

Date: 29 December 2010

Opposition: Wolverhampton Wanderers

Competition: League

Times	Guardian	Mail
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Echo		



29 December  
2010

THETIMES

Ward strike lifts McCarthy while increasing air of Liverpool gloom;  
Second-half winner increases Hodgson's agony  
Liverpool 0  
Wolves 1  
Having waited almost six months to hear his name chanted by the Kop, Roy Hodgson's big moment finally arrived last night. "Hodgson for England" came the cry from the Liverpool supporters, their derision as palpable as their team's decay. Defeat to the Barclays Premier League's bottom-placed club was a new indignity for Liverpool and their fans in a season in which they might have imagined that their low point had already been reached and overcome when being beaten at home by Blackpool and Northampton Town.  
When appointed last summer, Hodgson's arrival was heralded by those who brought him to the club as a move that would steady the ship. Instead, Liverpool are in danger of sinking without trace as Hodgson's presence accelerates a decline that he was supposed to stop.  
Mick McCarthy had insisted beforehand that he sought no sympathy for his plight and the Wolverhampton Wanderers manager got charity instead with Liverpool performing so abjectly the visiting team could scarcely do anything other than secure the victory they needed to climb away from the foot of the table.  
Liverpool's lack of natural wide players was again evident as Dirk Kuyt, a one-time centre forward who now ploughs a regular furrow on the right flank, was deployed on the left and Raul Meireles, a central midfield player, was shunted out to the right.  
It is this kind of imbalance that Damien Comolli, the club's director of football strategy, was recruited to address and the Frenchman could be about to complete his first piece of transfer business since joining Liverpool with the possible signing of Sylvain Marveaux, a 24-year-old winger, from Rennes for a fee in the region of [pounds sterling]3 million.  
Marveaux is out of contract next summer and his presence in the Anfield directors' box last night suggested that a deal could be imminent. Liverpool toiled once again in the first half as their narrowness choked the life out of Fernando Torres, who thrives in the kind of space that he is being denied. At least the tactical mishmash afforded Meireles the freedom to roam and pick up possession and the Portuguese did have Liverpool's best opportunity of the first 45 minutes only to be let down by his finishing.  
Having taken only a point from their previous eight away games, Wolves arrived at Anfield low on confidence and morale. On this evidence, though, there is no suggestion that McCarthy's team have stopped playing for their manager or believing in his tactics.  
Whether Liverpool had come down to Wolves' level is a moot point but what is not in question is that there was no yawning gap in either performance levels or approach. At times,Liverpool even descended into being second best, the latest chastening experience for their supporters, who made vocal their displeasure at the interval with a cacophony of boos and then with continuous chants of "attack, attack, attack". Such exhortations failed to lift Liverpool, who continued to struggle, and Wolves began to scent an upset. Their chances of causing one rose considerably when Stephen Ward, who was sent off in the corresponding fixture last season, gave them a deserved lead after 56 minutes. Hesitant defending by Sotirios Kyrgiakos put Liverpool on the back foot initially and they never recovered their poise as Sylvan Ebanks-Blake put Ward through on goal and the forward calmly drew Pepe Reina before sliding a shot under him.  
The replacement of David Ngog by Ryan Babel was the trigger for the outpouring with chants of "Hodgson for England" being followed with a choral demand for Kenny Dalglish to be installed as manager.  
While Hodgson's supporters in the media have continued to fight his corner, those at his club have long since given up on him and the only question now is how long it will take for Liverpool's owners to follow suit.  
Liverpool (4-4-2): J M Reina - G Johnson, S Kyrgiakos, M Skrtel, P Konchesky (sub: F Aurelio, 74min) - R Meireles (sub: J Cole, 73), Lucas Leiva,S Gerrard, D Kuyt - D Ngog (sub: R Babel, 62), F Torres. Substitutes not used: B Jones, D Agger, M Rodriguez, C Poulsen. Booked: Johnson.  
Wolverhampton Wanderers (4-4-2): W Hennessey - R Zubar, C Berra, R Stearman, G Elokobi - M Jarvis (sub: D Edwards, 89), K Foley, N Milijas, S Hunt - S Ward (sub: S Fletcher, 78), S Ebanks-Blake. Substitutes not used: M Hahnemann, D Jones, M Bent, G Bia, D Batth. Booked: Elokobi Referee: P Walton.

theguardian

Liverpool fans feed Hodgson to Wolves after dismal defeat  
When discussing the emotions of managing a club bottom of the Premier League, Mick McCarthy replied that he disliked the sympathy that came with it, a combination he described as "shit and caramel". Since coming to Merseyside, Roy Hodgson has endured plenty of the former and been offered precious little of the latter.  
There was little sweetness in the air around Anfield last night. The chants of "Hodgson for England" rang out from the Kop, mingling in with the more ominous sound of "Dalglish".  
This was the final Premier League game of 2010, for which, let it be remembered, that Hodgson was voted manager of the year. Long before its end, he was cutting a desperately isolated figure on the touchline. Two of his three substitutions appeared to inflame Anfield: Ryan Babel was jeered on while Paul Konchesky was almost laughed off.  
Liverpool had been outplayed by a club that before last night had won once at Anfield in 60 years. Hodgson thought it a worse performance than Liverpool's two other humiliations here this season: the defeats by Northampton and Blackpool. Sylvain Marveaux, the Rennes winger who is expected to become the first of Hodgson's signings in January was in the directors' box, although on this evidence, he may change his mind.  
Hodgson said he was trying to think of a different adjective to "disappointing". In the streets that hem in the old stadium, he would have been offered plenty of alternatives. Wolverhampton Wanderers' victory may have been unexpected but it was thoroughly deserved and the goal that sealed it had been coming. Shortly before Stephen Ward scored his first Premier League goal, Pepe Reina had passed straight to Sylvan Ebanks-Blake. What followed was far worse. Sotirios Kyrgiakos could only clear the ball as far as Ebanks-Blake and the striker slid his pass through to Ward, who in turn slid his shot through Reina's legs.  
At Old Trafford earlier in the season, Wolves had been denied a point in the final minute, which saw McCarthy kick a nearby water bottle a sight harder than Babel kicked anything last night. There was little danger of a repetition. Martin Skrtel did put the ball into the net beneath the Kop, but the fact that five Liverpool players were offside summed up the night.  
"Most people's perception of Wolves would be, 'They are going down, they are bottom of the league and just been beaten at home by Wigan'," said McCarthy. "They would think we would come here, sit back, get our arses slapped and our bellies tickled and go home with nothing. But we decided we were not having that. We would come here and have a real go, and fortune favoured the brave." A night laced with booing began with applause. They had put their hands together in memory of Avi Cohen and Bill Jones, men from different Liverpool generations - the ones that won the league titles in 1980 and 1947 respectively, to be exact - and both played in better teams than this one. For their previous game at Anfield Liverpool had given away free tickets to kids and entertained them with a stultifying Europa League contest with Utrecht in a game as devoid of meaning as it was shots at goal. This one was full price. Wolves are not exactly fearsome opponents in this corner of Merseyside.  
Their one victory in six decades at Anfield had come, perversely, in 1984, the year Liverpool won a treble and Wolves finished last. They did not play like a bottom-of-the-table team. Wolves were aggressive and inventive when going forward, adjectives that could not be used about the home team, captained by Steven Gerrard for the first time since the 2-0 defeat at Stoke in mid-November. It is tempting to see Gerrard as a footballing Ricky Ponting, a great player who finds his career turning at a sporting institution teetering towards deep decline. He tried manfully but the only clear opening came from a crossfield ball from Fernando Torres, played into Raul Meireles' path by George Elokobi. It was their only real chance and to borrow one of McCarthy's words, the shot contained far too much caramel.  
Liverpool 4-4-2  
Reina; Johnson\*, Kyrgiakos, Skrtel, Konchesky (Aurelio, 74); Meireles (Cole, 73), Gerrard, Lucas; Kuyt; Torres, Ngog (Babel, 62). Subs not used  
Jones, Agger, Poulsen, Rodriguez.  
Wolves 4-4-1-1  
Hennessey; Zubar, Stearman, Berra, Elokobi\*; Jarvis (Edwards, 89), Foley, Milijas, Hunt; Ward (Fletcher, 78); Ebanks-Blake.  
Subs not used  
Hahnemann, Batth, Jones, Mujangi Bia, Bent.  
Referee P Walton.

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# The Mail

HODGSON CAN'T WARD OFF PANIC  
Liverpool 0  
Wolves 1  
IT HAS taken six months for the Kop to chant Roy Hodgson--s name. They failed to sing for him on his Barclays Premier League debut as Liverpool manager and the most famous stand in football never gave him a thumbs-up when Chelsea were swatted aside in November.  
But last night the wait came to an end. As Liverpool's wretched season took another shambolic turn, the Kop left Liverpool's owners Fenway Sports Group in no doubt of their feelings as they chanted 'Hodgson for England'.  
In losing to basement side Wolves, Hodgson found his position come under enormous pressure following what was a woeful performance. Stephen Ward's first goal in the top flight was no more than Mick McCarthy's plucky side deserved. But while Wolves celebrated, Liverpool's supporters vented their frustrations and the singing of 'Hodgson for England', swiftly followed by cried of 'Dalglish', shows the appetite of the masses for change. Not even the fact Liverpool are closing in on making Rennes left winger Sylvain Marveaux their first signing when the transfer window opens could placate supporters who have never warmed to the former Fulham boss.  
The effects of the bleak mid-winter meant 18 days had passed since Liverpool were last in Barclays Premier League a c t ion and during the opening exchanges their heaviness of touch, coupled with indecisive movement, suggested the enforced break had done them few favours.  
It did enable Hodgson to get Steven Gerrard back to fitness but the table now dictates that the second half of the campaign will be fraught with problems. European qualification is expected in the Red half of Merseyside but the Champions League will remain out of reach come May and unless Hodgson can strike upon a winning formula soon, Liverpool might need to win the Europa League if they are to play in that competition next year.  
Hodgson had warned in the buildup that Wolves would make life difficult and so it proved. They scampered and harried to protect their goal while Liverpool spluttered and stumbled every time they got close to goal.  
Had Raul Meireles shown more conviction when Fernando Torres fired a quick free-kick in to his feet after just seven minutes, the nerves around Anfield might have dissipated.  
Instead, the Portugal midfielder, seizing on George Elokobi ' s indecision, fired his shot straight at Wayne Hennessey and Richard Stearman was able to clear the danger, giving his teammates -- and his manager -- more belief.  
McCarthy was totally relaxed as he prowled the technical area, conveying a sense of calm to his team; they did not look the worst team in the division, despite what the table suggests, comfortably keeping Liverpool at bay.  
Hodgson, by contrast, was frustration personified (left). Stuffing his hands into his pockets and shaking his head at each errant pass, he tried swapping and changing the formation of his team in an attempt to galvanise them.  
Nothing he tried in the opening half worked. Liverpool were confused and muddled, Torres was too often isolated, while Gerrard and Meireles failed to establish a rhythm as they were continually brought inside then pushed onto the flank.  
It came as no surprise, then, when the half was greeted with outbreak of exasperated boos from the Kop. Liverpool were woefully outof-sorts and Wolves, playing with great endeavour, sensed an opportunity.  
Emerging from the break with McCarthy's enthusiastic words ringing in their ears, Wolves set about securing their first away win in the Premier League since they beat West Ham United on March 23 and every time gold shirts poured forward, anxiety levels increased.  
Soon anxiety turned to outrage as Martin Skrtel and Sotirios Kyrgiakos got in a tangle and Sylvan Ebanks-Blake rolled a perfectly weighted ball into the path of Ward, who found himself in splendid isolation with only Pepe Reina to beat. He showed admirable cool as the Spaniard attempted to close him down, rolling his shot into the corner of the Anfield Road End net to spark scenes of unconfined joy in the away section and the visitors' dug-out.  
But for a terrific challenge from Glen Johnson on Kevin Foley, Wolves would have doubled their lead moments later, as Liverpool lost all sense of organisation and direction. All the while, Hodgson stood unable to comprehend the events unfolding before him.  
Skrtel did head the ball in the net from a free-kick two minutes from time, but his effort was ruled out for offside.  
MATCH FACTS  
LIVERPOOL (4-2-3-1): Reina 6; Johnson 5, Skrtel 6, Kyrgiakos 6, Konchesky 6 (Aurelio 74min, 5); Lucas 7, Meireles 6 (Cole 73, 4); Kuyt 5, Gerrard 6, Ngog 6 (Babel 62, 5); Torres 6. Subs not used: Jones, Agger, Rodriguez, Poulsen.  
Booked: Johnson.  
WOLVERHAMPTON WANDERERS (4-4-2): Hennessey 7; Zubar 6, Stearman 7, Berra 7, Elokobi 5; Jarvis 6, Foley 6, Milijas 7, Hunt 5; Ward 6 (Fletcher 78), Ebanks-Blake 6. Subs not used: Hahnemann, Edwards, Jones, Bent, Bia, Batth.  
Booked: Elokobi. Man of the match: Richard Stearman. Referee: Peter Walton 7.

# The Daily Telegraph

Hodgson thrown to the Wolves as Ward strikes winner  
Liverpool 0  
Wolverhampton 1  
Ward 56  
Att: 41,614  
Finally, after six long, arduous months, Roy Hodgson's name rang around Anfield last night. "Hodgson for England," sang Liverpool's fans as they watched their side crumble to abject defeat to the Premier League's bottom side. It was not intended as a compliment.  
It washed down the Kop almost as soon as Stephen Ward propelled Wolves into what turned out to be an unassailable lead, mingling with the songs in praise of the man they would see replace him, Kenny Dalglish. It subsided only to jeer Hodgson's decision to substitute David Ngog and to cheer the removal of Paul Konchesky.  
If the job of Liverpool manager was decided by public vote, Hodgson would be ejected by dawn. Even the 63 year-old admits that he has never been granted the benefit of the doubt by the Anfield crowd, his tenure forever haunted by the spectre of the man he beat to the post.  
"The famous Anfield support has not really been there ever since I came here," he said. "There were the problems with the owners and then with Kenny being such a legend here and not being given the job that was given to me.  
"I do not like to hear those things, but I have had to live with it from the start, and I suppose that is the Kop's way, Anfield's way, of showing they are not happy with the way things are. I can only hope the fans become supporters as well because this is a time the club needs support. It is time for people to help us along."  
To those disaffected loyalists in the stands, that task falls primarily to John W Henry and Tom Werner, owners of the Fenway Sports Group, Liverpool's owners. Their first act, it is felt, should be to dismiss Hodgson.  
Liverpool, after all, end 2010 just three points off the relegation zone, defeated at home by the team with the worst away record in all four divisions.  
FSG have shown precious little appetite for such seismic shifts in their first months at the club's helm, preferring a considered, thoughtful approach. Defeat against Bolton on Saturday may force their hand, but Hodgson insists he retains his own confidence and his players' faith in his ability to staunch the endless flow of nadirs.  
That self-belief will have been boosted by the sight of Sylvain Marveaux, the Rennes player, in the Anfield's directors' box.  
The 24 year-old, out of contract this summer, seems set to become Liverpool's first recruit in the January transfer window, for a fee of around [pounds sterling]1.5million.  
Capable of playing as either a left-winger or a left-back, his versatility is no doubt seen by both the manager and Damien Comolli as a considerable boost to the club's resources. Unless he can fill all 11 positions simultaneously, though, judging by this evidence, his impact will be minimal.  
As Hodgson acknowledged, none of his team emerged from the game with any credit. Liverpool were dire with the ball and without it, dire in defence and in attack, dire in thought and in deed.  
Liverpool almost scored after seven minutes, Fernando Torres picking out Raul Meireles with a quick free kick only for the Portuguese to find his shot blocked by Wayne Hennessey, but they failed to build on that fleeting threat. For 83 minutes, they laboured, hopeless, hapless.  
True, they might have had a penalty when Christophe Berra hauled back Sotirios Kyrgiakos, but the hosts did not even provide an intermittent menace to Mick McCarthy's side. Bottom of the table before the game, Wolves still arrived with two strikers and played confidently, offensively. There is no fear here any more. This is Anfield. So what?  
Their goal, hailed by McCarthy as overdue "justice" for Ward's dismissal here last season, was well-deserved, though it owed as much to Liverpool's ineptitude as Wolves' endeavour. Kyrgiakos failed to clear his lines, Sylvan Ebanks-Blake slotted the ball through Martin Skrtel's legs and Ward poked home.  
Anfield's response was immediate, furious. If only his team had produced a response so emphatic, rather than the meek surrender they managed.  
Hennessey, his back to the Kop, did not make a save of note in the second half. Starved of action, devoid of hope, Liverpool's fans bellowed out Hodgson's name. There was no praise, no thanks. Only fury, and frustration.  
Liverpool (4-4-2): Reina 6; Johnson 4, Kyrgiakos 5, Skrtel 5, Konchesky 4 (Aurelio 73); Meireles 5 (Cole 73), Lucas 6, Gerrard 6, Kuyt 4; Ngog 7 (Babel 62), Torres 4. Subs: Jones (g), Agger, Maxi, Poulsen. Booking: Johnson.  
Wolverhampton Wanderers (4-4-2): Hennessey 6; Zubar 6, Stearman 7, Berra 7, Elokobi 6; Jarvis 6 (Edwards 89), Foley 8, Milijas 7, Hunt 7; Ebanks-Blake 7, Ward 7 (Fletcher 78).  
Subs: Hahnemann (g), Jones, Bent, Mujambi-Bia, Batth.  
Booking: Elokobi.  
Referee: P Walton (Northamptonshire).

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Ward's strike leaves Hodgson reign in ruins

ROY HODGSON has been waiting a long time to hear the Kop sing his name but never did he think it would have been like this. The sharply ironic barbs of "Hodgson for England" rained down on him last night as his Liverpool side fell to a dispiriting and justified defeat to the club with the worst away record in all four English divisions.

Wolves had registered just one away point all season and had not won away since Upton Park last March, until a Liverpool side displaying all the uncertainty and lack of ambition which has characterised the Hodgson era capitulated to them. After the irony - delivered when Hodgson, his side a goal down, introduced Ryan Babel for David Ngog - came the indignity, for the manager of renewed chants of "Dalglish".

Liverpool could hardly have asked for a better choice of opposition to see out the year than a side against whom they have won 13 of the last 14 league games, keeping nine clean sheets. The memory of Avi Cohen, the man whose goal won the 1980 league title and who died this week, aged 54, from injuries sustained in a motorcycle accident, was certainly evidence that this club does not belong in the place it has occupied for the miserable past 12 months. Cohen was remembered before kick-off.

But the keen anticipation of the first game for nearly three weeks disappeared into the dank night mist just before kick-off. Steven Gerrard's return for the first time since his hamstring removed him from the side six weeks ago ought to have made a difference, but instead Roy Hodgson struggled to decide how best to deploy him. The defensive midfield role Gerrard unexpectedly took up, breaking up the holding partnership of Lucas and Raul Meireles which has started to work so well, left Liverpool clunking through the first half.

He and the Portuguese international swapped roles before the break, reverted back after the break, but the muffled boos which greeted the home side's departure reflected the desperate lack of incision.

One flash of inspiration from Fernando Torres almost made the difference just seven minutes in. The Spaniard spotted Meireles on the right and sent a 20-yard, crossfield free kick zeroing to him.

But Meireles' shot was saved instinctively by Wayne Hennessey, and Richard Stearman, a critical figure in the Wolves rearguard, cleared. Stearman also leapt to navigate a deep Gerrard cross out of touch before David Ngog could pounce on it.

Wolves created even less but looked the more inventive. They were rewarded six minutes past the hour, when an indecisive header by Sotirios Kyrgiakos - preferred despite Daniel Agger's return to fitness - allowed Sylvan Ebanks-Blake time to thread a ball between the Greek defender and Martin Skrtel for Stephen Ward to fire in his first league goal.

It was Hodgson's decision to remove David Ngog in place of Ryan Babel, six minutes later, which sent the murmurs of dissatisfaction into full blown mutiny on the Kop. Babel is not a popular figure at any corner of this stadium but Ngog had actually contributed more than Torres. First came the boos, then those ironic chants, then the legend of "Dalglish". Hodgson did not glance up but the predicament almost graduated into a calamity when another scramble in the Liverpool box left Glen Johnson to block desperately.

As Wolves continued to press, the cheers which greeted the arrival of Fabio Aurelio, a symbol of the Rafael Benitez era, for Paul Konchesky, one of Hodgson's, were another message. Five Liverpool players were offside when Skrtel rose to head in an 88th minute Gerrard free-kick and Liverpool fell to their second home defeat to Wolves in 60 years. The visiting fans had the last shout, singing: "We're winning away."

Liverpool (4-2-3-1) Reina; Johnson, Kyrgiakos, Skrtel, Konchesky (Aurelio, 73); Gerrard, Lucas; Meireles (Cole, 73) Ngog (Babel, 62), Kuyt; Torres. Substitutes not used Jones, Agger, Rodriguez, Poulsen.

Booked Johnson.

Wolverhampton Wanderers (4-4-2) Hennessey; Zubar, Stearman, Berra, Elokobi; Jarvis, Foley, Milijas, Hunt; Ward (Fletcher, 78), Ebanks-Blake. Substitutes not used Hahnemann, Edwards, Jones, Bent, Mujangi Bia, Baath.

Booked Elokobi.

Possession Liverpool 55% Wolves 45%.

Shots on target Liverpool 5 Wolves 3.

Referee P Walton (Northamptonshire). Att 41,614.



ROY FED TO WOLVES

JUST when Liverpool thought their annus horribilis could not get any worse, it has. This was a humiliation to add to the others suffered at Anfield this year against Reading, Northampton, Atletico Madrid and Blackpool.

And make no mistake, this was no fluke. Wolves fully deserved their first win at Anfield in nearly 27 years.

That was the most damning aspect of this latest low which was a fitting end to what has been a truly dreadful year for this proud club.

Wolves were better in every department and they out-fought, out-thought and out everythinged Liverpool to earn their first away win of the season and lift themselves off the bottom.

Kopites booed at the final whistle and vented their fury at Roy Hodgson by calling for their hero Kenny Dalglish.

They feel that under Hodgson, Liverpool are a rudderless ship, devoid of passion, drifting ever closer towards the bottom three.

It's hard to argue with them on the evidence of these 90 minutes - and forget the Champions League, the Reds are just three points off the relegation zone going into 2011.

Hodgson is running out of excuses and Steven Gerrard returned after six weeks out with a hamstring injury, although he looked a shadow of his usual self. Hodgson's tactics were all wrong and his decision to deploy Dirk Kuyt on the left and Raul Meireles on the right beggared belief. His substitution of David Ngog, Liverpool's best attacking player for the ineffectual Ryan Babel, was another call which angered fans.

Nothing could be salvaged from this disastrous night and the question fans are now asking is how much longer can owner John W Henry let the club continue to slide? Liverpool started well before fading completely and Meireles should have scored in the opening minutes when put through by Fernando Torres' quickly-taken freekick.

That was as good as it got for the Reds and Wolves grew in confidence as they easily contained the statuesque Torres and the off-colour Gerrard. Former French Under-21 left winger Sylvain Marveaux, who is set to join Liverpool in a pounds 1.5million deal from Rennes next week, watched from the stands and they desperately need him on this showing.

Liverpool could argue they should have had a penalty as Christophe Berra clearly tugged Sotirios Kyrgiakos down by his shirt, but few referees are brave enough to give one of those calls.

Glen Johnson, who was one of Liverpool's few decent performers, did well to thread the ball through to Ngog, but the French striker stabbed his right-foot effort wide. Wolves began to feel they could get something out of a fixture which has yielded so little down the years and Ronald Zubar turned and hit a left-foot shot across goal, which was held by Pepe Reina.

And they stunned Anfield after 56 minutes when Sotirios Kyrgiakos missed a high ball and Sylvan Ebanks-Blake played Stephen Ward through to finish coolly through Reina's legs.

It was a sweet moment for Ward, who was sent off for the first time in his career in this fixture last season as Wolves lost 2-0. Reina ran almost the length of the pitch to tell referee Andre Marriner to send Ward off for a second bookable offence and this time it was the Spaniard's turn to look despondent.

It must have felt just as good for Wolves owner Steve Morgan, who tried unsuccessfully to buy his beloved Liverpool during David Moores' reign. He could not be at Anfield, but must have wished he had been to savour this glorious night for his club.

The Kop were simmering and the final straw was Hodgson's bizarre decision to replace Ngog with the ineffective Babel.

They sarcastically chanted "Hodgson for England" before calling for Dalglish. It could have been even worse for Liverpool but Johnson made a goalsaving challenge to block Kevin Foley's shot.

Although as far as Kopites are concerned, it was still bad enough.

LIVERPOOL: Reina 6, Johnson 7, Kyrgiakos 4, Skrtel 5, Konchesky 5, Meireles 5, Lucas 6, Gerrard 5, Kuyt 5; Ngog 6 (Babel 62, 5), Torres 5.

WOLVES: Hennessey 6, Zubar 6, Stearman 7, Berra 6, Elokobi 6, Jarvis 6, Foley 6, Milijas 6, Hunt 6, Ward 8, Ebanks-Blake 6.

REF: Peter Walton

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LIVERPOOL

ECHO

Kop gives verdict on Roy Hodgson’s reign as Reds lose

ROY HODGSON had waited six months for The Kop to sing his name, but when the moment came last night he was left shuffling uneasily.

This was no tribute to the Liverpool manager, it was a message to go.

In advancing Hodgson’s claims to be the next England manager, promptly followed by their chants for ‘Dalglish’, supporters made a very public statement about the action they want to see the club’s new owners take.

This was the night when patience ran out and anger, frustration and despair poured down from the stands as not for the first time this season a once mighty club was woefully embarrassed.

Reds fans have been used to disappointments on their travels in 2010 but during some dark days Anfield has provided solace.

Not any more. Pre-match talk of this ground becoming a fortress again looked like a bad joke as the Reds served up a pitiful display.

This was Wolves – a side bottom of the Premier League who had taken just one point from their eight previous away games this season. A team beaten at home by Wigan just three days earlier and recently hammered 3-0 at Blackburn.

Yet despite all that, Mick McCarthy’s men were made to look like world beaters as they deservedly claimed their first win at Anfield since 1984.

When Liverpool were last beaten at home by Blackpool in October, Hodgson blamed tiredness after three games in a week.

Last night there were no excuses. Having gone two and a half weeks without playing, the Reds should have been fresh and champing at the bit.

Instead they were lifeless and played like strangers. For that Hodgson must shoulder the responsibility and fans left him in no doubt where they believe the blame lies.

His appointment in July was met with a lukewarm reception and ever since support for him has been dwindling.

Hodgson has failed miserably to engage with the fans who pay his wages and last night there was open revolt.

This wasn’t a knee-jerk response from day trippers or armchair fans ringing phone-ins, this was diehard Kopites who live and breathe the club and can’t bear to see its alarming decline.

They don’t believe Hodgson is the man to stop the rot which set in before his arrival.

have lurched from one calamity to another so far this season and this was as desperate as anything served up at Anfield in years.

It leaves the Reds just three points above the drop zone and the last time they went into a new year with such a low points total it was the start of 1954 and they were relegated.

The night began with a warm tribute to two former loyal servants of the club following the deaths of Avi Cohen and Bill Jones.

However, the current crop failed miserably to provide a performance befitting their memory. There was one moment of early promise with Fernando Torres’ quickly taken free-kick deflected into Raul Meireles’ path, but with the goal at his mercy the Portugal international scuffed wastefully at Wayne Hennessey.

That was as good as it got.

The Reds lost their way with possession conceded with alarmingly regularity.

Glen Johnson’s aimless punt into the Main Stand when under no pressure being the pick of the bunch.

The return of Steven Gerrard after six weeks out with a hamstring injury had left Hodgson with a decision to make.

The choice was to break up the central midfield partnership of Lucas and Raul Meireles or re-install his skipper just behind Torres.

Surprisingly, he opted for the former and Hodgson’s playing of square pegs in round holes undoubtedly contributed to the lack of creativity.

Meireles is a class act and the only one of Hodgson’s summer signings who has truly impressed.

But Meireles is no winger. Played in the middle he can dictate play and kick-start attacks with his range of passing.

Out on the right he looks lost and his obvious talents are wasted.

Similarly, on the opposite flank Dirk Kuyt may be Mr Versatile, but he’s no left winger and Maxi Rodriguez, who had scored in the two previous home league games, had good reason to feel miffed that he was the player to make way for Gerrard’s comeback.

If Hodgson was so intent on retaining David Ngog alongside Torres it would have made more sense against a side as limited as Wolves to sacrifice Lucas, play Meireles and Gerrard in the centre, stick with Kuyt on the right and Rodriguez on the left

When the Reds did string two passes together they couldn’t find a way past the outstanding Christophe Berra who threw himself in the path of shots from Torres and Ngog.

Having expected a dramatic improvement after the break, fans had to sit and watch in horror as the Reds’ display plummeted to new depths.

There was endemic sloppiness from back to front and the warning signs were there long before Stephen Ward raced through to fire past Pepe Reina for his first Premier League goal.

Unrest was rising around the ground and it boiled over just past the hour mark at Hodgson’s decision to replace Ngog with Ryan Babel.

Chants of ‘Hodgson for England’ and then ‘Dalglish’ rang out. Fans notorious for standing by their manager had seen enough.

Infuriatingly, there was no late rally, no show of character.

Liverpool limped to the finish with Martin Skrtel’s header, which was rightly ruled out for offside, the only passing threat to a Wolves side who couldn’t believe their luck

The crescendo of boos which greeted the final whistle brought the curtain down on a dismal end to a miserable year.

Hodgson raced off down the tunnel and vowed to battle on. A growing number of fans hope John W Henry and Tom Werner take that decision out of his hands.