Date: 1 January 2011
Opposition: Bolton Wanderers
Competition: League

Times	Guardian	Independent
Telegraph	Echo	Sun Independent
Sun Telegraph	Sunday Times	Observer

1 January 2011

THE TIMES

Crowding out begins for uneasy Hodgson

Liverpool 2
Torres 49, Cole 90+2
Bolton Wanderers 1
K Davies 43
Referee: K Friend. Attendance: 35,400

Having booed him, humiliated him, chanted for him to go and voted online for his removal, the Liverpool fans did something to Roy Hodgson on Saturday that could prove the most damaging yet - they snubbed him, preferring to spend New Year's Day at home rather than watch his team win.

Almost 10,000 empty seats bore testament to their disquiet, the Anfield Road Stand being left half-empty as fans voted with their feet. The timing of their passive protest was everything; this was a day when capacity crowds are usually guaranteed and yet the inclination of many was not to watch football. Well, not Hodgson's rudimentary brand of football.

The financial element of football dictates that when ticket sales fall away, directors' trigger fingers get twitchy. It is no consolation to Hodgson that John W. Henry, the owner, was already preparing to fire the bullet that will remove him from office before apathy took hold. This dramatic and spirited victory over Bolton Wanderers offered little solace apart from bolstering the manager's belief that his players have not given up on him, even if everyone else has.

"We are all right behind the manager," Joe Cole, the game's decisive figure, said without being able to offer a compelling reason why, other than that "the gaffer is a gentleman". Unfortunately for Hodgson, he is not being judged on his manners, it is results and style of football on which his future rests and neither has been good enough.

Cole is not the only one to fall into the trap of judging Hodgson as a man rather than a manager, though. The same mistake was made in the summer, as the adversaries of Rafael Benitez sought an antidote to the Spaniard when they should have been seeking a top-class replacement with a demonstrable record of success.

They pointed to the former Fulham manager's "class and dignity" in the knowledge that they were unable to highlight many accomplishments. It was an appointment that flew in the face of Liverpool's much-cherished mantra that the club "exist to win trophies". How could that be so when the only honours the 63-year-old has garnered came in Scandinavia, the last a decade ago? It is Hodgson's misfortune that the Liverpool supporters saw through the gaps in his CV, even if those in charge of realising their ambitions did not.

At half-time on Saturday, the prevailing feeling was that he would do well to see out the day as Liverpool trailed to a typical headed goal by Kevin Davies fromMatt Taylor's expert set-piece delivery.

"Can it really be this cruel?" Hodgson confessed to asking himself during the interval, only for a combination of fortune, fate and world-class contributions from Steven Gerrard and Fernando Torres to save him from the possibility of instant dismissal.

Gerrard may not have been on the pitch had an early injury to Raul Meireles not demanded his introduction from the substitutes' bench.

Once on the field, Gerrard ensured that all 11 players on show for Liverpool (before Cole was brought on) had been bequeathed by Benitez and the captain played a key role in turning the game in Liverpool's favour, just as Owen Coyle had feared. "I actually said to him as he was coming on, 'Could you not stay off a wee bit longer?' " the Bolton manager said.

Coyle's dread was not unfounded as Gerrard produced arguably the pass of the season to set up Torres's brilliantly taken volleyed equaliser, before creating Cole's scuffed stoppage-time winner with a cross that Bolton were unable to defend.

"It was one of those that I couldn't really miss," Cole said. "I was stood right by the goal and just got my studs on it, so I was just lucky to be in the right place at the right time and it was even better for me because it was right in front of the Kop."

It certainly was. Had it been in front of the Anfield Road End then he would have been greeted only by the half-empty stand that hammered another nail into his manager's coffin.

Ratings LIVERPOOL 4-4-2 M Reina 7 G Johnson 5 M Skrtel 6 D Agger 7 Aurelio 0 7 D Kuyt 6 Lucas Leiva 0 7 R Meireles 5 MRodriguez 7 D Ngog 6 Torres 8 Substitutes: S Gerrard 8 (for Meireles, 21min), J Cole (for Ngog, 82), S Kyrgiakos for Agger, 90). Not used: B Jones, Babel, C Poulsen, M Kelly. Next: Blackburn Rovers (a). BOLTON 4-4-2 Jaaskelainen 6 Ricketts 6 G Cahill 7 Knight 6 MAlonso 0 5 R Moreno 5 Muamba 6 MDavies 6 M Taylor 0 7 K Davies 7 Elmander 7 Substitutes: I Klasnic 6 (for Moreno, 70min), M Petrov (for Taylor, 82). Not used: A Bogdan, R Blake. Next: Wigan Athletic (h).

theguardian

Hodgson buys time but Anfield patience wears thin

There are some on the Kop so certain Roy Hodgson is not the right man for Liverpool that their response to this desperate victory would be the same as Elvis Presley's manager, Colonel Tom Parker, when told his client was dead: "This changes nothing."

In the long term they are right. If avoiding home league defeats to Bolton Wanderers is the yardstick for success at Anfield, then no manager has failed since the wretched Don Welsh, who relegated the club, having lost to Bolton in the same month Presley recorded I'll Never Stand in Your Way.

Nevertheless, Joe Cole's stab home from two yards has brought Hodgson that most precious of commodities, time, although it is unclear just how much. New England Sports Ventures has no desire to bring in an interim manager but defeat to Bolton after the debacle against Wolverhampton Wanderers could have short-circuited its plans to review Hodgson's position in the summer.

The trees may have thinned a little but Hodgson acknowledges his regime is still deep in the woods. On Wednesday he returns to Blackburn Rovers, where after some early success he failed to revive a team built by Kenny Dalglish, and then come Manchester United in the FA Cup, followed by a Merseyside derby at Anfield. In between lies Blackpool. These three matches are critical to Hodgson's longevity.

"Any match now is a huge match, it seems to me," said the Liverpool manager. "It is just one huge match after another. It is exaggerated for us because we started so badly. When you are next to bottom after seven games, with four points, you are staring at a black hole. I remember saying back then, and I don't apologise for repeating it, that we will do very well if we can get out of the hole and get ourselves into the top half of the table after 19 games. By then, we would have got a bit more discipline and organisation into our game and the philosophy I am preaching would be better understood."

There has been no real pattern or discipline to Hodgson's six months on Merseyside. Chelsea and Napoli have been swept aside at Anfield while Northampton Town, Blackpool and Wolves have all won there. At least there were signs that while the supporters may be irredeemably hostile, the dressing room is united behind their manager. Most made a point of embracing Hodgson on the touchline after the final whistle.

"We are all in this together," Cole said. "We are fighting for the club, for the manager, for the owners and the fans. We are all right behind the manager. He is a gentleman and we want to do well for him."

Sir Bobby Robson, who proved a less successful manager of Fulham than Hodgson, used to talk of "blue-chip players" and Rafael Benitez bequeathed his successor three - Steven Gerrard, Fernando Torres and Jose Reina. On Saturday, Torres and Gerrard combined as well as they have all season and Reina's save from Ivan Klasnic in the final seconds ensured his team and the manager would cling on.

Gerrard had begun on the bench, which given how desperately Hodgson required a victory, was a decision that required some guts. Gerrard was said to be exhausted after the defeat by Wolves, although the manager said that had his captain insisted on starting he would have done so. By the time 21 minutes were up, he was on for the injured Raul Meireles.

Bolton's manager, Owen Coyle, was relieved he did not start. As a Scot besotted with football there is something of Bill Shankly in Coyle's make-up and, should Hodgson (left) fall, he is a realistic candidate for the succession. "While Gerrard wasn't on the pitch, I was delighted," Coyle said afterwards. "I actually said to him as he was coming on: 'Could you not stay off for a wee while longer?' He could play for any team in the world and the longer he was off, then the better chance I thought we would have.

"If you have to lose and someone is going to benefit then I'm pleased it's Roy because I like him and I have a lot of time for him." How much time Liverpool's owners, John W Henry and Tom Werner, have for their manager is another question.

Man of the match Steven Gerrard (Liverpool)

Compiled by Graeme Riley

Date: 1 January 2011
Opposition: Bolton Wanderers
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Times	Guardian	Independent
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1 January 2011

THE INDEPENDENT

Liverpool players close ranks with Hodgson as Gerrard gamble pays off

An eighties legend gazes down at the Bill Shankly statue on the Anfield Road. Not Kenny Dalglish, but Phil Collins, whose vast image, plastered on the side wall of the Albert pub, promotes the new album, Going Back. That might be precisely the journey **Liverpool** decide to take, as their American owners come around to the idea of appointing a caretaker manager. Dalglish's willingness to resume temporarily the dugout seat which was his for six years from 1985 was by no means certain last night, but he is one of very few possible candidates.

There was nothing in Roy Hodgson's description of his conversation with the club's proprietors, John W Henry and Tom Werner, to suggest that he feels their gushing confidence. "I guess so," he said when asked if they support him and, in those circumstances, let none of the 63-year-old's many detractors on Merseyside say he lacked bravery on Saturday.

Though another home defeat to follow the one inflicted by Wolves last Wednesday would have been enough to sign off Hodgson's Anfield career on the six-month anniversary of its beginning, the manager concluded, for the greater good, that Steven Gerrard should begin on the bench. "Steven was in agreement with me that starting on the bench might be the best thing as he was very, very tired after the game on Wednesday," Hodgson explained. "If he'd said to me, 'No, no, I really want to play from the start', then I would have left one of the others out. But he was cramped up in all of his muscles [after Wednesday] and, of course, we are still a bit concerned about that hamstring injury he picked up with England." If Hodgson survives the season, let alone the year, then he may reflect on the way the fates moved in mysterious ways to preserve him.

When Raul Meireles sustained an ankle injury in the 21st minute, Hodgson was forced to play Gerrard anyway. "I actually said to him as he was coming on, 'Could you not stay off a wee bit longer'," the **Bolton** manager, Owen Coyle, revealed later - and Gerrard delivered almost as completely to **Liverpool's** victory as he did to November's 3-1 Europa League win over Napoli, when, with the new owners in attendance, **Liverpool** also trooped in a goal behind at the break.

Gerrard's interaction with Fernando Torres also bore eloquent testimony to those who feel that Hodgson's adherence to a 4-4-2 system is depriving the club's two prime forces of that synergy which has been at its best when the captain plays behind the striker. It wasn't just the giddyingly fine Torres equaliser after 49 minutes which Gerrard's clipped half-volley pass supplied in the midst of a four-touch build-up. "I have got to say there aren't many players in football who could have played that pass and the understanding Gerrard and Torres have is there for all to see," Coyle enthused. There was also the vast, arced ball which Torres took and smashed perhaps a yard wide three minutes later, or the Gerrard cross from the right which Torres volleyed wide 13 minutes from time. The new system has made moments of such majesty scarce.

Hodgson's grip on his job is rendered even more fragile by the lack of players to deliver a scintilla of what these two can. Only once this season have **Liverpool** strung Premier League wins together and the expectation now has to be that a poor performance will follow at Blackburn Rovers on Wednesday. Hodgson certainly won't be getting too carried away about Joe Cole despite his goal - his first in the Premier League football since the remarkably similar finish on the white paint line at Old Trafford in April which was decisive to Chelsea's title.

But Cole's warmth for Hodgson bore out the embraces which so many of the players offered him as they processed from the pitch. Pepe Reina knocked Hodgson off his feet; Lucas Leiva stopped his run from the field to embrace him. "We are all right behind the manager, he's a gentleman and we want to do well for him and the club and I suppose we showed that with the fight and the togetherness," Cole said.

The general Anfield chill is more impermeable - the 35,400 attendance was the lowest since Portsmouth's visit in 2004 - though Hodgson does seem to have learnt a lesson about his public discussion of "the famous Anfield support", as he rather icily described the phenomenon he has not experienced, on Wednesday. It is that such a pronouncement will be hyperanalysed at **Liverpool**, while at one of his many lesser clubs it would off pass virtually without comment. Hodgson's observations on Saturday night were laden with deferential references to the Kop. "I hope that the fans and supporters understand that," he added hurriedly, when discussing the need to rest players as fixtures arrive in abundance.

Those kind of semantics tend to be less scrutinised than the headline comment but the drive by manager and players to make Anfield a positive place renders the potential turmoil of dismissing Hodgson for a temporary successor look like folly. Numbers, like manager's quotes, can add up to whatever you want them to be. **Liverpool's** worst first half to a season since 1953 this might be but they will climb to sixth in the table if they win their two games in hand. This is a club in transition, not in crisis. There should be no going back.

Scorers: **Liverpool** Torres 49, Cole 90; **Bolton** K Davies 43.
Subs: **Liverpool** Gerrard (Meireles, 21), Cole (Ngog, 82), Kyrgiakos (Agger, 89).
Bolton Klasnic (Moreno, 69), Petrov (Taylor, 82)
Booked: **Liverpool** Aurelio, Lucas; **Bolton** Alonso, Taylor.
Man of the match Gerrard. Match rating 6/10.
Possession **Liverpool** 58% **Bolton** 42%.
Shots on target **Liverpool** 8 **Bolton** 4.
Referee K Friend (Leicestershire). Att 35,400.

The Daily Telegraph

Cole's goal merely a stay of execution for Hodgson

Liverpool 2
Torres 49, Cole 90
Bolton Wanderers 1
K Davies 43 Att: 35,400

Liverpool's dramatic victory over Bolton will not be enough to save Roy Hodgson's job as manager, with the club's owners, Fenway Sports Group, still determined to act as soon as they have identified his successor.

Goals from Fernando Torres and, in controversial circumstances, Joe Cole cancelled out Kevin Davies's opener, propelled Hodgson's side into ninth in the Premier League and staved off the immediate threat of dismissal. Even now, though, FSG remain convinced a change of manager is necessary if Liverpool are to salvage the campaign.

The group's principal backers, John W Henry and Tom Werner, had hoped to allow Hodgson to continue until the summer, but his continuing failure to elicit the best from his players has prompted them to act more quickly. They are now prepared to install a caretaker until the end of the campaign but will not remove Hodgson until they have pinpointed their preferred candidate.

Liverpool's fans have made clear their desire to see Kenny Dalglish appointed, and it is likely the Scot would be prepared to return on a temporary basis.

That Hodgson remains in place with Dalglish already at the club, however, would suggest that FSG are examining the credentials of other potential appointments. Guus Hiddink, who performed a similar role at Chelsea before the appointment of Carlo Ancelotti and is currently with the Turkish national side, may be considered while Ralf Rangnick, highly regarded after his work at Hoffenheim, quit the German club over the weekend.

Of those linked with the post permanently, only Frank Rijkaard and Martin O'Neill – both currently unattached – could conceivably be tempted to take an interim position.

Approaches for the likes of Didier Deschamps, of Marseille, Dortmund's Jurgen Klopp and Porto's Andre Villas-Boas, all possible long-term contenders, will wait.

The uncertainty at the club would seem to destabilise Hodgson's position, but Cole yesterday insisted the players remain determined to do their best to preserve his position.

"We are all in this together," said the England international. "We are all responsible, win, lose or draw. We are all right behind the manager. He is a gentleman and we want to do well for him and the club and I suppose we showed that today with the fight and the togetherness."

Liverpool's second-half performance indicated that Hodgson retains the faith of his players. As listless, rudderless as the hosts had been in the first half, they brimmed with purpose after the interval.

By that stage, they were behind to Davies's simple header, teed up for him by Matt Taylor's expert deadball delivery. Little matter. Steven Gerrard, introduced as a 20thminute substitute for Raul Meireles, victim of an ankle injury, excelled. He set up the first, when his beautifully weighted pass was finished by the Spaniard, drove his team on and carved out their winner. Cole touched in – with a hint of offside – after Maxi directed Gerrard's cross past Jussi Jaaskelainen.

Hodgson said: "Steven was excellent," said "This is an excellent day for me because not only did the players stand up and be counted when the chips were down, but we got such excellent support too."

Depending on the success of FSG's search, it may have been his last day at Anfield as manager.

Compiled by Graeme Riley

Date: 1 January 2011
Opposition: Bolton Wanderers
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1 January 2011

LIVERPOOL ECHO

IT WASN'T pretty and it wasn't convincing – but for Roy Hodgson it represents a lifeline.

On his six-month anniversary the Liverpool manager was on the brink. The fat lady may not have been singing but she was certainly clearing her throat as the seconds ticked away at Anfield on Saturday.

More dropped points and another tale of woe and the clamour for Hodgson's removal would surely have reached fever pitch.

But from the depths of despair Hodgson was transported to the dizzy heights of ecstasy by substitute Joe Cole's dramatic last-gasp winner.

Rarely has a victory against such limited opponents been celebrated so wildly on the touchline, but then this wasn't just any three points. It was one of the most vital wins of Hodgson's 36-year managerial career.

Against Wolves three days earlier, anger and bitterness tumbled down from the stands, this time it was joy and relief.

Hodgson embraced each of his players as they left the pitch and then turned to salute the fans who he had offended in midweek when he bemoaned the lack of the "famous Anfield support".

"Absolutely outstanding," was his description of the backing his side received on Saturday.

Hodgson lives to fight another day. The new year has brought him a glimmer of hope but he remains on thin ice.

"I guess so", was his response to questions about whether he still has the backing of owners Fenway Sports Group. Hodgson knows only too well that time and patience are in short supply on both sides of the Atlantic.

As for his battered relationship with the club's fans, one scrappy victory will do little to win over the growing numbers who are demanding change. 'Fans' new year wish – new manager' stated a banner on The Kop.

Those who did turn up focused their energy on getting behind the Reds, but it's the ones who stayed away who Hodgson should be most worried about.

The crowd of 35,400 was Liverpool's lowest Premier League attendance since Portsmouth were the visitors in 2004. That's a damning statistic for a game on New Year's Day when tickets are usually so hard to come by.

Fans are voting with their feet and when football club owners get hit in the pocket, they usually take action.

Hodgson can cling on to the fact that he appears to still have the backing of the dressing room.

Saturday was a true test of that. The players knew a repeat of the Wolves debacle and their boss' livelihood was in serious danger.

But in his hour and a half of need they delivered for him and the warm embraces at the final whistle suggests they want him to succeed.

"We're back with a bang," was Hodgson's enthusiastic assessment of the performance.

In truth he was hugely indebted to a heroic display from his skipper.

Steven Gerrard had been deemed too fatigued to start after playing 90 minutes on his comeback against Wolves after six weeks out with a hamstring injury.

But the departure of Raul Meireles to injury midway through the first half proved to be a blessing in disguise.

It prompted Gerrard's introduction and he swiftly stamped his authority on proceedings.

Hodgson prayed for divine intervention and Gerrard is no stranger to the role of saviour.

The inspirational midfielder did what he has done so many times over the past decade – drag Liverpool kicking and screaming to a victory which looked like eluding them.

On Saturday he found a willing accomplice in Fernando Torres. The Spaniard, who looked so uninterested in midweek, was transformed.

Chasing lost causes, wrestling with Gary Cahill and even taking on the role of ball boy in a bid to save time, the fire in his belly was back. Nobody could question his attitude or his work rate.

Torres ended his five-game barren spell in emphatic fashion when he volleyed home Gerrard's exquisite pass four minutes after the interval.

The way it was crafted and executed was world class and that goal energised the crowd after a first half which laid bare Liverpool's desperate lack of confidence and self-belief.

Bolton may have arrived flying high in sixth place but injuries and suspensions had left manager Owen Coyle with only 15 fit players.

They were there for the taking but despite enjoying plenty of possession, the nervy Reds couldn't find a cutting edge.

Maxi Rodriguez, thankfully restored to the left flank after being strangely omitted against Wolves, provided the brightest moments but had one effort hacked away by Matthew Taylor before nodding against the bar. Having started to build up a head of steam, the Reds proceeded to shoot themselves in the foot in the 43rd minute. Fabio Aurelio conceded a needless free-kick and then some woeful marking allowed Kevin Davies to head home Taylor's delivery. It was Bolton's first goal at Anfield for eight years.

When Lucas then somehow conspired to bundle the ball wide with the goal at his mercy on the stoke of half-time, Hodgson must have feared the worst.

On the seven previous occasions Liverpool had fallen behind in the league this season they had lost the lot. But when he needed it most, the manager got the show of character he demanded.

After Torres had equalised, Liverpool poured forward in search of a winner. Torres went agonisingly close before Gerrard was thwarted by Jussi Jaaskelainen and pleas for a penalty after Mark Davies handled were waved away.

Throwing caution to the wind, the Reds left themselves exposed at the back with Pepe Reina called into action to thwart both Mark Davies and Ivan Klasnic as Bolton chased a first win at Anfield since 1954.

Liverpool survived and Gerrard summoned one final effort.

His bending cross caused panic at the back and Johan Elmander could only direct the ball into the path of Cole, who touched home his first Premier League goal for the club.

Anfield erupted but in the cold light of day the fact remains the Reds have reached the halfway stage of the season with their lowest points tally in Premier League history. For Hodgson there is little margin for error.

If Saturday doesn't spark a sustained revival then a welcome three points will only bring a stay of execution.

LIVERPOOL (4-4-1-1): Reina, Johnson, Skrtel, Agger (Kyrgiakos 89), Aurelio, Kuyt, Lucas, Meireles (Gerrard 21), Maxi, Ngog (Cole 82), Torres. Subs: Jones, Babel, Poulsen, Kelly.

BOLTON (4-4-2): (4-4-2): Jaaskelainen, Ricketts, Cahill, Knight, Alonso, Moreno (Klasnic 70), Mark Davies, Muamba, Taylor (Petrov 82), Elmander, Kevin Davies. Subs: Bogdan, Blake.

GOALS: Davies (43), Torres (49), Cole (90+2).

CARDS: Booked – Aurelio (43), Lucas (45)' Alonso (57), Taylor (77)..

REFEREE: Kevin Friend (Leicestershire) .

ATTENDANCE: 35,400.

Compiled by Graeme Riley

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THE INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

Gerrard and Cole come to Reds' rescue

An injury-time tap-in by Joe Cole prevented Roy Hodgson's new year from getting any worse at the end of a fraught afternoon here. Cole and his England team-mate, Steven Gerrard, both emerged from the dug-out to transform their manager's day.

Gerrard had already created **Liverpool's** equaliser; then, in the third minute of the four added on, he put in another deep cross. Maxi Rodriguez met it beyond the far post, nudging it back into the middle for Cole to score from point-blank range.

"My players are adamant that Joe Cole was offside," Owen Coyle, the **Bolton** manager, said. "We had very little chance to recover from that and I'm disappointed for the players, because they worked their socks off today."

Hodgson, followed by a battery of cameras wherever he went on an afternoon when his position could have become untenable, was not complaining. "Even if we won it with a controversial goal, we're not going to apologise for that," he said. "We dominated over the 90 minutes. I'm very satisfied and I would have been if it had finished 1-1."

On the face of it, **Bolton**, despite a top six placing that **Liverpool** can only aspire to at the moment, always looked like a suitable side against whom to start a revival. They had lost their last eight games here and the strains on their current squad, from injury suspension, international duty and compassionate leave, were apparent in Coyle naming only four substitutes on his bench.

The under-fire Hodgson, on the other hand, had no less a bench-warmer than Gerrard, still easing his way back after his long-running ankle injury, among his statutory seven. Gerrard got the loudest cheer of the afternoon so far when he started to warm up after 15 minutes; mind you, there had not been much for the **Liverpool** faithful to applaud thus far.

That began to change when Matt Taylor had to clear the lively Rodriguez' goal-bound effort and the mood lifted a little more when Gerrard came on shortly afterwards for the hobbling Raul Meireles.

They almost took the lead when Dirk Kuyt crossed and Rodriguez' header looped on to the cross-bar with Jussi Jaaskelainen well beaten, but faced melt-down when, instead of falling behind, the Wanderers went ahead before half-time.

The opportunity stemmed, in a game of many free kicks, from a hotly disputed foul on Rodrigo Moreno that cost Fabio Aurelio a booking. From Taylor's curling left-footed kick, the **Bolton** captain, Kevin Davies, beat everyone in the penalty area to head home and claim the club's first goal at Anfield for more than seven years.

Liverpool almost equalised, through Lucas Leiva's lunge at Kuyt's low cross, but it would have been an anxious home dressing room at the interval.

Four minutes after the restart, however, **Liverpool** were level, from what Coyle admitted was a moment of rare quality from two world-class players. Gerrard took Glen Johnson's pass on the half-volley and flighted instantly into the path of Fernando Torres. The Spanish striker, hitherto peripheral, kept firmly under control by Gary Cahill, produced a glimpse of his old majesty, meeting the ball on the volley to finish handsomely.

"It was a great goal," Coyle said. "Created by two players who could play anywhere in world football."

It encouraged **Liverpool** to believe that they were capable of exorcising the week's traumas by pressing on to win the game. The same combination almost worked again, with a revitalised Torres twice close to converting penetrative balls into the area from his captain into further goals.

The chance that decided the game might have been messier, but nobody at the home club, least of all Hodgson, was inclined to worry too much about that.

Liverpool are back in the top half of the table and the talk of crisis is, for the moment, muted.

Substitutes: **Liverpool**: Gerrard for Meireles (21), Cole for Ngog (82), Kyrgiakos for Agger (89). **Bolton**: Klasnic for Moreno (69), Petrov for Taylor (82).
Bookings: **Liverpool**: Aurelio, Lucas. **Bolton**: Alonso, Taylor.
Attendance: 35,400
Referee: Kevin Friend
Man of the match: Rodriguez
Match rating: 6/10

The Sunday Telegraph

Cole late show too little for Hodgson

Liverpool 2
Torres 49, Cole 90
Bolton 1
K Davies 43, Att: 35,400

It may not have been too late, but it may still have been too little. Just as Roy Hodgson's six-month reign at **Liverpool** seemed destined to be brought to an immediate, ignominious close, his side produced arguably the most spirited 45 minutes of his tenure. It was enough to beat **Bolton**, but should not be enough to keep him at Anfield. The long night draws in. The only question is when dusk will fall.

Liverpool's second-half performance, one boasting the sort of verve, passion and intent sorely lacking in recent weeks and one book-ended by an emphatic strike from Fernando Torres and a controversial one from Joe Cole, will grant the 63-year-old a stay of execution. In the eyes of Fenway Sports Group, the club's owners, it is unlikely to warrant a pardon.

Hodgson may well be in charge for the trip to Blackburn on Wednesday; he may even survive long enough to take his side to Old Trafford in the FA Cup next weekend.

He was upbeat, buoyant in the aftermath of **Liverpool's** first win since Dec 6, but this was less a jolt of life into a doomed regime than the convulsions attendant with death throes.

Why that should be, even after such an uplifting comeback, was evident in the boos that rained down at half-time, the encore to the cries for the 63 year-old's dismissal that provided the soundtrack to defeat against Wolves, and in the 10,000 empty seats. Hodgson's public are voting with their throats and their feet. Those who stayed away, on the evidence of the first half, would not have regretted the decision.

True, there was a marginal improvement on the showing in that dismal 1-0 defeat on Wednesday night, but that said far more about how bad **Liverpool** were in that loss to Mick McCarthy's side than how good they were here.

Hodgson might have insisted that the half-time jeers were directed more at referee Kevin Friend -- how priceless a friend at the **Liverpool** manager's loneliest hour -- than his players and himself, but his side had done little to warrant anything other than scorn.

They created more chances than they had against Wolves - most notably to Maxi Rodriguez, who saw one shot cleared off the line and a header clip the bar with Jussi Jaaskelainen beaten -- but their play was still disjointed, their passes misguided, their tackling half-hearted.

Bolton took full advantage. Taylor curled in a tantalising free-kick and Kevin Davies, only cursorily marked by Glen Johnson, headed home. Anfield sat, silent. The worst of it was they were almost expecting this.

At that stage, the writing seemed on the wall. Lucas missed an easy chance to record an immediate equaliser, stumbling when Dirk Kuyt's cross picked him out at the far post, and **Liverpool** were condemned to trudge from the field, disconsolate, disaffected.

The reaction 45 minutes later was markedly different. It was joyous, vibrant. Such can be the impact of Steven Gerrard and, in this form, the form that once made him one of the most feared players on the planet, Torres.

Both excelled. It has been a long time since such a sentiment could be expressed. Torres steered home with the expertise of the veteran marksman just four minutes after the break, the unerring accuracy of his finish bettered only by the brilliance of his captain's pass. Gerrard had only been introduced to the field after 20 minutes, a replacement for the injured Raul Meireles, after Hodgson chose to rest him to preserve his still fragile fitness.

The pair, the reborn deadly duo, were far from finished. Torres -- who might have been sent off for clashing with Gary Cahill in the first half - flashed one effort wide, Jaaskelainen denied Maxi and Gerrard in quick succession, Mark Davies might have been penalised for handball.

Then, just as Anfield had started to lose hope, Gerrard's deep cross picked out Maxi, hurtling towards the far post. His shot beat Jaaskelainen, and Cole, on the field for just 10 minutes, touched home, a nose ahead of **Bolton's** defensive line.

"The players are adamant Cole was offside," said **Bolton** manager Owen Coyle. "Maybe that was the little bit of luck Roy needed."

It was a kind, honourable assessment from a man who had done himself no harm in underlining his credentials to displace his opponent. That little bit of luck, though, is unlikely to be enough.

Compiled by Graeme Riley

Date: 1 January 2011
Opposition: Bolton Wanderers
Competition: League

Times	Guardian	Independent
Telegraph	Echo	Sun Independent
Sun Telegraph	Sunday Times	Observer

1 January 2011

THE SUNDAY TIMES

Gerrard sparks revival

LIVERPOOL 2 Torres 49 Cole 90+2
BOLTON K 1 Davies 43

THE SUPERMAN act. You know the one: where Steven Gerrard makes David Beckham's famous 90 minutes against Greece look like a half-hearted shift. Where Gerrard slips into some hidden phone box inside the bowels of Anfield to emerge wearing his tights and cape. Where he channels the spirits of Souness, Rush and Dalglish to be a crusader rolling all those players into one.

Just when it was most needed, Gerrard reprised his act. Super Stevie didn't save the world - but, at least maybes for a little while, he might have saved his manager. Roy Hodgson remains unlikely to be at Anfield when the 2011-12 season begins. Fenway Sports Group, **Liverpool's** American owners, are considering who could replace him but have not made any final decision on doing so and their priority is getting the right man to manage **Liverpool**, not addressing the immediate issues thrown up by their club's underwhelming campaign.

It would suit them to wait until summer before making any change because of a belief that mid-season switches of manager are fraught with danger, and managers they would consider - such as Porto's Jose Mourinho-clone Andre Villas-Boas, Didier Deschamps and yesterday's vanquished boss, Owen Coyle - might be more readily available. Only a cataclysm of results would bounce Fenway into acting sooner and this victory, which put **Liverpool** back in the top half of the Premier League, was valuable to Hodgson in the short term. Gerrard was its driver and here Hodgson, who has not enjoyed much fortune during his Anfield reign, got some luck. He had put the captain on his bench, fearing he might be tired after Wednesday's dreadful defeat by Wolves, but an injury to Raul Meireles brought on Gerrard in the 21st minute and it left him enough time to build momentum in his performance and truly shape the game. In the second half, especially, Gerrard was devastating, winning tackles, snapping onto loose balls, showing for possession and then passing with fizz and accuracy. Vintage stuff.

Bolton were ahead at half-time thanks to a fine Kevin Davies header from a set-piece, but Gerrard ensured they spent the second period thoroughly embattled. Joe Cole's 92nd-minute winner was contentious, but deserved.

It came - of course - after a raking Gerrard cross. At the far post, Maxi Rodriguez went for goal. Cole was offside but the ball bounced off Johan Elmander, allowing the assistant referee to keep his flag down, and Cole got a feathery touch on the ball to help it over the line. Gerrard was also pivotal to Fernando Torres' equaliser. "**Liverpool** scored a wonderful goal through two world-class players," sighed Coyle and he wasn't wrong, with Gerrard running onto a ball chested his way by David Ngog and volleying a centre to Torres, who volleyed home first time.

Gerrard was not Hodgson's only amigo yesterday. He found a Friend who showed some charity - the referee, Kevin Friend, who declined to punish Torres in the slightest when, after being tackled by Gary Cahill in the first half, he grabbed the defender's throat, put a hand in his face and shoved Cahill's head back while he was lying on the ground. Other referees might even have red-carded Torres: to do nothing seemed extraordinarily weak. Hodgson was correct to point out that when a team play as well as **Liverpool** did (at least in the second half) they deserve to win whatever the circumstances. Neither did Coyle seek to use Friend's decisions as an excuse. He, too, was proud of his team. **Bolton's** small squad of 20 were depleted by a variety of circumstances, including the absence of Tamir Cohen after the death of his father, Avi. There were only four players named on the visitors' bench. Despite **Liverpool's** onslaught, which took place under the noses of the Kop, Coyle's men gave him everything in their efforts to hold out. Cahill and Zat Knight made more blocks than a Lego factory. **Bolton** managed to stay dangerous on the counterattack, too, with Jose Reina doing well to beat away shots from Ivan Klasnic and Mark Davies before Cole settled matters.

Given a rendition before kick-off, Fields of Anfield Road, a song to lost times, seemed more elegiac than ever. The increasing tendency **Liverpool** fans have displayed to seek refuge in their glorious past was emphasised when the Kop unfurled its banner depicting postwar hero Billy Liddell. Its denizens had a new sign, too. It read: "Fans New Year Wish - New Manager" and Hodgson was being optimistic when he suggested the half-time boos were for the referee. Kevin Davies had caused the discontent, losing Martin Skrtel and getting on the wrong side of Glen Johnson to head in Matthew Taylor's 43rd-minute free kick.

Lucas should have levelled by half-time. The Brazilian's effort levels are admirable but he and composure are not always friends. Not for the first time in his **Liverpool** career, in a key moment, the Brazilian blew it. Torres flicked a pass over his head to Dirk Kuyt, whose volleyed cross dropped to Lucas, six yards out. Any kind of firm contact would have knocked the ball into the net but Lucas, stretching, only got his foot on a small part of it and he lay agonised in the mud as his shot spun wide. The win took **Liverpool** ninth - giddy heights in a ghastly season. "I said when we were in the bottom three that if we could get ourselves in the top half of the table by the halfway stage we'd have a foundation to build on and that's where we are," said Hodgson in a defiant press conference.

Liverpool: Reina 6, Johnson 7, Skrtel 5, Agger 6 (Kyrgiakos 89min), Aurelio 7, Kuyt 6, Lucas 5, Meireles 6 (Gerrard 21min, 9), Maxi 6, Torres 6, Ngog 5 (Cole 82min)
Bolton: Jaaskelainen 6, Ricketts 6, Cahill 6, Knight 6, Alonso 5, Moreno 6 (Klasnic 69min), M Davies 5, Muamba 6, Taylor 5 (Petrov 82min), Elmander 6, K Davies 6

The Observer

Hodgson grabs Liverpool lifeline: Joe Cole's late, late goal has taken some of the pressure off the 'cut and hurt' manager

LIVERPOOL 2
Torres 49 Cole 90
BOLTON 1
K Davies 43

At Anfield you are supposed never to walk alone, but Roy Hodgson's isolation seems almost painful. As with all managers on the brink, the television cameras monitored his every reaction with a stalker's eye.

As the club's battle hymn played across the old stadium before kick-off and the banners fluttered in the Kop, they caught him mouthing the words and humming along with the tune. His backroom staff were all around him but the 63-year-old in his tracksuit seemed dreadfully alone, a republic of one.

When the final whistle sounded, the Kop sang again and Hodgson was embraced by every one of his players as they walked off the pitch after a victory that was snatched at the death by his first Liverpool signing.

Joe Cole's intervention, which consisted of nothing more than sliding a ball over the line, will only have bought Hodgson the short term but, with yesterday's headlines proclaiming him a "dead man walking", he would have settled for that. He is cut and he is hurt - an adjective he used around 20 times in an emotional pre-match press conference, laced with regret and sadness - but he is not yet finished.

Kenny Dalglish, for so long the spectre at Hodgson's meagre feast, had used the pages of the Liverpool Echo to make an impassioned plea for unity; the kind politicians make when their parties are hopelessly riven.

It was, however, a truce that held. Hodgson's name was not mentioned, let alone mocked as it had been on Wednesday night's excruciating defeat to Wolves. And when Kevin Davies, whose headed goal from a needlessly surrendered free-kick was both predictable and preventable, put Bolton ahead the Kop responded with a fresh passion.

It is hard to remember now but there was a time when there was optimism surrounding Hodgson's regime - the week in July when Cole was persuaded to leave London for Liverpool. That he was sent off on his debut seemed to sum up Hodgson's time on Merseyside. Here, he managed to be in the right place - a couple of yards from the goalline - as Maxi Rodriguez, tangling with Johan Elmander, wrestled Steven Gerrard's cross back towards goal.

Just as he had been in the only truly memorable victory Liverpool have fashioned this season - the dramatic 45 minutes when the ground disappeared beneath Napoli's feet - Gerrard was the catalyst from the bench.

The decision not to start with the man most likely to bring Hodgson a victory that was his minimum requirement was a brave one, even given the fact that Gerrard had been plagued by cramp in the desperate, barren closing minutes against Wolves. It was always planned that Gerrard would come on but not after 21 minutes when Raul Meireles picked up an injury. His impact was not immediate; Liverpool had only Rodriguez's header on to the top of the crossbar to show for a first half in which Bolton scored their first goal at Anfield in seven years.

When the teams reappeared, Bolton must have sensed their first win here since the 1953-54 season, the last campaign that began worse than this one and one that ended in Liverpool's relegation.

Instead, Gerrard and Torres, whose failure to assert himself following a World Cup that had seen the eclipse of the world's most elegant striker has damaged Liverpool badly, began to combine.

The equaliser was a move that took in four touches. The third was Gerrard's; a beautifully measured chip that Torres took on the volley and drove into the net beneath the Kop with the kind of finality that was once his trademark. It was his sixth of the season and his first since an underwhelming 1-1 draw at Wigan in November.

It was a signal for a siege in which Gerrard and Torres displayed the kind of understanding that suggested the past two distracted years had never been. Moments after the equaliser, Gerrard put the Spaniard through with a more conventional pass and the shot whistled past Jussi Jaaskelainen's post.

Another went higher and wider; a drive from David Ngog thundered into a defender's body. The scoreboard at Anfield looks like an early attempt at a digital watch circa 1979, but it counts down just as quickly as any other and emotions were beginning to fray.

A draw would have satisfied no one; the speculation would have mounted and the key image would not have been Hodgson, the weary general embraced by his troops, but Lucas Leiva, having screwed a glaring opportunity wide, lying on the sodden turf, staring up at the grey unforgiving skies.

Anfield 35,400
Game rating 7/10 Referee Kevin Friend

Compiled by Graeme Riley