

Date: 6 February 2011
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6 February
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THE TIMES

Liverpool enjoy sense of revenge

Chelsea 0 Liverpool 1 Meireles 69 Referee: A Marriner. Attendance: 41,829
 OLIVER KAY Football Correspondent Even if romance is dead, as Fernando Torres suggested last week, football retains a wonderful penchant for melodrama. Whichever way you looked at yesterday's match - and Liverpool's supporters will call their victory instant revenge on the man who betrayed them - it was a captivating end to a remarkable weekend in the Barclays Premier League. On Saturday there were goals galore: 41 in eight top-flight matches. At Stamford Bridge yesterday there was only one, scored by Raul Meireles midway through the second half, but it was a goal heavy on significance on an afternoon when Liverpool's defiance, discipline and determination - all of it embodied in the performance of Jamie Carragher, back in action for the first time since November - raised questions about just how big a "step forward" Torres has made. At best Chelsea were disappointing. At worst they were wretched. They could cling to a sense of injustice, citing two reasonable penalty appeals in the closing stages, or they could look at their performance as a whole and concede that they were outfought on the pitch and out-thought on the sidelines, where Kenny Dalglish, his 3-5-1-1 formation working superbly, looked far from the Jurassic manager some assumed he would be upon taking charge for a second time. Torres burst into life in the second minute, seizing on a loose pass and lashing a fierce shot past the target, and was superbly thwarted by Carragher on the half-hour, but otherwise his Chelsea debut was highly forgettable. He was substituted in the 66th minute - a brave move on Carlo Ancelotti's part, given that Roman Abramovich will regard Torres as a symbol of his beneficence - and three minutes later Meireles scored the only goal after indecision between Petr Cech and Branislav Ivanovic. "Torres, Torres, what's the score?" the visiting supporters taunted, adding that the [pounds sterling]50 million man "should have stayed at a big club". The gap between the sides is only six points, with Carlo Ancelotti's team having played a game fewer. On paper, this is still a formidable Chelsea squad, but the feeling that Torres has joined a team on the wane will not be lessened by displays such as this. Well adrift of Manchester United at the top of the table, they should regard their two forthcoming matches against Sir Alex Ferguson's side as a cause for concern rather than a reason to talk up their title aspirations. Sixty-six minutes is no kind of sample on which to judge the Torres experiment at Chelsea, but it is enough to strengthen suspicions that any chemistry with Didier Drogba will have to be the product of hard, unselfish work. For all the goalscoring potential in Ancelotti's attacking triumvirate yesterday, with Nicolas Anelka operating just behind the front two, the link-ups between Drogba and Torres could be counted on one hand. Drogba and Torres have always been happiest playing on their own up front - you might call theirs a twin lone striker partnership - so something will have to give, in terms of how they approach their respective roles, if it is to work. The one consolation for the pair at full time yesterday was that they are unlikely to come across many opponents defending as doggedly as Liverpool did. Liverpool defended superbly, denying Chelsea space up front, in midfield and, thanks to the workrate of the wing backs, Martin Kelly and Glen Johnson, on the flanks. There must have been some space somewhere, but Anelka, in a free role, struggled to find any, while farther back there was no spark in the performances of Michael Essien and Frank Lampard. A lack of fluency and creative inspiration was perhaps to be forgiven of Chelsea, particularly as Carragher and his defensive cohorts snuffed out every move and Lucas Leiva performed manfully alongside Steven Gerrard in midfield. Less excusable was how vulnerable they looked on the counter-attack, with John Obi Mikel still not offering the basic security demanded of a player in the position where Claude Makelele once excelled. Cautious for the first half-hour, Liverpool became more assured as the first half went on. With Dirk Kuyt competing for every ball, Gerrard and Meireles were beginning to find opportunities to break forward. On 33 minutes they should have taken the lead, but, after Gerrard had beaten Jose Bosingwa on the outside and drilled a low cross to the far post, Maxi Rodriguez, two yards out, hit the crossbar. Chelsea looked rattled. Just before half-time Cech and Ivanovic clashed over whose job it was to clear a cross by Kelly. Perhaps that mix-up was still playing on their minds in the 69th minute when Gerrard forced his way down the right and struck a cross towards Kuyt. Cech and Ivanovic froze as the ball sailed beyond them and was turned in at the far post by Meireles, his fourth goal in five games. Essien struck a left-foot shot narrowly wide and Florent Malouda, on as a substitute, was denied by Pepe Reina, but just about every time Chelsea tried to find a way through, the ball was cleared by a Liverpool foot or head. Or hand. The ball certainly struck the hand of Lucas Leiva in the penalty area with nine minutes remaining, but Andre Marriner, the referee, was unmoved. It was the same in stoppage time as Ashley Cole crossed and Ivanovic was felled in a mid-air collision with Johnson. Again, no penalty. An equaliser would have been harsh on Liverpool. A fourth straight win and a fourth consecutive clean sheet - unimaginable a month ago under Roy Hodgson - will only increase a feel-good factor. Dalglish said of Torres beforehand that no man would ever be bigger than Liverpool Football Club. But one man, back in charge after a near 20-year absence, has restored smiles to the faces of players and supporters alike. Who said romance was dead?

theguardian

Dalglish tactics allow Liverpool fans to delight in Torres' pain Surely it ought not cost so much to play in an impoverished match. Having just become the most expensive signing in the history of English football, Fernando Torres was derided by the fans of his old club when Chelsea took him off in the 66th minute. The centre-forward had certainly not flourished on his debut and the pounds 50m fee is a weight he must learn to carry, but there were many around him whose cheaper stumblings went unnoticed. Liverpool, even so, are entitled to delight. The obligation was not on them to entertain and they could have taken pride in a goalless stalemate. Kenny Dalglish's tactics were impeccable if unexpected. The manager fielded a back three and that was shrewd since the narrowness of the defence could be risked when Chelsea carried such little threat on the flanks. Dalglish has now won four Premier League matches in a row without conceding a goal. Any fear that his appointment might be burdened with sentimentality is waning. This success was the club's first at Stamford Bridge since October 2008. Dalglish had the luxury of letting his new acquisition Luis Suarez remain on the bench for the entire game. As matters stand, it seems almost useful that Andy Carroll is injured. Liverpool functioned effectively without him and can now anticipate another fillip when the pounds 35m purchase is over his thigh strain. Everything necessary to Liverpool was already present at Stamford Bridge. Jamie Carragher, who dislocated his shoulder at White Hart Lane in November, made a comeback at Stamford Bridge that suggested he had been out for no more than a day or two. The defender snapped into sharp action and made a block on Torres. The striker, all the same, was only in that briefly promising position because of a Lucas error that had left Didier Drogba to play a through pass in the 31st minute. There was a general drabness to a fixture that will still glow in Liverpool's memory. They have grounds to think that they are on the rise. Chelsea, on the other hand, stalled here and qualification for the Champions League continues to be a test of their mettle more than a foregone conclusion. The manager, Carlo Ancelotti, can be sure, in any case, that the owner, Roman Abramovich, appreciates the extent of the rebuilding that has to be undertaken. Last week's other acquisition David Luiz, at a mere pounds 25m from Benfica, came off the bench for his first outing with Chelsea. He will not have appreciated the novelty of disappointment for the club at a ground where they are often commanding. This was Liverpool's first win at Stamford Bridge since October 2008. No one at the club will care that it came about through the sheer sloppiness of Chelsea. The goalkeeper Petr Cech failed to collect a cross from Gerrard in the 69th minute and Raul Meireles volleyed the ball home with great composure. It was disappointing that the entertainment should mostly have been associated with mistakes. Torres lashed a shot high with two minutes gone, but it had been an errant pass from his former-team-mate Maxi Rodriguez that led to the opening. Ancelotti ought to be uneasy that the invention that would have assisted Torres was lacking in the remainder of the line-up. The scheming of the Chelsea manager for this fixture only saw him outfoxed by his opposite numbers. A means of accommodating important players is yet to be found. This, of course, was merely his initial experiment in fitting Torres into the scheme. The Spaniard was paired with Drogba and the Nicolas Anelka took up a position a little way behind the duo of outright strikers. Nobody looked wholly comfortable in that arrangement. There is more time to come for experiments, but in this game the side was blunt. A draw would have been an unlikely reprieve and a penalty appeal in stoppage time went unheeded although Glen Johnson, the former Chelsea player, had been unwise to bump into Branislav Ivanovic. All in all, Chelsea had been mediocre. Their campaign has a curious air since notions that they might rally to mount a strong defence of their Premier League title are in doubt once more. It looked here as if a variety of alterations is called for rather than the arrival of one great and costly talent. Torres, at least, is eligible for the Champions League, which must be the principal target. Liverpool, peculiarly for an institution with such a heritage, may be enjoying a relatively low profile in the league. This was a fine win, but the emphasis is still on the reshaping of the club. The sales of Torres and Ryan Babel paid for Carroll and Suarez, so there must be so far untouched means to continue with the reconstruction of the squad in the summer. Dalglish, for his part, had been out of the manager's role since a short spell with Celtic in early 2000, but he can only have assuaged any doubts that Liverpool's owners may have had about making this a permanent appointment. A regretful Chelsea can give Dalglish an excellent reference.

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The Mail

TOTAL TORRES TORTURE; Liverpool ruin [pounds sterling]50m striker's Bridge debut and go sixth

Chelsea 0 Liverpool 1

Next: Fulham v **CHELSEA** (next Monday), **LIVERPOOL** v Wigan (Saturday)
 HAD Fernando Torres still been wearing red, there would have been plenty to celebrate. As it was, he endured the most miserable of afternoons. Not a hint of romance for the most expensive player in British football history. Just humiliation and what amounted to a humbling defeat that probably marked the end of **Chelsea's** title challenge. In three second-half minutes, Torres must have wanted to be anywhere but here at Stamford Bridge. To be hauled off after 66 minutes of misery and frustration in front of the visiting **Liverpool** supporters would have been bad enough. 'You should have stayed at a big club,' they cried as the Spaniard trudged off the pitch, looking every bit as unhappy as he had done at Anfield in the six months prior to moving south.

But then came the goal from Raul Meireles. Then came the opportunity for his former colleagues to celebrate a magnificent win; a victory that was all the sweeter because of the extraordinary events of transfer-deadline day. It was no less than **Liverpool** deserved. A reward for their defiance and determination as well as the tactical mastery of a manager who is demonstrating exactly why **Liverpool's** new American owners are so keen to see him succeed in his second term at Anfield. As Kenny Dalglish said, it was a fourth consec-utive clean sheet as well as a fourth consecutive win that lifts **Liverpool** to sixth in the table and the formation he employed worked a treat. A formation that extends a remarkable record for the Scotsman against **Chelsea**. Played 21, won 15, lost one.

Dalglish said the Stoke game in midweek was not a dress rehearsal for this, but the use of three centre backs proved hugely effective when it came to combating the threat posed by Torres and Didier Drogba. Not to mention Nicolas Anelka in the hole behind the front two. With Jamie Carragher simply immense in his first start since the end of November, and Martin Skrtel and Daniel Agger following his lead, they smothered every **Chelsea** attack. When Torres was suddenly presented with an opportunity to strike, Carragher was there to make the block. Only when Maxi Rodriguez passed to his former colleague by mistake in the opening couple of minutes did Torres have another chance, and on that occasion he shot high and wide. Yesterday saw a second outing for a new **Chelsea** formation too, one that enables Carlo Ancelotti to keep Anelka in the side despite the use of two other strikers. But what worked well at Sunderland was nothing like as successful here, not least because it was so lacking in width.

With **Liverpool** able to more than match them through the middle, the use of two wing backs in Martin Kelly and Glen Johnson meant the visitors could control the field there too. **Chelsea** had nowhere to go and Pepe Reina had very little to do as a result, his only save coming when Florent Malouda provided **Chelsea** with a threat from out wide and forced **Liverpool's** goalkeeper to stand tall and parry the Frenchman's effort. For Ancelotti, rather like Torres, it amounted to something of a nightmare. Not a good day at the office when the boss has just allowed you to spend [pounds sterling]75million of his money. Even if his side did deserve a late penalty for Johnson's foul on Branislav Ivanovic, Ancelotti will wince at the fact that the last time **Chelsea** lost seven games in the league was Claudio Ranieri's last season in charge. It will, of course, get better. Ancelotti has bought one of the finest strikers in the world and David Luiz impressed when he came on as a second-half substitute. But it was so much more positive for a **Liverpool** side who managed to complete a fine double over **Chelsea** this season without the two new signings they now have to fill the void left by Torres. Even with Andy Carroll injured and Luis Suarez sitting on the bench, **Liverpool** could have won this by more. More should have been made of some fine passing from the back from Carragher but when Steven Gerrard drove the ball across the face of **Chelsea's** goal in the 33rd minute, Rodriguez somehow sent his shot against the crossbar from three yards.

It amounted to a lucky escape for **Chelsea**, as did a moment when Petr Cech and Ivanovic collided in pursuit of a cross from Kelly. Incensed by a lack of communication, an angry exchange between them followed. It probably contributed to the goal that Meireles eventually scored in the 69th minute, his fourth in five games for **Liverpool**. When Gerrard sent in a cross from the right, a moment's confusion between Cech and Ivanovic led to a collective failure by both of them to deal with the danger -although in fairness to the Serb, Cech was more at fault -and Meireles arrived at the far post to strike with a super half-volley. After that there was a penalty claim, and a brief but physical confrontation between Carragher and John Terry as they both crowded the referee in response to the incident. But **Liverpool** remained very much in control against a **Chelsea** side seemingly bereft of ideas. A **Chelsea** side that, while looking like they had emerged from their slump with victories over Bolton and Sunderland, again lacked the fluency and finesse they have shown in previous seasons. Compared to **Liverpool** they also lacked desire yesterday, Gerrard's reaction to the final whistle a measure of how much it meant to them. He threw his arms in the air and looked to the heavens; the highlight, clearly, of his season.

'We've had a great week,' said Dalglish, and given how it had started it had most certainly been that.

TORRES TOUCHES: 29 WHAT do you get for [pounds sterling]50m? In 66 minutes, Torres made only 29 touches -that's about [pounds sterling]1,724,137 per touch. He made the fewest passes (13) of any outfield player and had the worst passing accuracy (nine per cent). He completed only 69 per cent of those passes and was one of only three players not to make a single tackle.

MATCH FACTS

STAR MAN: Jamie Carragher **CHELSEA** (4-3-1-2): Cech 5; Bosingwa 6 (Luiz 73min, 7), Ivanovic 5, Terry 6, Cole 6; Lampard 6, Mikel 6 (Malouda 71, 6), Essien 6; Anelka 5; Torres 5 (Kalou 66, 6), Drogba 5. Subs not used: Turnbull, Ferreira, McEachran, Sala. Booked: Mikel. **LIVERPOOL** (3-4-2-1): Reina 6; Carragher 9, Skrtel 7, Agger 7; Kelly 6, Lucas 7, Rodriguez 6 (Aurelio 75, 7), Johnson 7; Gerrard 7, Meireles 8 (Poulsen 83, 6); Kuyt 7. Subs not used: Gulacsi, Kyrgiakos, Suarez, Jovanovic, Ngog. Booked: Lucas.

Referee: Andre Marriner 6. Attendance: 41,829.

The Daily Telegraph

Liverpool joy as Torres walks alone

Chelsea 0 Att: 41,829

Liverpool 1 Meireles 69

For Liverpool, this has been the year of Kenny Dalglish famously cutting short a cruise and Fernando Torres jumping ship. Yesterday confirmed which was the more significant event. As the clock ticked down on this most tense of contests, Dalglish kept kicking every ball in the dugout, kept willing Liverpool to protect their lead and kept checking his watch every few seconds until the final whistle brought deserved victory. Here was Liverpool reconnected to their glorious past, a loyal servant exhorting the team to reach for the skies again. Ably assisted by Sammy Lee and Steve Clarke, Dalglish had Liverpool's players hunting in pairs, seeking and destroying Chelsea moves before they could build real momentum. Lucas was outstanding, a figure of perpetual motion between the boxes, a model of composure when Chelsea came calling with urgency late on. Raul Meireles made some important tackles and shuttled between midfield and attack, even ghosting in to score his fourth in five games.

Even without Luis Suarez, who remained on the bench, and Andy Carroll, who remains on the treatment table, Dalglish's men were too organised and determined for the champions. Even without Torres, now sporting Chelsea blue, so much belief remained.

Liverpool's fans set the tone of defiance, backing their team with chants of "Suarez" or "Dalglish" whenever the home fans sang Torres's name. The Merseyside Banner Factory had been busy with the bedsheets and Sally Bercow, the Speaker's wife, was well advised to steer clear.

A minute before kick-off, Chelsea stewards failed in their attempt to grab one of the banners. It read: "He who betrays will always walk alone". Another declared: "Torres a pawn on our chessboard but the King remains."

Such is Liverpool's transformation under Dalglish, a reinvigorated team now sixth, it can only be a matter of time before he is confirmed as longterm manager. Martin Kelly's vibrancy, defending hungrily and attacking with pace and persistence, rivals Meireles in embodying the new model Liverpool under Dalglish. Clarke, warmly greeted by Chelsea fans, has also played his part in the revival, notably drilling the defence at Melwood. This was Liverpool's fourth successive clean sheet, the players showing their adaptability by again making the back three work. Jamie Carragher's return from shoulder surgery added further to the resistance movement. But the key was that the visitors defended as a unit, playing the old Liverpool way, the Dalglish way.

For Carlo Ancelotti, this numbing defeat reduces the champions' chances of catching Manchester United, who remain 10 points clear. The last time Chelsea lost seven games in a League season the manager, Claudio Ranieri, was sacked. Ancelotti needs time to bed his new players in but a huge call has to be made on his attack, one that could define Chelsea's season.

Clearly, the Drogba-Torres-Anelka triumvirate needs working on, or simply abandoning, omitting Nicolas Anelka and reverting to a 4-4-2 system. Chelsea were desperately short of width yesterday, particularly with Liverpool's wing-backs, Kelly and Glen Johnson mainly keeping Ashley Cole and Jose Bosingwa deep on another epic day in the mighty Premier League soap opera.

Yesterday's two away wins, here and for Birmingham City at Upton Park, capped an extraordinary weekend. Following Saturday's series of goal sprees and comebacks, Richard Scudamore sent a message to his Premier League staff.

"Remember Saturday 5th February 2011," said the chief executive. "There has never been, and I doubt we will ever see, quite such a remarkable single day in our great competition... let the Select Committee and Government try to improve it!" Yesterday's shocks simply added to the drama. Initially, this was a slow-burner, the first half notable only for a skied Torres effort, a Torres shot blocked by Carragher and an astonishing miss from Maxi Rodriguez, who hit the bar from three yards. Heaven knows what Mini Rodriguez is like. Signs of the unease in the Chelsea ranks surfaced when Branislav Ivanovic and Petr Cech argued. Chelsea briefly stirred at the start of the second half. Anelka shot wide. Ivanovic headed over. But familiar themes continued to be seen. When Torres collected possession, Meireles and Lucas hounded him into giving up the ball.

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Chelsea's menace was too infrequent, too slowly unfurled. Liverpool were too alert, Lucas nipping in to ensure Jose Bosingwa's cross did not reach Torres. The [pounds sterling]50million man was withdrawn after 66 minutes, to applause from the Chelsea fans and unrestrained glee from the red section of the Shed. "You should have stayed with a big club," chanted Liverpool fans, clearly not forgetting Torres' parting words that he was joining a "big club". As if to emphasise past feats in Europe, Liverpool supporters chorused: "In Istanbul we won it five times."

Three minutes later Steven Gerrard charged down the right, whipping in a cross that should have been meat and drink for Cech but he made a real meal of it. Hesitating with Ivanovic, Chelsea's keeper allowed the ball to carry through to Meireles, who finished with an unstoppable volley.

The crowing intensified. "Torres, Torres, what's the score?" inquired the Liverpool fans. Chelsea were stunned, their attempt at a comeback unconvincing. Anelka had a shot saved and David Luiz came on, allowing Ivanovic to revert to rightback. Luiz kept pushing into midfield but Liverpool stood firm. Cech needed to save from Fabio Aurelio but Chelsea were denied a penalty when Johnson barged into Ivanovic's ribs, knocking the Serb over. Nobody was going to wrest this victory away from Dalglish and Liverpool.

THE INDEPENDENT

Torres endures nightmare debut as Liverpool recover old swagger

THE FIRST shot that Fernando Torres struck yesterday afternoon hit the banner midway up the Shed End that commemorates Peter Osgood, another famous Chelsea No 9, and if that sounds bad for the [pounds sterling]50m man, it got even worse from there.

It was another extraordinary result in an extraordinary weekend of Premier League football in which events on the pitch steadfastly refused to stick to the script. Torres had little discernible effect on the game and was substituted after 66 minutes, Liverpool won the match without Luis Suarez even setting foot on the pitch and the Roman Abramovich strategy to rejuvenate his team fizzled like a damp firework.

Torres will undoubtedly score goals for his new club, but this was one of those occasions when football's great unpredictability confounds billionaire owners and record-breaking signings and serves up a result that no one really expected.

It was Jamie Carragher, the old warhorse who would no sooner contemplate leaving Merseyside than he would contemplate changing his name to Sandra, to whom the day belonged as well as an unlikely supporting cast of Raul Meireles, Lucas Leiva and Glen Johnson.

Carragher's crowning moment came when, as Torres pulled the trigger on a through ball from Didier Drogba, the Liverpool defender slid across and blocked the shot as soon as it left the striker's foot. It was reminiscent of Carragher's great cramp-inducing tackle on Andrei Shevchenko in the 2005 Champions League final and this in his first game back since November.

But Carragher and his two fellow centre-halves that were part of Kenny Dalglish's 3-5-1-1 formation - a system used only for the second time - closed Torres, Drogba and Nicolas Anelka out of this game. When Torres was called to the touchline there was a sense that half the job had been done, and three minutes later Meireles' goal reflected the direction the game was heading.

Carlo Ancelotti's team have now lost seven league games, more in a single season than any since Claudio Ranieri's side lost seven in 2003-04 and the boost of their re-connection with Abramovich's enormous fortune has been postponed. Funnily enough, the player who really impressed was new signing David Luiz who played only 27 minutes as a substitute but looked every inch a talented defender.

As for the rest, it was a tired, mish-mash of a performance. It was always going to need something special to break down what was effectively a five-man defence, especially as the selection of three centre-forwards denied Chelsea width. Ashley Cole and Jose Bosingwa leant Chelsea some threat on the wings but the arrival of Torres does present Ancelotti with problems.

On the pitch before the game there was a snatched conversation between Drogba and Torres that looked like an ad hoc division of labour between the two strikers. Whatever they decided upon it did not work. Drogba barely had a shot on goal and none of Chelsea's three forward players fancied it much when it came to tracking back.

Chelsea should have been given a penalty in time added on at the end of the game when Johnson craftily barged into the back of Branislav Ivanovic in the Liverpool area. But what was surprising about Chelsea is that for all the attacking talent at their disposal, Ancelotti's side created so few chances.

It will not just be a case of Ancelotti selecting all his strikers in future, he will have to find a combination that actually works - he hinted as much after the game - and that will mean making some tough choices. That is a lot to consider with only 13 games left of the season and the gap to Manchester United still a troubling 10 points.

When the focus on Torres is put to one side, and the emotion taken out of the occasion the biggest blow to Chelsea is that they could not close the lead that United have on them. Once again Sir Alex Ferguson's team have escaped relatively lightly after that defeat to Wolves. Only Manchester City have gained three points on them after the leaders' worst result of the season.

It was hard to recall a single **Chelsea** chance other than a Florent Malouda shot that Pepe Reina blocked on 75 minutes. Their diamond formation in midfield played into the hands of **Liverpool** who closed down the central areas with excellent performances from Lucas and Meireles.

This time it was not Steven Gerrard who was required to perform his usual heroics; instead he laid on the ball for Meireles' goal. Making space for himself down the right wing Gerrard struck a cross that, disastrously for **Chelsea**, Petr Cech and Ivanovic left to one another. Although the ball travelled beyond the far post, Meireles did an excellent job of getting his foot round it and steering it inside the post.

Once ahead it never looked likely that **Liverpool** would relinquish that lead and something of that old intransigence that they made their trademark in games against **Chelsea** in the Rafael Benitez years was evident. They seem to perform best when they have something to defend and when the occasion requires them to be stoic and determined.

Otherwise their best chance came when Maxi Rodriguez got his shin on Gerrard's fast-travelling cross from the left from which, a matter of yards from goal, Rodriguez could not control his shot and instead rattled the crossbar. **Chelsea** never even got that close to their opponents' goal.

With four straight wins, four clean sheets and sixth place in the table this job is becoming Dalglish's by default. Some would argue he has already done enough.

Last night he played down his role in the whole show and contended that he would not stand in the way of anyone who was better suited to the job. But who is he kidding? **Liverpool** is becoming Dalglish's club again and having nursed them through the departure of Torres, to win this game six days later only cemented his position.

"It has been a great week for us," he said, renewing that old habit of dismissing anyone or anything outside of **Liverpool**. Dalglish has certainly delivered **Liverpool** a grand consolation in the Torres saga. Torres got his move but his moment of glory will have to wait.

MATCH FACTS

Substitutes: **Chelsea** Kalou (Torres, 66), Malouda (Mikel, 72), Luiz (Bosingwa, 73). Unused Turnbull (gk), Ferreira, McEachran, Sala. **Liverpool** Aurelio (Rodriguez, 75), Poulsen (Meireles, 84). Unused Gulacsi (gk), Kyrgiakos, Suarez, Jovanovic, Ngog.

Booked: **Chelsea** Mikel **Liverpool** Lucas.

Possession **Chelsea** 51% **Liverpool** 49%.

Attempts on target **Chelsea** 4 **Liverpool** 4.

Man of the match Carragher. Match rating: 6/10.

Referee A Marriner (West Midlands).

Attendance 41,829.



IT'S A STROLL DOWN THE KING'S ROAD

THEY mocked their former hero as they hailed the King of the Kop.

Victory and three points but, in truth, this was about far more than merely conquering the club they loathe with a passion - an emotion that has grown in recent days.

For **Liverpool** and Kenny Dalglish, laying the ghost of Fernando Torres could not have been achieved in a more galvanising manner.

The bonus of terminating **Chelsea's** flickering title hopes added to the delight.

And while there is still a long way for Dalglish to take his side before he can start thinking about recreating the true Anfield glory days, it is on afternoons such as this that the building blocks start to be cemented into place.

It did not matter to Dalglish or his players that Raul Meireles' goal owed as much to a defensive mess, that would not have been out of place on Hackney Marshes, as it did to Steven Gerrard's effort and commitment down the right.

A month ago, under poor old Roy Hodgson, **Liverpool** could not have imagined coming to Stamford Bridge and doing such a number on Carlo Ancelotti's side.

Especially when the arrival of Torres was supposed to herald a new dawn.

Instead, the myth of **Chelsea's** revival was exposed as exactly that. They were second best in every area that mattered.

Gerrard outplayed Frank Lampard even before burning off the **Chelsea** man to create the winner.

Jamie Carragher's anticipation snuffed out Torres' one genuine moment of threat. Dirk Kuyt ran and ran. Meireles got up in support at every opportunity. Glen Johnson refused to allow Jose Bosingwa to get past him and caused far more problems at the other end.

The statistics alone spell out the change at Anfield once Dalglish was able to get to work with the players he inherited.

Four straight wins, four straight clean sheets and up to sixth. And that is with Andy Carroll still in the treatment room and Luis Suarez only on the bench.

Suddenly, a side that looked utterly bereft of inspiration and teamwork, is a united, focused force.

The supporters who had lost faith have been reinvigorated, restored to health.

Only twice did Torres suggest he might make the impact he was hoping for in his debut in a blue shirt.

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In the second minute, he blazed over, and later when Carragher recalled all those hours on the training field as the Spaniard burst onto Didier Drogba's angled ball. The first task, of stifling the home side, was accomplished with an effectiveness that must have concerned Ancelotti.

Chelsea found all their attempts petering out, the avenues of attack blocked off. And when Liverpool looked to hit and hurt them on the break, the men in red always appeared to have more options and imagination.

Meireles, bursting forward in support, fired at Petr Cech when he linked up with Kuyt just after the half-hour - and a minute later Liverpool should have gone in front.

This time Meireles fed Johnson, who teased the ball through to Gerrard on the left.

Gerrard duly thumped it across goal, where Maxi Rodriguez stood unmarked four yards out, the goal at his mercy.

Despite the bobble, it took something remarkable for the Argentinian to hit the bar, rather than the gaping net.

That miss might have hurt Liverpool, yet Chelsea were far from right. A stand-up row between Cech and Branislav Ivanovic after an ugly muddle on a Liverpool break was more significant than it appeared at the time.

The proof of that came in the 69th minute, after Chelsea - too narrow all afternoon with Torres and Drogba not working naturally - had resorted to pot shots from long range.

Gerrard tore 50 yards down the right - showing no sign of the groin injury Dalglish announced after the match - and Lampard failed to close down his centre.

The communication between Cech and Ivanovic was woeful as they left the ball to each other, and allowed Meireles to force home his fourth goal in five games.

Fabio Aurelio might have doubled the lead soon after, denied by Cech, before Chelsea's late rally.

They should have had a penalty, Johnson blatantly barging into Ivanovic from behind in stoppage time, but Andre Marriner and his assistant both missed the incident.

Yet nothing could prevent Dalglish and his men from taking their deserved rewards, the Scot gleefully hugging Sammy Lee as John Terry made a frustrated, but pointless, beeline to remonstrate with the officials. That summed up the day. That summed up the clubs. A penny for your thoughts, Fernando.



Reds spoil Fernando Torres' welcome party

THE build-up to this fixture had been solely and comprehensively about the actions of one particular Spaniard.

Not for a long time has one footballer dominated the headlines in the run-up to a Premier League game.

This was set to be the Fernando Torres show at Liverpool's expense, the rebirth of Chelsea's new £50million man after fleeing Merseyside on a supposed quest for silverware and glory.

But the Reds were determined to gatecrash the party and they did just that in a beautifully destructive style.

The sense of theatre couldn't have been better staged.

Before kick-off, the circus-style Stamford Bridge pitch announcer publicly hailed three people as he strode about the pitch with microphone in hand.

Ex-Chelsea and now Liverpool coach Steve Clarke and one-time Stamford Bridge right-back Glen Johnson were singled out, before a special razzmatazz welcome was voiced for the new £50m Fernando Torres.

Well, he certainly got his first two tributes right.

On 65 minutes, Torres was withdrawn from the action by Carlo Ancelotti, bringing an end to an ineffectual afternoon for the Spaniard.

Four minutes later, almost on cue, Liverpool had taken the lead.

Raul Meireles brilliantly hooked past Petr Cech to send the travelling Scouse support into unabated delirium.

This was akin to the Portuguese midfielder - whose contribution has been immense in recent weeks - defiantly declaring to Torres, "We're the club on the up!"

"You should have stayed at a big club", crowed the Liverpool support as a disgruntled Torres wrapped up warm on the bench.

With the Reds matching and outperforming Chelsea in every department, that chant was perfectly timed.

Make no mistake, this was a hugely deserved win for Kenny Dalglish's men who served up a performance of guts, commitment and no little skill.

There were man of the match candidates all round the pitch, but the influence of Lucas in central midfield and Glen Johnson at left-back was huge.

Playing like this, a Champions League place cannot be ruled out, as Liverpool now stand sixth points off Chelsea in fourth place.

Liverpool made two changes from the side which beat Stoke 2-0 at Anfield on Wednesday night with Maxi Rodriguez and Jamie Carragher coming in for Fabio Aurelio and Sotorios Kyrgiakos while Luis Suarez again sat on the bench.

Torres got the nod from Carlo Ancelotti, playing alongside Anelka and Drogba, and the Spaniard had his first glimpse of goal within two minutes, blazing over after a wayward Rodriguez pass.

The first 15 minutes were cagey, but Liverpool's five-man midfield easily held Chelsea at bay with a deflected Didier Drogba shot flying wide of Reina's post. Torres got a further chance on the half hour, but he found his old pal Jamie Carragher, back from his dislocated shoulder, more than a match for him with a whole-hearted block.

But despite Chelsea's mounting pressure it was Liverpool who came within a whisker of scoring the opener.

A Meireles pass eventually made its way to Gerrard out on the left and his low cross was met by Rodriguez who crashed against the bar.

It was a glaring miss from the Argentinian from only a few yards out, connecting with his ankle when any true contact would have done the trick.

The miss seemed to stun Chelsea who suddenly realised Liverpool hadn't just turned up for the ride as Lucas growing increasingly influential in midfield and Gerrard finding room out on the left flank.

It's been years since a Reds side consistently passed the ball well at Stamford Bridge and won the bulk of the tackle exchanges, but that was the reality yesterday.

Chelsea were certainly rattled and the interval arrived with Cech and Ivanovic almost coming to blows after getting themselves in a tangle following a Martin Kelly cross.

Liverpool began the second half in much the same fashion they had started the first, confidently knocking the ball to feet, and they went close again with a drive from Glen Johnson flashing narrowly wide.

The Londoners, however, sensed the Reds growing impetus and responded themselves, Drogba going close after Andre Marriner had waved away optimistic penalty appeals following a clash between Ashley Cole and Carragher.

It was anyone's game and Anelka's rasping shot past the post was a warning to Liverpool while Essien's dipping effort minutes later was even closer.

But if one Chelsea striker was going close, it was a different story for Torres who was substituted to loud mocking cheers from the travelling support.

The Spaniard looked crestfallen as he trotted off having delivered a minimal impact during his hour on the pitch.

And to rub salt into the wounds, Liverpool next showed the £50m man exactly how a goalscorer finds the net.

A wicked Gerrard cross was inches away from Kuyt, but an onrushing Raul Meireles was on hand to expertly hook past Cech.

The Portuguese man's contribution to the Liverpool cause has been massive in recent weeks, and this his fourth goal in five games showed exactly why Roy Hodgson invested £11.5m in the former Porto man.

Predictably Chelsea rallied, but with the whole of the Reds back line in miserly mood, they kept the Londoners at bay.

Liverpool still remained a threat, Kuyt raiding on the left and feeding substitute Aurelio whose hammered drive was saved by Cech.

With the game still in the balance, the Reds played out the last 10 minutes with almost nonchalant ease.

At the start of this game, the sight of Fernando Torres wearing a blue shirt had seemed so very wrong.

But by the end, it hardly seemed to matter.

Chelsea had been beaten on their own patch without either £35m Andy Carroll or £22.8m Luis Suarez.

The future looks incredibly bright.

"At Liverpool, you're expected to win most games, so you can't get too carried away as the standards here are so high," JAMIE CARRAGHER keeps his feet on the ground after victory.

"We have to give Fernando time to adjust to the shape, but I think that he will do it quickly," CARLO ANCELOTTI defends Fernando Torres after substituting the former Liverpool striker

CHELSEA: Cech, Ivanovic, Cole, Essien, Lampard, Torres (Kalou, 65), Drogba, Mikel, Bosingwa (Luiz, 72), Terry, Anelka Not used: Turnbull, Luiz, Malouda, Ferreira, Kalou, McEachran, Sala.

LIVERPOOL: Reina, Johnson, Meireles(Poulsen, 83), Agger, Gerrard, Rodriguez (Aurelio, 75) Kuyt, Lucas, Carragher, Kelly, Skrtel Not used: Gulacsi, Aurelio, Suarez, Jovanovic, Kyrgiakos, Ngog, Poulsen.

GOALS: Meireles (69).

CARDS: Booked - Lucas, Mikel

REFEREE: Andre Marriner (West Midlands).

ATTENDANCE: 41,829