THE TIMES

Kop give voice to their frustration

Liverpool 1 Kyrgiakos 53 Blackpool 2 Adam 29 (pen), Varney 45+1 Referee: M Jones. Attendance: 43,156 TONY BARRETT It had taken the Kop 94 days to deliver its verdict on Roy Hodgson and yesterday it finally came. "Dalglish, Dalglish, Dalglish" was the chant that rolled from the stand, a judgment that rocked the Anfield foundations almost as much as the defeat by Blackpool that prompted it. Having billed himself as "one of Europe's most respected coaches" in media interviews leading up to the game, Hodgson had to endure the ignominy of finding out in the most humiliating fashion that his opinion is not shared by the Liverpool supporters. But then respect from fans brought up on winning football was always going to be hard to come by for a manager whom many of them did not want in the first place and who is presiding over Liverpool's worst start to a season since 1953-54 - the last time, incidentally, that they were relegated.

The supporters may doubt him, but not even an unwanted place in the bottom three has prompted Hodgson to doubt himself.

"I don't think you go from being viewed as positively as I was in May to losing your ability by now," he said. "Whether I can turn things around is a question that really shouldn't be asked, but you know it will be asked in football when there are some bad moments. That's the nature of the game. "After 35 years in football I don't think that I have suddenly lost my ability as a manager and I have faith in my ability to handle this situation." Upon his appointment on July 1, Martin Broughton, the Liverpool chairman, had explained the decision to opt for Hodgson and snub Kenny Dalglish, whose application was not even considered. "He wanted to focus on how he could get more out of the existing players," Broughton said. "He was really focused on, I believe, and I've got a track record that demonstrates it, that I can take the existing players, get much better performances out of them and buy constructively to build for a better future." "There was a manager doing just that at Anfield yesterday, creating a team that are more than the sum of their parts, but it was not the one in the home dugout. That role was filled by Ian Holloway, who coaxed an outstanding performance and an iconic result out of a Blackpool team put together for less than Joe Cole's annual salary.

The ovation his players received from the Kop was as deserved as their victory as the tangerine dream lived on at a venue that Holloway regards as football's spiritual home. "To be applauded off at what is almost the home of football is so special," Holloway said. "That is what I dreamt of last night. These supporters have seen some of the best football ever, which started when Mr Shankly had his dream.

In my era, there was no better football club in the world."

The Blackpool manager's reverence to Liverpool knows no bounds and he confesses readily to being disarmed by the This Is Anfield sign - "It makes you wobble and your butterflies get even worse" - but he also knows that past achievements count for nothing in football and his pledge to attack a Liverpool team who began and ended the day in the relegation zone was carried out to the letter, with Charlie Adam at the heart of everything that was good about their display.

It may have the look, air and reputation of one of sport's greatest citadels - and Holloway's elation at winning there was anything but misplaced - but it carried the feel of a derelict house being ransacked. The sight of Liverpool ending the game with Sotirios Kyrgiakos up front would have been telling enough given that he was their most potent attacking weapon, but the best illustration of the paucity of their tactics and their desperation was provided by Steven Gerrard filling in in central defence with Raul Meireles beside him at left back. "We had to go for it in the second half," Hodgson said. "We did not have a defensive midfielder, we went with four attacking players up front and we could not have done much more."

That all they did do was reduce the arrears through Kyrgiakos's header from Gerrard's free kick speaks volumes. Liverpool could have taken a point via a similar route when the Greece defender was denied by an outstanding last-gasp save by Matthew Gilks, but a draw would have been a perverse outcome. It may have been "like the Alamo" at the end, as Holloway put it, but Blackpool's victory was earned by their dominance of a first half that was so one-sided Liverpool were fortunate to go in at the interval only two goals down.

Blackpool had taken control of the game even before Adam gave them the lead with a penalty, awarded after Glen Johnson, who was once again abject, felled Luke Varney in the box. Their passing, teamwork and organisation were markedly superior and while Holloway may have pointed to the departure of Fernando Torres with a groin injury after ten minutes as a turning point, the truth is that even the forward he regards as the best in the world has been singularly unable to lift Liverpool from their slumbers of late. The visiting team even provided an emblematic goal that ultimately proved decisive as Varney finished off a flowing passing move that had already stretched Liverpool's back line to breaking point by the time Gary Taylor-Fletcher provided the final defence-splitting through-ball. It was a wonderful move, one in keeping with Holloway's philosophy of how football should be played and one that showed up as bunkum the ideals of those who believe a lack of resources make recourse to the rudiments of a long-ball game almost inevitable. As Hodgson admitted, Blackpool's dream was his own team's nightmare and with a bottom-of-the-table clash with Everton next up, things could get worse for Liverpool before they get better.

That is a game that the Liverpool manager dare not lose. After hearing Dalglish's name chanted so vociferously, Hodgson can ill afford to add a derby defeat to a list of failures that is lengthening with every passing week. Unpleasant reminder of days in the twilight zone

Liverpool are in the relegation zone for the first time in 46 years (excluding after one game of the 1992-93 season). They finished seventh in 1964-65 and went on to acquire a host of trophies, in contrast to Blackpool, their conquerors at Anfield yesterday.

Previous time Liverpool in relegation zone: 1964-65 top division (2pts for win)
 Main trophies won by Liverpool and Blackpool since Liverpool were last in relegation zone Liverpool 12 league titles 7 FA Cups 7 League Cups 5 European Cups 3 Uefa Cups Blackpool 2 Football League Trophies 1 Anglo-Italian Cup

the guardian

Kop call for Dalglish after nightmare result for Hodgson

Fourteen games as Liverpool manager and the Kop has returned its verdict on Roy Hodgson. It was 11 minutes before five o'clock, and Blackpool were seconds from a deserved victory that mired the Anfield club in the relegation zone when it came. "Dalglish! Dalglish! Dalglish!" was the plaintive cry. On current form it may not be the faces in the Liverpool boardroom that change in mid-October but the one in the manager's chair. Anfield is in despair at its worst start to a season since 1953-54, when Liverpool were relegated, with another protest against Tom Hicks and George Gillett following the appeal for a return of its favourite son.

Sandwiched between disgust at the team and the co-owners, however, was an ovation for those celebrating a famous and perhaps defining result. Ian Holloway's team was outstanding: well-drilled, committed to attack and spirited in the face of adversity. Everything Liverpool, under their floundering new manager, are not. "Their great result is our nightmare result," Hodgson said, and for two weeks there will be no escape from the bottom three. Liverpool resume their relegation fight at Everton on 17 October, two days after the deadline for Hicks and Gillett to repay their loans to the Royal Bank of Scotland. Hodgson's first Merseyside derby will be one he cannot afford to lose. "The last few results have been very, very bad," he said. "At the moment things look really, really bleak because they are conditioned by our most recent results. There is a lot of work to do, there are a lot of things to sort out. I can't escape that and will not hide from it. Things are difficult." Asked if chants for Kenny Dalglish - a legend whose application to succeed Rafael Benitez was not considered by the managing director, Christian Purslow, and the chairman, Martin Broughton - were unfair, Hodgson replied: "What's fair and unfair? There is no fairness. The fans are frustrated at the moment. There are a lot of things happening, and it's understandable they are frustrated. I am the manager, I am the one who has to take responsibility and I have to accept their right to aim their frustration in my direction. "I don't think you go from being viewed as positively as I was in May to losing your ability by now. Whether I can turn things around is a question that shouldn't be asked, but you know it will be asked in football when there are some bad moments. That's the nature of the game." The biggest indictment of Hodgson's reign is that the scoreline did not surprise. Sotirios Kyrgiakos, who almost salvaged an equaliser with a header in the third minute of injury time - it was saved by Matthew Gilks - was Liverpool's standout defender and forward. Fernando Torres limped off after just 10 minutes with a groin injury and Christian Poulsen, Hodgson's dismal pounds 5m acquisition from Juventus, was substituted to ironic cheers. Blackpool passed Liverpool into submission in the first half and defended for their lives in the second. They showed more invention, unsettled Liverpool's defence with the pace of DJ Campbell, and, in Charlie Adam, had the game's best passer. Including David Vaughan, Blackpool had the two most authoritative central midfielders on display until Liverpool's essential second-half revival. The breakthrough encapsulated the performance of both teams. Joe Cole sent Hodgson apoplectic on the touchline by losing possession on the edge of the Blackpool area. The visitors broke superbly. The ball quickly found Luke Varney, who cut in from the left and tumbled over Glen Johnson's leg for a penalty. Jose Reina got a hand to Adam's powerful spot-kick but could not prevent the Blackpool captain finding the bottom corner.

The second goal demonstrated Blackpool's confidence when outside the Liverpool box. Elliot Grandin surged down the right and found Gary Taylor-Fletcher inside. The former Dagenham & Redbridge midfielder delivered a nonchalant flick into the area, where Varney beat the offside trap and shot low under Reina. Liverpool capitalised on Blackpool's napping to score in the 53rd minute, when Steven Gerrard's free-kick was headed home by Kyrgiakos. Holloway introduced Keith Southern, a player schooled at Everton, to counter the midfield threat, and the visitors squandered several chances to increase their lead. Liverpool finished with Gerrard at centre-back, Raul Meireles at left-back, and Kyrgiakos up front - a shambles on and off the pitch. "To be applauded off at what is almost the home of football is so special," Holloway said. "That is what I dreamed of last night. These supporters have seen some of the best football ever, which started when Mr Shankly had his dream. In my era, there was no better football club in the world." Was, being the operative word.

Man of the match Charlie Adam

Dictated much of the game's flow, and all of Blackpool's attacking intent, with a classy midfield display Best Moment When he nutmegged Joe Cole in front of the Liverpool dugout and back-heeled the ball to his own team-mate

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The Mail

ROY ON THE ROPES; Liverpool in drop zone as fans call for Dalglish
 Liverpool 1 Blackpool 2

Next: Everton v LIVERPOOL; BLACKPOOL v Manchester City (both October 17)
 ROY Hodgson has always insisted he needs time and money to steer Liverpool back to the top. The money disappeared long ago and, judging by the disarray on the pitch and growing hostility off it, time could be about to follow suit. They have become accustomed to lending at Anfield, after the debt-ridden days of reviled owners Tom Hicks and George Gillett, and if there were any doubts that Hodgson is on borrowed time, little more than three months into his reign on Merseyside, they vanished at precisely 11 minutes to five yesterday afternoon.

A couple of minutes still remained, but the Kop had seen enough to deliver a damning verdict on the former Fulham manager's brief period in charge. It started as a rumble then began to grow clearer, painfully so for Hodgson, as patrons of English football's most famous vantage point chanted long and loud for Kenny Dalglish. Hodgson may argue that Liverpool's five-man board are the ones who sit in judgment, but the sound of long-suffering fans calling for the man who openly declared his fervent wish to succeed Rafa Benitez had an ominous ring to it. Reminded of it half an hour after the final whistle, Liverpool's beleaguered manager spread his arms wide and shook his head, as if to acknowledge his fate may be out of his own hands, with many more performances like this. There were those arguing that one more may be enough, given that Everton are next up, at Goodison Park a week next Sunday. Patience is already at breaking point and may well snap under the strain of a derby-day humiliation.

It is already the 18-time champions' worst start to a season since they were relegated 57 years ago and, significantly, even Hodgson made no attempt to gloss over their alarming shortcomings and try to alarmingly shortcomings and try to portray their plight as anything other than desperate. Liverpool may have dropped into the bottom three by virtue of Everton's first win of the season 24 hours earlier. This was their opportunity to extricate themselves, and they failed abjectly. Blackpool's fairy tale rise to the Barclays Premier League was supposed to touch base with reality on days like these. Trips to the bastions of the English game were meant to finish with the sort of drubbings inflicted on them by Chelsea and Arsenal, yet there was a worrying portent for Anfield regulars in the way Ian Holloway's side's visit was billed.

Never in their worst nightmares could they imagine it being described as a six-pointer, yet if there was any sense of indignation, it was hardly apparent. Far from taking it out on the upstarts from a few miles up the North West coast, Liverpool found themselves on the wrong end of a football lesson in a barely believable, one-sided first half.

The role reversal was enough, for once, to lift Hodgson out of his seat in the dug-out and leave him standing, in increasing exasperation, on the edge of the pitch. More high-profile, perhaps, but there was still little he could do, as he repeatedly stroked his chin and looked on pensively.

A thumping Charlie Adam freekick forced a flying save from Pepe Reina in only the second minute, and the shocks just kept coming after that. Fernando Torres's 10thminute withdrawal with a groin problem was one, as was a sweeping 15th-minute move that almost produced a far-post goal for DJ Campbell and another crisp, incisive passing pattern that led to Luke Varney having a close-range shot blocked eight minutes later.

Glen Johnson's defensive deficiencies were cruelly exposed in the 29th minute, as Varney cut in from the left and was up-ended by a clumsy challenge for the clearest of penalties that Adam dispatched past Reina in front of a dismayed Kop. More than 3,000 travelling fans at the Anfield Road end, and a section of the directors' box containing father and son Karl and Owen Oyston, erupted in disbelieving celebration.

Understandable, perhaps, yet the evidence of their eyes should have told them a breakthrough was on its way. There was no stopping Blackpool, and, after Campbell almost caught out Reina at his near post, Varney sprung the offside trap to latch on to a pass from lifelong Liverpool fan Gary Taylor-Fletcher and double their advantage with a cool finish past Reina.

Boos escorted the players off, but there was renewed hope for the hosts in the 53rd minute, when a piece of quick thinking by Steven Gerrard helped reduce the arrears.

Awarded a free-kick for a debatable handball, the Liverpool skipper took it before Blackpool's defence had the chance to organise themselves and saw Sotirios Kyrgiakos plant a header in off the underside of the bar.

That should have been the cue for a siege of the Blackpool goal, and an outcome to soothe the home crowd's anxieties, particularly in view of manager Holloway's ready admission that protecting their own area hardly counts as his side's strongest suit.

Instead, there were few real concerns for Holloway's gallant team, despite Hodgson throwing on the unsettled Milan Jovanovic and repeatedly switching the likes of Dirk Kuyt and Joe Cole in a fruitless search for the cohesion needed to force an equaliser, at least.

Raul Meireles had a goalbound shot blocked, Cole fired agonisingly wide after being played through and, in the last minute of added time, keeper Matt Gilks brilliantly repelled a point-blank Kyrgiakos header.

By then, a packed but piqued Kop had reflected on the Northampton debacle and the shambles presented to them here and made up their minds.

'Dalglish,' they chanted, and it must have sent a shudder through the man Liverpool's board had turned to instead.

MATCH FACTS

LIVERPOOL (4-4-1-1): Reina 6; Johnson 5, Skrtel 5, Kyrgiakos 6, Carragher 6; Meireles 5, Poulsen 5 (Jovanovic 60min, 6), Gerrard 7, Cole 6 (Rodriguez 88); Kuyt 5; Torres 6 (Ngog 10, 5).

Subs not used: Jones, Kelly, Lucas, Spearing. Booked: Kyrgiakos. Scorer: Kyrgiakos (53).

BLACKPOOL (4-3-3): Gilks 7; Eardley 7 (Phillips 46, 6), Evatt 7, Cathcart 6 (Keinan 20, 6), Craine 7; Grandin 6 (Southern 63, 6), Adam 8, Vaughan 7; Taylor-Fletcher 7, Campbell 7, Varney 7. Subs not used: Halstead, Sylvestre, Harewood, Ormerod. Booked: Taylor-Fletcher. Scorers: Adam (29 pen), Varney (45). Man of the match: Charlie Adam.

Referee: Mike Jones 7. Attendance: 43,156.



DAMNEDFIELD

THE incredulous boos that echoed around Anfield at the end of both halves will reverberate long after the final whistle.

Even before the Kop sang "Dalglish" as Liverpool limped towards inevitable defeat, it was already clear a large section of the home crowd have no faith in their new manager and what, if anything, he is trying to achieve.

The Reds sit in the bottom three of the table for the first time since 1984. And with the Merseyside derby next up, it is not unduly unfair to suggest that Roy Hodgson's position will become uncomfortable, if not untenable, should he lose against Everton.

Take nothing away from Blackpool, they produced a magnificent performance to dominate for all but a handful of second-half minutes.

Even they must have been stunned by the lack of fight, the lack of character and the total absence of any semblance of unity among this shambles of a Reds side. The Kop certainly was.

After the game, several thousand fans stayed behind to register another protest against the American owners who have brought the club to its knees.

The lack of financial backing and poisonous politics he has endured at Anfield has hardly helped Hodgson.

But he knows none of that can excuse this display, and Liverpool's position.

What will hurt Liverpool fans most is that even after clawing their way back into the game through Sotirios Kyrgiakos's header just after the interval, the home team rarely looked like drawing level, never mind winning. Blackpool outfought them, and at times outplayed them too, the skill and enthusiasm of Luke Varney, Charlie Adam and David Vaughan an antidote to the careless passing and clueless thinking of the home team.

Kyrgiakos reduced the lead given to Blackpool by Adam and Varney with a towering header from Steven Gerrard's free-kick on 53 minutes. But after that Liverpool managed barely two more clear-cut chances.

The best chance fell to Joe Cole from Jamie Carragher's pass, but he shot criminally wide. That moment seemed to knock the stuffing out of Liverpool, with their increasingly hapless efforts summed up by the performance of substitute Milan Jovanovic, whose erratic use of possession was appalling.

If a wrong option could be taken, it invariably was.

Liverpool were not helped by Fernando Torres limping off after nine minutes with a groin problem.

Blackpool took the lead through a Charlie Adam penalty that was awarded after Glen Johnson's ridiculous challenge on the impressive Varney.

Varney scored a second on the stroke of half time when Johnson loitered behind Liverpool's line to play the striker onside from Gary Taylor-Fletcher's pass.

At the end, boos r a n g e o n d Anfield with some venom. If this performance is repeated at Goodison in a fortnight, you fear for Hodgson's future.

LIVERPOOL: Reina 4, Johnson 3, Kyrgiakos 3, Skrtel 4, Carragher 5, Gerrard 5, Poulsen 3 (Jovanovic 60, 4); Cole 5 (Maxi 89), Kuyt 3, Meireles 4, Torres 3 (Ngog 10, 5).

BLACKPOOL: Gilks 7, Eardley 7 (Phillips 46, 6), Cathcart 6 (Keinan 20, 6), Evatt 7, Craine 6, Grandin 6 (Southern 64, 5), Vaughan 7, Adam 7, Taylor-Fletcher 6; Varney 8, Campbell 7.

REF: Michael Jones

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THE INDEPENDENT

Anfield turns against Hodgson as Liverpool are humiliated
 Sir Alex Ferguson once claimed his greatest achievement was "knocking Liverpool off their perch", but this morning they are at the bottom of their cage, feet sticking up in the air. Losing to Northampton in the Carling Cup at Anfield was humbling; this was much worse.

Before every kick-off at Anfield, a huge banner is unfurled along the Kop with pictures of all Liverpool's managers from Bill Shankly onwards. It is a moving display of loyalty and continuity and Roy Hodgson's face does not appear upon it. Ominously, as it became clear that Liverpool would lose, the name of Kenny Dalglish began to be chanted the length of the great stand. In the summer, Dalglish's candidacy to resume the role he quit in 1991 was rejected out of hand, although many who streamed away from Anfield last night would have wondered whether, even if the returning hero would have brought only sentiment to the job, he could have possibly done worse.

Hodgson may have been right in his observation that it "stretched credulity" that Liverpool would be relegated. The last time they were in the bottom three, in 1984, it was in a season that climaxed with them finishing second in the league behind Everton and in a European Cup final. These days the European Cup is out of the question but it is still highly likely they will finish behind Everton.

Blackpool have now taken nine of their 10 points away from Bloomfield Road. The 4-0 win at Wigan, with which they opened their first top-flight campaign since 1971, was a delightful surprise. The victory at St James' Park came against the odds. This was both historic and astonishing. For the opening 45 minutes - numbing or thrilling depending on where you were sat - that decided this game, they outplayed and out-passed Liverpool.

By comparison, the home side appeared a bewildered, incoherent mess, unable to cope with the loss of Fernando Torres who was withdrawn with a groin strain before 10 minutes were up.

"Seeing the best striker in the world limp off so early played into our hands," said the Blackpool manager, Ian Holloway. "It gave us such a boost."

It showed. Blackpool should have scored before Charlie Adam's penalty flew under Pepe Reina's gloves, when DJ Campbell's snap shot from a beautifully delivered cross from Neal Eardley skimmed into the Kop.

As it had in Utrecht on Thursday night, Glen Johnson's game looked utterly at odds with itself and it was hardly a surprise when he conceded a needless penalty with a challenge on Luke Varney who cut into the Liverpool area without any real support. Adam had the daunting task of converting a penalty in front of the Kop and, although Reina went the right way, it was not enough. The second goal, in first-half stoppage time, was a wonderfully executed move with Gary Taylor-Fletcher slipping in Varney, who finished off a goal that was worthy of Arsenal. Holloway prides himself on the fact that when Blackpool enter the Premier League's great cathedrals, they pass and move with the same sense of purpose that brought them one of the more unlikely promotions. At the Emirates Stadium, where they were beaten 6-0, and at Stamford Bridge, where they were four down at the interval, Blackpool had come horribly unstuck. Here, they were for a while the clearly superior team.

When Christian Poulsen was substituted after a wretched hour, the decision was greeted by a standing ovation. The home supporters applauded Blackpool off at the final whistle; the kind of generous gesture Anfield had accorded Barnsley and Watford when they won here in seasons in which they were each relegated. This is still a ground with a big heart, although it is questionable whether you could say the same about the players they support.

"'You'll Never Walk Alone' is one of my dad's favourite songs; he's no longer with us and I was singing it with them," said Holloway. "This is almost the home of football and to be applauded off at the end made me so emotional."

"In the second half, we were making mistakes, panicking and giving the ball back to Liverpool and sometimes in the second half it was like the Alamo. They were battering us so much and right at the death it needed a fantastic save by Matthew Gilks [from Sotirios Kyrgiakos] to give our fans something they will remember forever."

More than half an hour earlier, the Greek's powerful header, which rebounded from the underside of the crossbar, had given Liverpool and Hodgson hope that they might be able to salvage a draw or maybe even steal a win. It had come from a free-kick, quickly and cleverly taken by Steven Gerrard, which displayed an invention Liverpool had entirely lacked in the first half. Kyrgiakos muscled his way past his marker, Ian Evatt, and a sustained assault that lasted a quarter of an hour began.

Joe Cole, racing on to a pass from Jamie Carragher, unveiled a shot that seemed destined for the corner of the Blackpool net but swept just wide. When Gilks clung on to Dirk Kuyt's diving header, you could almost sense the goalkeeper's gratitude.

"You saw in the second half, when we sat back, how poor we can be," said Holloway. "We need to be going forward. To win I thought we had to overrun Liverpool on their own ground, which we nearly managed in the first half. After that, we were just hanging on."

"We have the smallest budget in the Premier League and we pay the worst money but that comes with its bonuses because there is no expectation, which is the awful cross that Liverpool have to bear."

"I heard one guy shout: 'They are not Real Madrid, get tighter to them'." However, last year Real Madrid did come to Anfield and were beaten 4-0. What has happened since almost defies analysis.

MATCH FACTS

Liverpool 4-4-2: Reina; Johnson, Skrtel, Kyrgiakos, Carragher; Meireles, Gerrard, Poulsen (Jovanovic, 60), Cole (Rodriguez, 89); Kuyt, Torres (Ngog, 10). Substitutes not used: Jones (gk), Lucas, Spearing, Kelly.

Booked Reina, Kyrgiakos.

Blackpool 4-4-2: Gilks; Eardley (Phillips, h-t), Cathcart (Keinan, 20), Evatt, Craine; Taylor-Fletcher, Adam, Vaughan, Varney; Grandin (Southern, 64), Campbell.

Substitutes not used: Halstead (gk), Harewood, Ormerod, Sylvestre, Phillips.

Booked Taylor-Fletcher.

Man of the match Varney.

Possession Liverpool 50% Blackpool 50%

Shots on target Liverpool 10 Blackpool 7

Referee M Jones (Chester) Attendance 43,156 Match rating 8/10.

The Daily Telegraph

Calls for Dalglish as Liverpool hit new low

Liverpool 1 Kyrgiakos 53 Blackpool 2 Adam 29 pen, Varney 45 Att: 43,156
 Roy Hodgson last night conceded Liverpool cannot regard themselves as being too big for the relegation battle after crashing to defeat by Blackpool at Anfield yesterday.

The Liverpool manager had more misery - losing Fernando Torres after 10 minutes with a groin strain - but insisted the club will finish the season nearer the top than the bottom of the table.

"If you are in the relegation zone, then you are in a relegation battle," he said. Charlie Adam's penalty and Luke Varney's clipped finish had left his side in the bottom three for the first time in 46 years, despite Sotirios Kyrgiakos's consolation goal.

"I am not going to think too much about relegation with 31 games left to play and I'm absolutely convinced Liverpool will not be in the bottom of three at the end of the season. Whether we can fulfil our ambition of finishing towards the top is another matter, but when you saw the way we played in the second half I am incredulous anyone can suggest we will finish in the bottom three." That a Liverpool manager should even be forced to address the issue, though, is a damning assessment of Hodgson's nascent tenure.

More damning, even, than the word belted from the Kop as Phil Dowd, the fourth official, signalled three minutes of injury time. The one word which indicated that the fans are running out of patience: "Dalglish". Liverpool's supporters may have a reputation for loyalty to their club's manager. They may pride themselves that they do not succumb to the knee-jerk irrationality which afflicts modern football. But over the last three years they have developed a keen nose for mismanagement.

More than 3,000 marched against off-field incompetence before this game, while a similar number stayed behind afterwards to reinforce the message that the continued presence of the club's owners, Tom Hicks and George Gillett, will not be tolerated.

But in that one word - and in the torrent of boos which accompanied both the half-time and full-time whistles - it became clear that such militancy is not limited to matters in the boardroom. Those who inhabit the Boot Room will be subject to scrutiny, too. Fans will no more see their club in the wrong hands on the pitch than they will off it.

They do not want a Liverpool side which has, in consecutive games, been dominated by Northampton, Sunderland and Blackpool. They do not want a side with no ideas, fluency, width, penetration, guile or movement.

"To be applauded off at what is almost the home of football is so special," said Holloway. "That is what I dreamed of last night. These supporters have seen some of the best football ever, which started when Mr Shankly had his dream. In my era, there was no better football club in the world." It is almost impossible, with this team, with this manager, with these owners, to equate such sentiments with Liverpool. No wonder discord is in the air.

They do not want to see a manager - appointed by managing director Christian Purslow to bring attractive football, to unite the dressing room and to steer a course through troubled waters - field a centre-back up front, produce a team with no discernible spirit and plunge the club to its lowest position in years. More worrying still is that Liverpool cannot even rage against the cruelty of fate. They lost this game because they deserved to. They are in the relegation zone because they deserve to be.

That Blackpool led 2-0 at half-time was no fluke. They attacked from the first whistle, five men crashing into Liverpool's half from the kick-off, going for the jugular.

So Charlie Adam, imperious for an hour, stung Pepe Reina's palms with a fierce free-kick, DJ Campbell skewed a simple finish from Neal Eardley's cross and Luke Varney, in menacing form, saw one effort saved and one blocked by Martin Skrtel. Liverpool, clearly rocked by Torres's exit, produced not so much attempts on goal but illusions of attacks.

Matthew Gilks had been called into action just once, scrambling a Kyrgiakos flick off his line, when Glen Johnson tripped Varney and Adam stroked in the resultant penalty.

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The Blackpool goalkeeper had done little more when Varney doubled the lead, timing his run to perfection to latch on to Gary Taylor-Fletcher's through ball and clip the ball past Reina.

The shock of being booed off seemed to work, at least initially, Kyrgiakos's emphatic header from a Steven Gerrard free-kick just eight minutes into the second half seemingly heralding the start of a comeback. It failed to materialise.

Raul Meireles twice went close and Joe Cole should have scored after Jamie Carragher released him, but Holloway's description of the finale as "like the Alamo" was generous.

Blackpool might even have had a third through Campbell, before Hodgson threw his Greek central defender up front. He went close twice, but the artisan was to prove no more effective than the artists. The chant for Dalglish began. Hodgson's clock started to tick.

Anfield anguish

Liverpool's most humiliating results on home turf:

Liverpool 0 Bristol City 1 Jan 1994

The result that did for Graeme Souness, in an FA Cup third round replay. Anfield was stunned into silence by Brian Tinnion's goal and Souness was sacked three days later.

Shock rating: 8 Liverpool 0 Watford 1 Aug 1999

Watford set the standard for newlypromoted Premier League sides visiting Merseyside. Tommy Mooney's strike must still give Gerard Houllier nightmares.

Shock rating: 7 Liverpool 1 Grimsby 2 Oct 2001 A first win for the determinedly unfashionable Mariners in the League Cup third round. Phil Jevons's extratime goal sent the holders out.

Shock rating: 7

Liverpool 2 Northampton 2 Sept 2010

No Red needs reminding of the most recent embarrassment, in the Carling Cup fourth round. Having almost lost in extra-time, Roy Hodgson's team were beaten (above) in a penalty shoot-out.

Shock rating: 9



Dominic King on how the Reds are becoming a laughing stock

IN my era, there was no better football club in the world. These supporters have seen some of the best football ever."

Those were the poignant words of Blackpool manager Ian Holloway early yesterday evening, as he tried to explain what it meant for him to be in charge of a team that had beaten Liverpool Football Club – once the doyens of the beautiful game – at Anfield.

When Holloway was playing, Liverpool collected league championships with glorious regularity and added other pieces of silverware at will; they were a team that made the people of their city proud and puff out their chests.

How things have changed. How the mighty have fallen. Liverpool are no longer the best football club in the world, more a laughing stock that lurches from one calamity to another; according to the current Premier League table, they aren't even the best team in the city.

Anger, frustration, bitterness and despair now rule the red half of Merseyside and those emotions are only going to become more acute the longer Liverpool remain in this harrowing state of flux – for some, enough is enough.

The sound of The Kop chanting 'Dalglish' in the final moments of a 2-1 defeat to Blackpool that has shaken the foundations of this footballing relic was the clearest sign that a significant number have lost faith in the current regime and it is not hard to see why.

Having gorged themselves on a menu in recent years that has included a 4-0 thrashing of Real Madrid, a win against Inter Milan in the San Siro and a 4-1 dismantling of Manchester United, supporters want change if the future is going to consist of the slops of the last month.

You may raise an eyebrow at the 'slops' reference but think about it. Tumbling out of the Carling Cup against League Two opposition; failing to raise a gallop in bore draws with Birmingham and Utrecht; losing to a poor Manchester United side – it is damning evidence.

Roy Hodgson has not helped his cause with some odd statements and those who have been ambivalent towards him from the start now want quick, decisive action taken to stop the rot spreading any further.

But ask yourself this: is Hodgson to blame for everything that is currently wrong with Liverpool? Absolutely not. Would bringing in Kenny Dalglish suddenly catapult Liverpool from a basement battle to a title fight? Again, absolutely not. Hodgson might appear to be a rabbit caught in the headlights right now but you have to accept he is working with a squad which is short of quality and is trying to go about his daily business while the club's owners continue to be the worst type of nuisances.

Everything starts from the top and, as more demonstrations against Tom Hicks and George Gillett proved yesterday, Liverpool will remain in dire straits until they have been moved on – one thing they can't be blamed for, though, is the performance which was produced here.

Starting slowly and getting progressively worse, it defied belief that Christian Poulsen emerged for the second half, having plodded his way around in the opening period, never once threatening to make a significant contribution.

To think he is Javier Mascherano's replacement. All summer everyone knew Mascherano would be leaving and it is now being shown up precisely what he did for the team; Poulsen is older and slower and can't provide the infectious energy that Argentina's captain did.

Yet it would be wrong to say he was the main reason for Liverpool remaining in the bottom three – Glen Johnson, after all, was culpable for both the goals that led to the Reds' worst day at home in 18 years to continue his wretched form. Supporters of a certain vintage can remember only too well the torrid start to the 1992-93 campaign when Liverpool slipped to the cusp of the relegation places following three consecutive September defeats against Sheffield United, Aston Villa and Wimbledon.

There were howls of disbelief on the Kop the day John Fashanu, Robbie Earle and company raced into a 2-0 lead – they eventually won 3-2 – but this, without doubt, surpassed the events of that dreaded day.

Quite frankly, the first 45 minutes were embarrassing. Bar a spirited opening to the second period, the rest wasn't much better. Blackpool played with the swagger and confidence of a side that had nothing to fear while Liverpool, by contrast, were clueless and lacked direction on and off the field.

Trailing to a Charlie Adam penalty, needlessly given away by the completely out of sorts Johnson, the manner in which Liverpool fell further behind was truly alarming, as Blackpool effectively walked through their defence before Luke Varney smashed in from 10 yards.

All credit to Blackpool. Refusing to panic when Sotirios Kyrgiakos pulled one back, they mirrored the style of their enthusiastic manager and richly deserved the ovation they were given by The Kop at the final whistle but what will live longest in the memory is the booing which preceded it.

Anfield has turned on its managers before – think back to 1994 when Graeme Souness saw Liverpool's FA Cup dreams ended by Bristol City or 2004 when Charlton Athletic hammered the final nail into Gerard Houllier's coffin – but never so soon.

Hodgson has only had 14 games to try and steady the ship – that, after all, is what Liverpool's board wanted in the summer when they parted company with Rafa Benitez – but the ship is listing so badly now it is almost capsizing.

If it is not to fully submerge, Hodgson absolutely needs certain players to recapture their sparkle ahead of the next Premier League game but, above all, he needs to oversee a win at Goodison Park to keep his head above water and Liverpool away from the abyss.

Then again, even if he does that, Liverpool will still be a million miles from the club which Holloway talked so fondly about. Can it get any lower? We will find out on October 17.

"We were anxious to get back on track, but no words or anything I can say will change things or make it any better." – ROY HODGSON appreciates the depth of unhappiness and frustration on the Red half of Merseyside

"The fans were singing You'll Never Walk Alone, my dad's favourite song. He is no longer with us. I was so emotional and singing along with them. To then be applauded off in what is almost the home of football makes the day so special," – the ever-quotable IAN HOLLOWAY

LIVERPOOL: Reina: Johnson, Skrtel, Kyrgiakos, Carragher; Meireles, Poulsen (Jovanovic 60), Gerrard, Cole (Rodriguez 89); Kuyt, Torres (Ngog 10). Subs: Jones (GK), Spearing, Kelly, Jovanovic, Lucas..

BLACKPOOL: Gilks: Eardley (Phillips 46), Evatt, Cathcart (Keinan 21), Crainey; Vaughan, Adam, Grandin (Southern 63); Taylor-Fletcher, Campbell, Varney. Subs: Halstead (GK), Ormerod, Slvestyre, Harewood.

GOALS: Adam (29 pen), Varney (45+1), Kyrgiakos (53) .

CARDS: Booked – Reina (45+1), Kyrgiakos (64)

REFEREE: Mike Jones (Cheshire).

ATTENDANCE: 43,156.