

Date: 20 October 2010
 Opposition: West Ham United
 Competition: League

Times	Guardian	Echo
Telegraph	Mirror	Sun Independent
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20 October
2010

THE TIMES

Grant on notice to hit Gold standard

Liverpool 3

Johnson 18, Kuyt 27 (pen), Rodriguez 38

West Ham United 0

Referee: L Probert. Attendance: 43,024

Taking recent history as a gauge and the most notorious excesses of his employers as an indication, Avram Grant had reason to fear the worst after West Ham United suffered a three-goal humiliation at the hands of Liverpool that caused their supporters to call for his head.

In March, David Sullivan, the club's joint chairman, responded to a 3-0 defeat by Wolverhampton Wanderers with an open letter to fans on West Ham's website condemning a "shambolic performance". It was a move that undermined Gianfranco Zola, Grant's predecessor, despite Sullivan's insistence that he remained "right behind the manager".

"Nobody at the club should delude themselves that we are a good team," Sullivan wrote. "The table at this stage of the season does not lie."

There have been no such internet communiqués this time, but with West Ham bottom of the Barclays Premier League after eight successive games without a win, the same sentiments apply as much now as they did then. The only difference is that Sullivan appears more willing to keep his powder dry, in contrast to the West Ham fans at Anfield demanding Grant's removal.

"It was sardonic singing - it is what fans do," David Gold, the more diplomatic of the joint chairmen, said. "But by the same token they did chant, 'Avram, Avram, give us a wave.' They are disappointed and there is no question that we have to do better. The situation is worrying.

"As we speak, we are standing by the manager. But, by the same token, we know we have to do a lot better."

Given West Ham's appalling record at Anfield - the last time they won there was in September 1963 - it would perhaps be unfair if Grant's future was determined by this defeat. Their first-half performance on Saturday, though, was so abject that the temptation will be to allow that to happen, particularly with precious little sign that a recovery is likely to begin soon.

Grant's immediate future is likely to rest on the match against Wigan Athletic at Upton Park on Saturday. Lose this game and Sullivan and Gold may be tempted to turn to Glenn Hoddle - who was too expensive for them in February - or Gareth Southgate or Chris Coleman. Victory will allow Grant to limp on.

For that to happen, the defensive fragility that allowed Liverpool to race into a three-goal lead by the 38th minute will have to be eradicated. "We come to Anfield and suddenly Liverpool are back at their best," Gold said. "We were 3-0 down and we were thinking we were going to get beaten by 6-0."

The suggestion that Liverpool were back to their best is erroneous. They were competent, determined and had far too much quality for West Ham. They also showed an ability to cope without the injured Steven Gerrard, with Raul Meireles thriving in the absence of the Liverpool captain, but Roy Hodgson would have reason to be worried if he believed that this performance represented the summit of their ambition.

Instead, the Liverpool manager will enjoy the fact that the goals came from sources other than Fernando Torres and Gerrard, even if he concedes that the defensive benevolence shown by West Ham is unlikely to be on offer from many other sides. "It was good because it stops people from accusing us of being a one or two-man team," Hodgson said.

Glen Johnson's opener set the tone, the defender being allowed to chest down a corner by Meireles, despite being surrounded by defenders, before firing past Robert Green. Then Dirk Kuyt took advantage of more generosity, this time from Danny Gabbidon, who handled under pressure from Torres, to score from the penalty spot. The collective failure of Grant's back four was made complete as Maxi Rodriguez was afforded the freedom of the penalty area to head home a cross from Paul Konchesky.

Hodgson will also have taken solace from not being the manager under most pressure and, although he saw the funny side of the chants against Grant, he showed his counterpart compassion, having recently been subjected to similar treatment. "It's not easy when you're watching your team play and you can see yourself conceding a lot more," he said. "You're losing at half-time and you go in to jeers and catcalls. You lose at full time, there are boos and everyone is going to get sacked. That's what we have to live with."

Liverpool (4-4-2): J M Reina 6 - G Johnson 7, J Carragher 7, M Skrtel 6, P Konchesky 6 - D Kuyt 7, R Meireles 8 (sub: J Shelvey, 83min), C Poulsen 6, M Rodriguez 7 - D Ngog 6 (sub: F Aurelio, 73), F Torres 6 (sub: R Babel, 85).
 Substitutes: B Jones, S Kyrgiakos, M Kelly, N Eccleston. Next: Tottenham Hotspur (a).

West Ham United (4-3-3): R Green 7 - L Jacobsen 4, D Gabbidon 4, M Upson 5, H Ilunga 5 (sub: J Tomkins, 76) - M Noble 5, R Kovac 5, L Boa Morte 4 - V Obinna 3 (sub: P Barrera, 46 4), C Cole 4 (sub: B McCarthy, 69 5), F Piquionne 5. Substitutes not used: W Reid, J Spector, F Nouble, M Stech. Next: Wigan Athletic (h).

the guardian

Hodgson makes virtue of old values after Grant fails his Anfield audition
 Sir Alex Ferguson blames the "X Factor generation" for condemning Premier League managers to weekly trial by public jury and, as one who could have been eliminated had the lines been left open at Manchester United in 1990, he will always be the riposte to short-termism. But the paying public are entitled to their voice and they do not always get it wrong.

Anfield hosted its latest excruciating audition of the season on Saturday night but this time it was not the Kop calling for Kenny Dalglish to replace Roy Hodgson but West Ham pleading for Paolo Di Canio to succeed Avram Grant. Their repertoire did not end there, with allegations about the visiting manager's private life interspersed with the standard "sacked in the morning". It was painful stuff, causing the co-owners, David Sullivan and David Gold, to shake their heads in the directors' box, though not as distressing an experience as the one their supporters endured.

West Ham's first-half display was abject. Havant and Waterlooville and Northampton Town displayed greater desire, adventure and, compared with Victor Obinna and Herita Ilunga, quality here than the Premier League's joint-bottom club. Liverpool, on edge before kick-off following defeat at Stoke City and the absence of Steven Gerrard plus Lucas Leiva, mocked any suggestion of a contest containing two managers in the dock.

Hodgson spoke afterwards of the change in English football culture. "We have to learn to live with that these days, I'm afraid," he said. "When I first went to Switzerland in the early 1990s we used to watch French football and I was astounded by how often a team was booed off at half-time if it was losing or the cat-calls that came at the end. I remember saying to my wife: 'That wouldn't happen in England.' Here at Anfield I remember seeing away teams applauded off after winning, which may have been a one-off, but today all of that has gone out of the window."

Yet while professing sympathy for his counterpart, Hodgson, along with everyone else inside the stadium, accepted the away end had a point. Hodgson added: "I've got to say I thought the West Ham fans were quite humorous in what they were singing. They travelled a long way to watch their team here. They came with high hopes and they've watched their team given very little hope of getting anything out of the game, so I suppose they found their comfort where they could."

It was only eight months ago that Sullivan penned an open letter to West Ham supporters that castigated Gianfranco Zola's team, and undermined his manager, following a 3-1 home defeat by Wolves. The sentiment from on high, at least from Gold, was markedly different on Saturday. Gold said: "We came up against a Liverpool side back on form and we have to accept we are bottom of the league but there is no question of a change of manager. But we must do better." It is third-from-bottom Wigan Athletic at home on Saturday, and there will be no margin of error.

Grant's assertion that there were positives to be gleaned from a resilient second-half display was futile in the extreme. Liverpool were three goals up inside 38 minutes and hard done by at that. Glen Johnson, back in the side after injury and a public spat with his manager, opened the scoring after West Ham had failed to deal with a Raul Meireles corner and excelled throughout. Dirk Kuyt took Gerrard's advice to put a penalty against Robert Green straight down the middle following Danny Gabbidon's handball and the impressive Maxi Rodriguez glanced home Paul Konchesky's cross for the third. Hodgson finds himself only three points off fourth place. It may be a congested league but Grant is a long way from redemption.

Man of the match Glen Johnson (Liverpool)



Reds outclass lowly Hammers

LIVERPOOL shrugged off the loss of Steven Gerrard as they secured an emphatic 3-0 victory over lowly West Ham in the Premier League at Anfield.

The Reds skipper, who is out for a month with a hamstring injury suffered on England duty, watched on as Roy Hodgson's side tore the relegation threatened Hammers apart.

First half goals from Glen Johnson, Dirk Kuyt and Maxi Rodriguez ensured Liverpool bounced back from their defeat at Stoke and piled the pressure on West Ham boss Avram Grant.

The rock-bottom Hammers haven't won at Anfield since 1963 and they never looked like ending that miserable run.

Liverpool dominated from the start and the only surprise was that the hosts had to wait until the 18th minute for the breakthrough.

Rodriguez, David Ngog and Raul Meireles all forced saves from an overworked Robert Green before the goalkeeper was finally beaten.

Johnson, who impressed on his return from injury against his former club, chested down Meireles' corner and hammered a low shot past Green.

The Reds doubled their tally nine minutes later. Danny Gabbidon handled in the box as Fernando Torres looked to go past him and Kuyt stepped up to slot home the penalty.

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Seven minutes before the break the third goal arrived. Green kept out Torres' shot but the ball broke to Paul Konchesky whose curling cross was expertly nodded into the far corner by Rodriguez.

The away fans responded with chants of 'You're getting sacked in the morning' towards manager Grant and sang the name of club legend Paulo Di Canio. Pablo Barrera replaced Victor Obinna at the start of the second half but Liverpool remained firmly in control.

Ngog was denied by Radoslav Kovac's brave block and then the impressive Rodriguez chipped Green but his effort drifted narrowly wide.

Only the heroics of Green kept the score down. With 18 minutes to go the keeper pushed Fernando Torres' blistering strike on to the woodwork and was up quickly to tip Christian Poulsen's long range piledriver behind.

Substitute Fabio Aurelio twice went close late on with West Ham relieved to hear the final whistle.

Liverpool: Reina, Johnson, Carragher, Skrtel, Konchesky, Kuyt, Meireles (Shelvey 83), Poulsen, Maxi, Torres (Babel 84), Ngog (Aurelio 73). Subs: Jones, Kyrgiakos, Kelly, Ecclestone.

West Ham: Green, Jacobsen, Gabbidon, Upson, Ilunga (Tomkins 76), Piquionne, Noble, Kovac, Boa Morte, Obinna (Barrera 46), Cole (McCarthy 69). Subs: Stech, Reid, Spector, Nouble.

Referee: Lee Probert (Wiltshire)

The Daily Telegraph

Angry West Ham fans ridicule Grant

Liverpool 3

Johnson 18, Kuyt pen 27,

Rodriguez 38

West Ham United 0 Att: 43,024

The attempts of West Ham's great and good to support Avram Grant may be admirable but his hold on the manager's position looks shakier than ever.

Just a few days after vice-chairman Karren Brady gave assurances that Grant is safe and will have money to spend in January, another abject performance was ridiculed by the club's fans. Saturday's match against Wigan is already being viewed as his last chance to save his job.

West Ham's travelling support have had little choice but to turn to self-mocking at Anfield over the years, but rarely has a manager ever been taunted by his own club's fans in such a way as Grant was.

There was a clear message behind the chants of "Paolo Di Canio". It was reminiscent of the reception received by Gerry Francis as his Tottenham side slipped to a 4-0 defeat at Anfield just over 13 years ago, when each Liverpool goal was greeted with chants of "Bye, bye Gerry". One week and another defeat later, Francis had resigned.

Grant also retains the support, publicly at least, of co-owners David Gold and David Sullivan and maintains he can sort out a squad who have won just once in 14 Premier League matches and are five points from safety.

"We've played 14 games now and have a lot of time to improve it but we need to start quickly," Grant said. "I'm optimistic. The next game is very important and we need to win."

For Liverpool, the return of Glen Johnson, who has struggled with an ankle injury in recent weeks, made a significant difference but, like his team, he will be better judged at White Hart Lane on Sunday.

Against little resistance, Johnson opened the scoring from a Raul Meireles corner, Dirk Kuyt added a second from the penalty spot before Maxi Rodriguez claimed Liverpool's third before half-time.

Johnson's impressive performance came a week after sources close to the player suggested his relationship with Roy Hodgson had broken down completely in the wake of what were perceived as negative comments from his manager.

On the evidence of much of this year, talk of Bayern Munich or Real Madrid waiting in the wings is surely fanciful and it makes sense for Johnson to attempt to resolve any remaining issues with Hodgson.

After all of the apparent discord, Johnson was clearly hoping to move the situation on, even managing to say "nice" half a dozen times in the space of a minute.

"I didn't need to hear it from the boss that I wasn't playing well," he said. "I'm an honest man and I know how well I can play and I hadn't been doing that so it's nice to do well."

"It's always nice to get back off the treatment bench and nice to get back with a goal. It's nice to play again. I'd missed six out of the last seven games so it's nice to get back into it and it was nice to come back with a goal."



Woeful Hammers leave Grant on the edge

LIVERPOOL 3

WEST HAM 0

LIVERPOOL: Reina 7, Johnson 8, Carragher 7, Skrtel 6, Konchesky 7, Kuyt 7, Poulsen 7, Meireles 6 (Shelvey 84), Maxi 6, Ngog 6 (Aurelio 73, 5), Torres 7 (Babel 85). Goals: Johnson 18, Kuyt 27pen, Maxi 38

WEST HAM: Green 7, Jacobsen 6, Gabbidon 5, Upson 6, Ilunga 5, Kovac 5, Noble 6, Boa Morte 5, Obinna 5, Piquionne 5, Cole 5 (McCarthy 69, 5).

REFEREE: Lee Probert

ATTENDANCE: 43,024

THIS had the potential, as one commentator said, to be a game which cost jobs. For Roy Hodgson defeat, whether merited or not, would have piled on untenable pressure. For Avram Grant, catastrophic defeat would surely have had the P45 winging his way.

Both avoided such a scenario, at least, but while Liverpool boss Hodgson can breathe a little easier this morning, for his opposite number the outlook is grim. West Ham were hopeless, while Liverpool played some compelling football in the first half to suggest they are finally beginning to get what it is their manager wants from them.

But they were aided by woeful defending from Grant's team, with errors you would think impossible at this level.

Were it not for some world-class saves from keeper Robert Green in the second half, this could easily have ended in the cricket score that would have ensured Grant was an unemployment statistic this morning.

That is why he was left admitting his continuing job prospects are now out of his hands, and why Hammers joint owner David Gold was not exactly unequivocal in his support.

"As we speak we're standing by the manager," said Gold. "We all have to stick together now."

It's not a time to run scared.

"But, by the same token, we know we have to do a lot better. The situation is worrying."

His words suggests a parting of the ways is highly likely, perhaps inevitable.

It is a shame, because Grant, like Hodgson, is a football man and a decent human being who has a firm grasp of the game. But alas, he does not have a team, or anything approaching one.

West Ham look relegation candidates yet cannot afford to go down and cannot get some expensive mistakes off the wage bill to create space for new signings, making the manager the likely casualty of the situation.

Hodgson seems to be making slow progress towards more stability. On Saturday evening Liverpool were three points off a Champions League place, something of a miracle, given their results this season. The performance of Glen Johnson was a testimony to Hodgson's work. He had suggested he was not playing like an England full-back this season, and it provoked the defender's best display of the campaign so far.

The former West Ham man admitted he exchanged words with his manager, expressing his disappointment comments over his form were made in the media. But he also agreed Hodgson's actions had the desired effect.

"Today I felt good, and it was more like it," he said. "I'm an honest man, I don't need to hear it from the manager that I haven't been playing well. I know when I'm playing well and when I'm not."

"No one wants me to find my best form more than me, and I was aware of what I had to do. It was a little reminder from the boss, he told me that was what he meant by it."

"The gaffer told me he has faith in my ability, we spoke and we cleared things up. The boss explained he didn't mean it in a negative way, just that he knew I had more to offer than I was showing, and wanted to get that from me - and really, that was more like it from me."

It was Johnson who paved the way for this easiest of victories with an impressive opening goal, even if Grant will ask how his side managed to ignore the defender completely at a corner.

Johnson chested down Raul Meireles' delivery and had enough time to turn and smash the ball into the corner of the net, without any noticeable attention from the visitors' back line.

Worse was to follow for West Ham, their decline hastened when Danny Gabbidon handled as Fernando Torres tried to go around him and Dirk Kuyt stepped up to convert the penalty.

The third goal arrived just before the interval. Torres was put through and although his shot was saved West Ham were dreaming as the ball found its way out to Konchesky on the left, and he was given a ridiculous amount of time to tee up Maxi Rodriguez for a simple finish.

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THE INDEPENDENT

ON SUNDAY

Johnson helps Reds shrug off the loss of Gerrard

Avram Grant once came to Merseyside to study Bob Paisley's methods when Liverpool were dominating English football in the 1970s. If that visit provided illumination, this trip will have only brought dark thoughts as Liverpool's comprehensive victory underlined the size of the task he faces to lift West Ham United off the bottom of the table.

And that is if the Israeli is given the chance. Despite vice-chairman Karren Brady's words of support for Grant in midweek, West Ham have won only once in the Premier League this season and this defeat, which ended a run of three draws, had the away fans chanting: "You're getting sacked in the morning." Liverpool were out of sight by the interval, the hosts' bright display in the first half having been rewarded by goals from Glen Johnson, Dirk Kuyt, from the penalty spot, and Maxi Rodriguez.

"We were very poor first half," admitted Grant, though he was defiant about his ability to revive the Londoners' fortunes. "The minute I think I cannot do my job I will not be here. But I am sure I can do a good job and take the team forward."

While Grant rued the absence of Scott Parker - victim of a chest infection - along with Valon Behrami, Kieron Dyer and Manuel da Costa, for once Liverpool did not miss Steven Gerrard, sidelined by the hamstring injury sustained on England duty, as they bounced back from last weekend's disappointment at Stoke City, climbing to ninth on the back of this third straight home victory.

Liverpool's manager Roy Hodgson said: "We were concerned to some extent we would have to do it without Steven Gerrard and [the suspended] Lucas Leiva but luckily the players selected today did really well."

Johnson set the tone for Liverpool's performance with a surging run into the box in the opening minute that won the game's first corner.

David Ngog, starting alongside Fernando Torres, had a low effort saved by Robert Green soon after and Liverpool's early pressure paid off through Johnson's opening goal.

After Green had tipped over Raul Meireles's strike, the midfielder swung over a corner that Johnson, emerging from a cluster of players, took on his chest before firing low past Green.

Hodgson had been critical last week of Johnson's performances this season but he was full of praise for the defender on his return from injury. "I thought he was full of running, and he scored a very important goal."

Liverpool's second came when Danny Gabbidon handled in the box as Torres sought to burst through. Kuyt, following a tip from Gerrard, beat Green down the middle.

Liverpool's third came from Rodriguez. Although Green foiled Torres with his feet, Paul Konchesky crossed the ball back into the middle where the unmarked Argentinian steered a header inside the far post.

West Ham created only one chance in the second half and that was in injury time when Frederic Piquionne headed wide from Pablo Barrera's cross. Pepe Reina's only save of the half came when Piquionne's cross almost dipped beneath the crossbar.

Green managed to spare West Ham further embarrassment with two flying stops, first turning a searing Torres strike on to the crossbar, then tipping behind Christian Poulsen's 20-yard drive.

Substitutes: Liverpool: Aurelio for Ngog (73), Shelvey for Meireles (83), Babel for Torres (84). West Ham: Barrera for Obinna (h-t), McCarthy for Cole (49), Tomkins for Ilunga (76).

Booking: West Ham: Noble.

Attendance: 43,024

Referee: Lee Probert

Man of the match: Johnson

Match rating: 7/10

The Sunday Telegraph

Liverpool stroll turns up the heat on Grant

Liverpool 3
 West Ham 0
 Attendance: 43,024

For the second week running the name of a former great was used to bait a manager and there must have been some relief for Roy Hodgson that it was West Ham fans singing for Paolo Di Canio.

For Liverpool fans, it may not have felt like it for much of the early part of Liverpool's season but there is generally always someone worse off than you. Unfortunately for West Ham, sitting bottom of the table, there is no one worse than them in the Premier League. Their fans were told at half-time that the last train to London departed 33 minutes after the final whistle. Three goals down at the time and without a win here since 1963, the majority stayed on but then, on this evidence, and the 13 other Premier League matches this season that have yielded just one victory, this may be their last visit to Anfield for some time.

The recalled Glen Johnson, Dirk Kuyt's penalty and a goal from Maxi Rodriguez gave Liverpool a comfortable half-time advantage allowing them to stroll through the second period.

Although a stiffer test awaits Liverpool at White Hart Lane a week today, Liverpool should be applauded for the thrust they showed in pulling apart admittedly dreadful opposition.

West Ham have not won in 16 Premier League matches at Anfield, but rarely can they have been beaten so convincingly.

Johnson may have intimated that he was bored by manager Roy Hodgson after his lack of contribution was highlighted by his manager last week, but on his return to the side he showed he meant business inside the first minute.

A fine sweeping move saw Kuyt spread wide to former West Ham defender Johnson, who withstood a challenge from Herita Ilunga and clipped a cross to the far post that was headed away from danger by Lars Jacobsen.

David Ngog was also relishing a start and after a powerful run down the left flank he cut in field before forcing a low save by Robert Green. Maxi also thumped a shot narrowly wide of the West Ham goal as the hosts continued to pour forward.

Ngog caused more problems when he stayed on his feet after a wild challenge from Danny Gabbidon and fed Fernando Torres, whose low effort flew wide. Raul Meireles collected his own corner from Maxi and hit a dipping shot that was palmed over his bar by Green.

But from the Meireles corner that followed, Johnson burst through a crowd of bodies to control on his chest and drill a low shot past Green to give Liverpool a well-deserved 18thminute lead.

Just a few minutes later, they had the opportunity to double their advantage thanks to more comic defending from the visitors.

Kuyt clipped a cross in field, which was left by three West Ham defenders and reached Torres, whose attempt to nick the ball into the area was blocked by two separate handballs from Gabbidon, spotted by referee Lee Probert. Dutchman Kuyt rolled in a scruffy penalty and soon the West Ham fans were calling for Avram Grant's head.

It should have been three when Green failed to punch away a Paul Konchesky free-kick and a looping header from Rodriguez was cleared by Gabbidon.

There was even ironic applause from the visiting fans, who had been cheering each pass in a rare spell of possession from their team, when a cross from Luis Boa Morte found the head of Carlton Cole, who glanced straight at Pepe Reina. Green made a low save with his legs from Torres but West Ham failed to clear properly and Konchesky's cross was glanced into the corner of the net by Rodriguez.

Hodgson was so cheered by the moment that he even retrieved the ball from 20 yards down the touchline to return it to the centre circle to get the game under way again.

After the interval, Johnson found more space in the West Ham area but glanced a header wide from a corner from Meireles and as the visitors attempted some sort of response, Mark Noble drove wide from distance.

Radoslav Kovac was forced into a fine block to get in the way of an Ngog effort and Torres and Rodriguez also missed from distance.

Torres had an effort turned onto the bar by Green, who then palmed a shot wide from Christian Poulsen and saw a thumping drive from Fabio Aurelio fly past his top corner.

Liverpool (4-4-2): Reina; Johnson, Skrtel, Carragher, Konchesky; Kuyt, Poulsen, Meireles (Shelvey 83), Rodriguez; Ngog (Aurelio 73), Torres (Babel 84). Subs: Jones, Kyrgiakos, Kelly, Ecclestone.

West Ham (4-3-3): Green; Jacobsen, Gabbidon, Upson, Ilunga (Tomkins 76); Kovac, Noble, Boa Morte; Piquionne, Cole (McCarthy 69), Obinna (Barrera 46). Subs: Reid, Spector, Nouble, Stech. Booked: Noble
 Referee: L Probert (Gloucestershire)

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Liverpool ease their way past hapless Hammers

LIVERPOOL 3

Johnson 18, Kuyt 27 pen, Maxi 38

WEST HAM 0

JUST when it seemed that the absence of one England international might deepen the woes of Liverpool and their beleaguered manager, Roy Hodgson, along came another to put some fire back in Anfield bellies, albeit against a team that stopped just short of standing aside and waving him through on goal.

Glen Johnson, missing for three games with a groin strain and seemingly unhappy at Anfield, tore West Ham apart in the first half and scored the first goal. Dirk Kuyt and Maxi Rodriguez added a goal each before the interval as the Premier League's bottom side did their best dying swan act at a ground where they haven't won for 47 years.

"Glen probably profited in a strange way from the fact that he has been obliged to undergo an enforced rest with the injury," Hodgson said. "He was full of running and enthusiasm and scored a very important goal."

In all the furore over Gerrard's absence, it was easy to forget that West Ham were missing their own talisman Scott Parker, who had a chest infection. With the in-form Lucas Leiva also absent because of suspension, Hodgson was forced to throw in Christian Poulsen, who has been fingered by Liverpool fans as one of those who they believed had failed to step up to the plate during these troubled times at Anfield. Johnson has also been getting some stick, not least from his manager, and was clearly intent on proving a point after Hodgson had publicly stated that he needed to play to the form of an England right-back.

In the opening exchanges he was more like an out-and-out, old-fashioned winger, constantly getting to the opposition byline and delivering well-directed crosses as Liverpool peppered Robert Green's goal in the face of minimal West Ham resistance. One from Raul Meireles on 17 minutes was palmed away for a corner that the same player took and while West Ham's central defence watched, Johnson was able to chest the ball down on the edge of the box and slam a low right-footed shot past Green. Eight minutes later they were two behind. Fernando Torres burst into the box and his progress was only halted by Danny Gabbidon's outstretched arm touching the ball. Kuyt sent Green the wrong way with the penalty.

West Ham could only register one effort on target in the first half when Luis Boa Morte's cross and Carlton Cole's header forced a save out of Pepe Reina.

Fatalistic Cockney wit had already set in by the time Rodriguez added a third on 38 minutes. Victor Obinna lost the ball in his own half and then inexcusably gave up the chase as Torres was sent through on Green and when the ball rebounded off the goalkeeper's legs, it fell to Paul Konchesky, whose cross was headed in by Rodriguez, with Matthew Upson a spectator.

It marked a complete transformation from Liverpool's performance in the late kick-off the previous Saturday against Stoke City. Stoke were physical and in their faces and Liverpool couldn't cope; West Ham, were abject and spineless, looking like a side going through the motions.

The West Ham vice-chairman Karren Brady had given their manager, Avram Grant, a vote of confidence during the week, but when he came to the edge of the technical area at the start of the second half, West Ham's own fans told him he would be "sacked in the morning". Otherwise Anfield was muted as the game meandered, though Green produce a brilliant double save on 72 minutes, first tipping a Torres drive on to an upright and then diving to his other side with equal athleticism to deny Poulsen.

"We were very poor in the first half and we didn't come to the game in any way," said Grant, who added that the West Ham fans had a right to call for his head.

"Even now in this situation I am sure we can get out of this, because we have been playing well in the past few weeks. The minute I think I cannot do my job I will not be here."

Star man: Glen Johnson (Liverpool) Yellow card: West Ham: Noble Referee: L Probert Attendance: 43,024

Liverpool: Reina 7, Johnson 8, Carragher 7, Skrtel 7, Konchesky 7, Poulsen 7, Kuyt 7, Meireles 7 (Shelvey 83min), Maxi 7, Torres 6 (Babel 84min), Ngog 6 (Aurelio 73min)

West Ham: Green 8, Jacobsen 5, Gabbidon, 4 Upson 5, Ilunga 4 (Tomkins 76min), Kovac 6, Noble 5, Boa Morte 6, Obinna 3 (Barrera h-t, 5), Piquionne 5, Cole 5 (McCarthy 69min)

Johnson seizes his chance to leave Grant on brink: On this showing the visiting fans will have the change of manager they want soon

LIVERPOOL 3

Johnson 18 Kuyt 27pen Maxi 38

WEST HAM 0

The only act of mercy for West Ham's suffering supporters at Anfield came when the PA announcer revealed the time of the last train back to London. What they really want, as was made volubly clear during this stroll for Liverpool, is for time to be called on Avram Grant's reign. There may not be long to wait, on this evidence.

There is a vast difference between defeat and humiliation, and Liverpool capitalised on a truly woeful first-half display from the visitors to inflict the latter here. David Sullivan and David Gold, the West Ham owners who will ultimately determine Grant's fate, had to listen to repeated chants of "Paolo Di Canio" from the away section, as their club remain adrift with Wolves at the bottom of the Premier League. Problems must run deep when a man with no managerial experience is being touted as your saviour.

"The moment I think I cannot do my job, I will not be here," said the former Chelsea and Portsmouth manager. "But I am sure I can do a good job and that I can take the club forward." His employers currently share the same view, at least in public, but outright antagonism towards a manager and abject performances on the pitch usually create only one answer. "We missed a lot of players but we still should have performed better," added Grant. "But at least the second half was good and we showed it's not easy to break us even in a bad situation."

The tone was set in the opening seconds. Liverpool began with an energy and purpose the visitors never matched, and went close through Glen Johnson, David Ngog, Maxi Rodriguez and Fernando Torres inside the first 10 minutes. At no point did it seem Liverpool would rue those misses and, on 18 minutes, three West Ham players challenged three opponents for a Raul Meireles corner. Johnson not only beat Herita Ilunga in the air to take the ball on his chest, he then had acres of space to drive the second ball low under Robert Green.

Eight minutes later, Torres twisted his way into the West Ham area only for Danny Gabbidon to flick the ball away with his hand. There was no dispute from the visitors, and Dirk Kuyt, who spread the play from midfield unopposed all game, drilled the penalty straight down the middle as Green dived to his left.

That was as much as even West Ham's stoical travelling support could take.

"You're getting sacked in the morning" and chants for their former Italian idol soon reverberated from one corner of the Anfield Road. Davids Gold and Sullivan shifted uncomfortably in the directors' box.

As Roy Hodgson would no doubt confirm following his own turbulent start at Liverpool, judgement is passed rapidly in the Premier League these days. But it is also unavoidable following performances such as this from West Ham. They were appalling, lacking in movement, adventure and, as Victor Obinna showed when he allowed Johnson to race past him inside the West Ham penalty area in the opening minute, any passion whatsoever.

A butterfly possesses stronger wings than West Ham's left flank of Obinna and Ilunga, and more heart, although Liverpool's third arrived from the equally porous right. The industrious Rodriguez released Torres inside the area and though Green denied the Spaniard, former West Ham man Paul Konchesky returned the loose ball with an exquisite cross for the Argentinean to apply an equally polished header into the far corner.

Obinna produced West Ham's first shot of note in first-half stoppage time. The only net it found was that hanging off the stand. Neither the ball nor the Nigerian would be seen again. West Ham at least showed some professional pride and defensive resilience after the interval, with Green saving superbly from Torres and Christian Poulsen in quick succession, but that did not stem the tide of vitriol towards the former Chelsea and Portsmouth manager.

Anfield 43,024

Game rating 7/10 Referee Lee Probert