

Date: 10 September 2011
 Opposition: Stoke City
 Competition: League

Observer	Times	Guardian	Mirror
Sentinel	Telegraph	Echo	Sunday Times
	Sunday Mirror	Sun Telegraph	Mail on Sunday



10 September
2011

THE TIMES

Pulis champions Shawcross push

Stoke City 1 Walters 21 (pen) Liverpool 0 Referee: M Clattenburg. Attendance: 27,592 It was an afternoon of intrigue at the Britannia Stadium. Kenny Dalglish, the Liverpool manager, hinted at conspiracies damaging his club and the people of Stoke-on-Trent became increasingly perplexed that Ryan Shawcross has not caught the eye of the England manager.

"I don't want to take the gloss away from Stoke, who have won 1-0," Dalglish said, but his outburst almost did exactly that. Tony Pulis has created a team who are relentlessly hard-working but with enough intuition to be entertaining.

As Stewart Downing said, it was, for Liverpool, "one of those days" when possession and pressure simply do not pay off and one that Dalglish might have chosen to shrug off as deeply unfortunate.

"That is probably as good a team performance as I have seen by one of my teams that has lost 1-0," Dalglish said. And he would be right. Perhaps his comments about the club being "battered" by refereeing decisions also took the gloss off all the fine work his own players produced.

"Stoke is a difficult place to go, but at times we played some good football and cut through them," Downing said.

Unfortunately for Liverpool every time Downing and his team-mates cut through, Shawcross and his defence were sufficiently alert to frustrate them.

"It's the second year he's captained the club," Pulis said of Shawcross, who has appeared twice for England's under-21 side but not for the senior team. "If [Fabio] Capello picks him, brilliant, if he doesn't, nobody in Stoke-on-Trent will think any the less of Ryan."

Asmir Begovic was outstanding in goal and the hero in a passage of play in which Jordan Henderson and Charlie Adam produced five shots in succession between them but could not fool the goalkeeper.

"That's the way we are," Pulis said. "It's the DNA of the football club and the players buy into it. Peter [Crouch] and the lads who have just joined will tell you what the spirit is like."

Crouch was making his debut after joining Stoke for [pounds sterling]10 million from Tottenham Hotspur. Much has been made of whether the former Liverpool striker and Abbey Clancy, his wife, would actually want to move to the Potteries.

"What Peter does and what he doesn't do off the pitch is up to him," Pulis said.

"What we want him to do is come and enjoy his football, train well and play well and score goals and I'm sure he'll do that for us. I've had a good chat with Peter and I know where Peter wants to live but I ain't going to tell you lot."

Stoke took the lead in the 21st minute after Jamie Carragher hauled down Jon Walters for a penalty. Walters missed a spot-kick against Norwich City three weeks earlier, but he was not about to forgo the opportunity to delight his family.

"My family are all Evertonians so they are happy," Walters said. "No one was going to take the penalty off me. I just decided to hit it down the middle."

Dalglish believed that Suarez had won a late penalty when the Uruguayan's cross hit the arm of Matthew Upson and that it was not given prompted his outburst about Liverpool being treated unfairly so far this season by officials. But you need only look at the 2-0 loss the team suffered at the Britannia last season, when Roy Hodgson was in charge, to realise that this is a vastly improved side even in defeat.

the guardian

Dalglish sees injustice everywhere after familiar problems in Potteries For those with ambition and an appreciation of history there are few more appealing jobs in football than that of **Liverpool** manager. But the time may have come to issue the post with a health warning; a recognition that taking over at Anfield could make you as deeply paranoid as Gerard Houllier, as obsessively contentious as Rafael Benitez, as visibly bewildered as Roy Hodgson and now, it seems, as shockingly enraged as Kenny Dalglish.

The Scot has been the personification of joviality since returning to **Liverpool** in January, but it felt as if a turning point had been reached on Saturday. Four games into the new season, and in the aftermath of the club's first defeat of a campaign in which they are aiming to challenge for a Champions League place, Dalglish has decided to ditch the nice-guy act.

His ire is with the standard of refereeing in the Premier League, believing **Liverpool** have been victims of "contentious decisions" in every one of their fixtures so far. This was only enhanced at the weekend when Mark Clattenburg, the official in charge, awarded **Stoke** the penalty from which Jonathan Walters scored the game's only goal and denied **Liverpool** one of their own late on when Matthew Upson, stationed inside the host's area, appeared to block Luis Suarez's cross with his arm.

"We would like to be respectful to the referees but more importantly is them having respect for my club," said the **Liverpool** manager, "and if I feel we're suffering in any way, then I may need to go the same route as some others and see if I can gain some benefit from that."

Dalglish declined to expand on his plans, insisting he would "speak to [the club's] owners first". The most obvious move is an official complaint to the Premier League. **Liverpool** did not confirm yesterday if that was indeed his intention. For its part, it is understood the Football Association is unlikely to discipline Dalglish for his comments given he did not criticise or question the integrity of any referee in particular.

That may come as a relief to the 60-year-old but for his admirers there may remain concern over his loss of temper, the sense, even, that for the second time in two decades the task of managing **Liverpool** is proving too great a responsibility for him.

Dalglish would dispute that and it could be deemed that his frustrations on Saturday had more to do with his team's failure to win a third league game in succession, despite their dominance of proceedings. **Liverpool** had almost 73% of the possession, created 16 shots on goal - compared to **Stoke's** two - and, as Dalglish pointed out, were denied what did appear to be an obvious penalty. In fairness to Clattenburg, the one he awarded **Stoke** appeared a fair one given how it resulted from Jamie Carragher's hauling down of Walters as the forward ran in on goal.

The visitors' wastefulness was, in reality, their true downfall and seen most starkly just after the hour when, between them, Jordan Henderson and Charlie Adam had five shots on goal saved by **Stoke's** defence in a matter of seconds.

"We played well, it was just one of those days when we couldn't hit the net," said Stewart Downing. "Hopefully we'll be able to do that at Tottenham next week.

We've just got to keep doing the same things."

That last sentiment is one that would be shared by **Stoke**, who are now unbeaten in eight games and face a first ever group-stage match in the Europa League when they travel to Dynamo Kyiv on Thursday.

"We've started well but are still 32 points from safety," said the **Stoke** manager, Tony Pulis. "Any side can beat you on any given day, so we've to keep our feet on the ground and take nothing for granted." Pulis's delight extended to the debut display of Peter Crouch following his pounds 10m move from Tottenham. The striker was quiet but showed plenty of eagerness.

The same could be said of Craig Bellamy, who marked his return to **Liverpool** as a snarling, second-half substitute. As it transpired, he was not the only one from the visitors' camp who was in a petulant mood in the Potteries.

Man of the match Ryan Shawcross (**Stoke City**)

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NOW IT'S COOL bRITANNIA

New signings bring a touch of quality to City's battlers WhisPEr it quietly near the likes of Arsene Wenger but unfashionable stoke are finally getting some genuine respect from Premier League rivals.

As usual Stoke's opponents went away cursing but this time there were no complaints about City's style - even from WAG Abbey Clancy.

The Britannia has long been an unpopular ground to visit for the silkier topflight teams such as Wenger's Arsenal.

Chelsea boss Andre Villas-Boas had a quick wake up call in his first league game when his side were held 0-0 there.

Tony Pulis' unbeaten side have since built on that impressive result with a draw at Norwich, victory at West Brom and a place in the Europa League group stages.

Now they have their first big scalp of the season with this hardfought triumph.

It left Liverpool boss Kenny Dalglish fuming over Jonathan Walters' 21st-minute penalty.

But a delighted Pulis reckons bringing in proven Premier League players such as Jonathan Woodgate, Matt Upson, Peter Crouch and Wilson Palacios is already paying dividends.

The quartet have taken Stoke upmarket in their bid to become an established, respected Premier League force.

Crouch and Palacios made their debuts as Stoke produced a typically gutsy rearguard action, with their captain Ryan Shawcross outstanding. Crouch's London-based wife Clancy, the model turned TV presenter, was at the ground despite her misgivings about moving to Staffordshire.

She would have left impressed with the noisy atmosphere and Stoke's admirable work ethic to which signings such as her husband have added some stardust.

Rory Delap's trademark long throw may still be one of the Potters' most dangerous weapons. But Pulis is determined his side will play more football this season through the likes of midfielder Palacios.

And the mix of skill combined with workhorses like striker Walters, will stretch most teams.

Walters said: "The spirit we showed epitomises this team and the new boys who have come in have carried that on."

Walters was particularly pleased with his winner, having grown up an Everton fan. He added: "A goal is a goal, but it's always sweet to score against them."

Walters converted the spot-kick after going to ground in a tussle for the ball with Jamie Carragher.

The rest of the contest was dominated by the visitors, who were hardly troubled again by Stoke's attack.

Man of the match Shawcross blocked a Luis Suarez effort and Jordan Henderson and Charlie Adam were denied by keeper Asmir Begovic as Liverpool rained in five shots on target in a mad scramble. Suarez missed a sitter at the very end.

Pulis said: "We've got to keep our feet on the ground and keep working hard.

What we have to change is to make sure we're a bit better with the ball in possession."

The Daily Telegraph

Defeat leaves Dalglish in fighting mood

Stoke City 1

Walters 21 pen

Liverpool 0

Att: 27,592

All the pressures, frustrations and perceived injustices that cloud the vision of Premier League managers appeared to revisit Kenny Dalglish at the Britannia Stadium, with his suggestion that Liverpool are being victimised by referees' decisions smacking of faint paranoia.

For a fourth Premier League game running, reckoned Dalglish, contentious decisions had worked against his side, including the penalty award for Jamie Carragher's foul on Jon Walters which saw the bustling Stoke striker -- and, as he reflected cheerily later, Everton fan too -- pick himself up and smash home the first-half winner from the spot.

"If we continually get battered by things which are out of our control then we're not going to have much chance," bemoaned Dalglish. "We would like to be respectful to the referees, and I feel we have been respectful, but more importantly is them having respect for Liverpool Football Club.

"And if I feel we're suffering in any way, shape or form then I may need to go the same route as some other people and see if I can gain some benefit from that."

That route, on which he would make no decision until he had talked to the team's owner John Henry "because the last thing I want to do is for my behaviour to impinge on the club's success in any way", presumably could entail an official protest.

And what a waste of everyone's time that would be. Despite Dalglish couching all his grumbles under the cloak of being respectful, it still all seemed faintly absurd on an afternoon when the raging penalty injustices he saw were not so blindingly clear to everyone else.

Dalglish's "contentious" decisions were exactly that. Not travesties, not scandalous, just contentious.

Carragher had his arms wrapped round Walters like an octopus so the penalty decision was always eminently 'giveable'. When Rory Delap handled, it was not even obvious enough for Liverpool players to make anything more than half-hearted appeals. And when, in the dying seconds, Luis Suarez screamed for handball, it would have been a very harsh penalty for Mark Clattenburg to award against the sliding Matthew Upson.

As for the wider concept that Liverpool have been "battered" by bad decisions all season, even those who have chronicled their every game so far seemed wholly unconvinced.

The truth was Dalglish's men, inspired by Suarez's livewire excellence, created enough chances to have won. Was it Clattenburg's fault that the Uruguayan sidefooted wide when it seemed easier to score?

To Dalglish's credit, he ended up shrugging that he would not say any more because "I don't want to take the gloss away from Stoke". Quite right too. The home side, displaying commitment, courage and defensive resilience which even Dalglish conceded was "heroic", hurled bodies on the line time and again to maintain their own eight-game unbeaten start.

Asked about the Potters' extraordinary fortitude, Tony Pulis just shrugged: "It's the DNA of the football club." Actually, it wasn't until Pulis himself transplanted it there but it was evident from seeing Peter Crouch knuckling down as a third centre-half to help lift the late siege.

Pulis could hardly help smiling when it was suggested Stoke are in danger of becoming fashionable. Heck, even Mrs Abigail Crouch, supposedly not the greatest admirer of the Potteries, loved her afternoon.

Could it even be fashionable enough for Ryan Shawcross to woo Fabio Capello? "If Capello picks him, brilliant," shrugged Pulis. "And if he doesn't, nobody in Stoke; on Trent will think any the less of Ryan. We think the world of him."

RED MIST THREE INCIDENTS WHICH DROVE KENNY CRAZY

12 MIN Liverpool cry 'penalty' as Rory Delap appears to brush away a Martin Skrtel throw

19 MIN Jon Walters wins Stoke a spot-kick as he tangles with Jamie Carragher

90 MIN Liverpool again appeal as the ball touches Matthew Upson's upper arm

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Referee Clattenburg is man of the match as unbeaten run ends

A BURNING sense of injustice lingered as Liverpool headed for home.

This was a contest which made a mockery of the old adage you get what you deserve in football. Defeats are never easy to stomach but this was a truly bitter pill to swallow. The Reds' unbeaten start to the campaign was ended in the Potteries but how they left with nothing to show for their efforts will remain one of life's mysteries. On their previous visit to the Britannia Stadium under Roy Hodgson 10 months earlier, Liverpool had wilted under an aerial bombardment. They were bullied into submission and deservedly beaten. Saturday was a world away from that chastening experience. Kenny Dalglish's rejuvenated Reds stood up to Stoke and dominated long periods of a hopelessly one-sided game. They had 59% possession, 20 attempts on goal and forced a dozen corners - yet they returned pointless. Stoke handed their man of the match award to the impressive Ryan Shawcross but the bubbly should have gone to Mark Clattenburg. Dalglish attempted to bite his lip but struggled to hide his disgust at the blundering official's wretched display. The decision to award Stoke a penalty midway through the first half when Jon Walters theatrically tumbled after backing into Jamie Carragher was baffling. It came just after Clattenburg had ignored Rory Delap's blatant handball inside his own box and worse was to follow at the death as Matthew Upson got away with a similar offence. Of course Clattenburg has previous for failing to spot major incidents. This was the same referee who back in February didn't see Wayne Rooney's blatant elbow on Wigan's James McCarthy, yet awarded a free-kick which meant the striker couldn't be punished retrospectively. Since the mess Clattenburg made of handling the derby at Goodison in 2007 he's rarely been spotted on Merseyside. Saturday was the first time he has refereed a Liverpool game home or away for three and a half years. If a similar amount of time elapses before he's spotted in the middle again it will still be too soon. Criticising the referee in a bid to hide your own side's failings is the oldest trick in the book but this was no case of looking for a scapegoat. Dalglish was steadfastly refused to berate officials so far this term. Respect has been the watchword but it's getting Liverpool nowhere with other clubs seemingly reaping the rewards of haranguing referees.

The manager has vowed to speak to owner John Henry to consider a change of approach and his frustration is understandable. On the opening weekend against Sunderland, it was Phil Dowd who cost the Reds after failing to issue the red card Kieran Richardson's professional foul on Luis Suarez demanded. Then even in the victory over Bolton, Lee Robert somehow allowed Zat Knight to get away with cynically bringing down Luis Suarez in the box. On Saturday the three penalty shouts that all went against the Reds went a long way to deciding the outcome. But there were also reasons closer to home why Liverpool's wait for a first league win at the Britannia Stadium goes on. The fact is if Dalglish's side had been ruthless they would have made Clattenburg's howlers irrelevant. A host of glorious chances were spurned, especially in a frenetic finale, as Stoke clung on to a lead they had done precious little to earn.

Wirral-born Walters accepted the gift presented to him in the 21st minute when he lashed the controversial spot-kick past Pepe Reina. It was the hosts' one and only shot on target. Prior to that Liverpool had started brightly with Suarez making a nuisance of himself and the Uruguayan almost provided an instant response to Stoke's opener. Asmir Begovic flapped at Jordan Henderson's cross but Shawcross threw himself in the path of Suarez's goal-bound shot.

Stoke's route-one style means they have no need for a perfect playing surface and the long grass certainly hampered Liverpool's passing game.

Charlie Adam struggled but he wasn't the only one who slipped below recent high standards. The character and the commitment couldn't be questioned as the Reds matched Stoke physically but a lack of composure in the final third meant the visitors' extra quality wasn't made to count. With one eye on Stoke's aerial threat, Martin Skrtel was preferred to Glen Johnson at right-back but the Slovakian was out of his comfort zone venturing forward.

Skrtel blazed over after being teed up by Suarez and it was a surprise that Johnson had to wait until the closing stages to enter the fray. In the second half the Reds were slicker and cranked up the pressure. Henderson should have scored just past the hour after being put clean through by Jose Enrique. It was an intelligent run from the young midfielder but he fired weakly straight at Begovic. Henderson couldn't put away his two bites at the rebound and then Adam was twice denied as Stoke somehow shovelled the ball behind. Dalglish responded by introducing Andy Carroll up front and new signing Craig Bellamy on the left.

The onslaught was maintained but Downing nodded straight at Begovic before Bellamy headed wide at the back post. Stoke defended heroically and Liverpool's desperation had reached fever pitch when Suarez was convinced he had secured a late penalty. The ball clearly struck Upson's arm as he went to ground but Clattenburg didn't want to know. Suarez picked up a booking for his prolonged protests and his mood soon worsened. When Begovic dropped the ball inside the box deep into stoppage time, the net was gaping but Suarez drilled wide to complete a miserable afternoon for the Reds.

It's a setback but not one to cause real concern. Those feelings of anger and frustration need to be bottled and unleashed on Tottenham next Sunday. "The first four league games have all had a contentious decision and every one has gone against us. We would like to be respectful to the referees and I think we have been, but more important than being respectful to referees and their campaign is having respect for my football club." KENNY DALGLISH

"We were pretty poor in possession of the ball today and we are better than that but we were top drawer off the ball. We stopped them playing, although I thought Suarez up front was fantastic." TONY PULLIS.

STOKE (4-4-2): Begovic, Huth (Wilkinson 64), Shawcross, Upson, Wilson, Pennant, Delap (Palacios 71), Whitehead, Etherington (Jones 68), Walters, Crouch. Not used: Sorensen, Whelan, Shotton, Jerome.

LIVERPOOL (4-4-2): Reina, Skrtel (Johnson 81), Carragher, Agger, Enrique, Henderson (Bellamy 67), Adam, Lucas, Downing, Kuyt (Carroll 67), Suarez. Not used: Doni, Maxi, Coates, Spearing.

GOALS: Walters (pen 21)

CARDS: Suarez (90)

REFEREE: Mark Clattenburg (Tyne & Wear)

ATTENDANCE: 27,592

THE SUNDAY TIMES

Stoke's dogged heroics have Dalglish crying foul

STOKE CITY 1

Walters 21 pen

LIVERPOOL 0

EXPECTATION surrounded two deadline-day acquisitions, with most eyes focused on Peter Crouch's debut for Stoke against his former club and Craig Bellamy's emotional homecoming to Liverpool. But the crucial figure was Ryan Shawcross, who somehow eluded the elite when the transfer deadline approached.

The City captain epitomised a home back five who were herculean in their resistance to wave after wave of assaults after Stoke's Merseyside-born Jonathan Walters had scored the only goal with a contested penalty.

Liverpool manager Kenny Dalglish became increasingly agitated on the touchline, particularly over that penalty and an unsuccessful appeal when Stoke defender Matthew Upson handled Luis Suarez's attempted cross in the final minute.

Dalglish appeared to suggest a conspiracy of officialdom against Liverpool.

"If you continually get battered by things outside your control, you've got no chance," he said.

Adding that he may decide to take his complaints further, Dalglish cautioned: "The last thing I want to do is impinge on the club's reputation. I'll have to speak to the owners first. But we've had contentious decisions go against us in all four games."

Although the Potters are evolving, they retain that cussed, combative element for which they are renowned. Compared to the hyperbole surrounding his [pounds sterling]10m signing, Crouch had a subdued game. He held the ball up well enough, but otherwise made little impression until the final seconds of stoppage time, when he collided with his goalkeeper, Asmir Begovic, allowing the lurking Suarez a rare shot at goal. The Uruguayan screwed his effort wide. It summed up the visitors' afternoon.

Midway through the half, Liverpool captain Jamie Carragher dragged down Walters, who powered home the spot kick. Curiously, Carragher was not even cautioned by Mark Clattenburg. Dalglish's view: "I just cannot see how that was a penalty kick."

In the first half, Stoke generally looked comfortable. When Begovic flapped at a cross Walters: and gave Suarez a rare chance, Shawcross threw his body on the line. The Uruguayan then set up Martin Skrtel but the defender blazed over.

When Suarez finally tested the keeper, it was a weak effort.

Liverpool were revitalised after the break. On the hour, Stoke were caught out badly by Jose Enrique's ball to an unmarked Jordan Henderson. Begovic and his defence thwarted him three times before Charlie Adam, getting in on the act, suffered a similar fate. Andy Carroll and Bellamy appeared as disputed goal substitutes with a quarter of the game remaining and re-energised the attack.

Liverpool made vociferous penalty claims when Suarez's cross hit Upson's arm in the final minute, but it was clearly unintentional.

Then Suarez, otherwise so inspirational, spurned that inviting chance of an equaliser as Stoke maintained their undefeated start.

Star man: Ryan Shawcross (Stoke) Yellow cards: Liverpool: Suarez Referee: M Clattenburg Attendance: 27,592 Stoke City: Begovic 7, Huth 6 (Wilkinson 64min), Shawcross 8, Upson 7, Wilson 6, Pennant 6, Delap 6 (Palacios 71min), Whitehead 6, Etherington 6 (Jones 68min), Walters 7, Crouch 6 Liverpool: Reina 6, Skrtel 7 (Johnson 81min), Carragher 5, Agger 6, Enrique 6, Henderson 5 (Bellamy 67min), Lucas 7, Adam 7, Downing 6, Suarez 7, Kuyt 6 (Carroll 67min)

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The Sentinel

STOKE City produced one of the best defensive displays of their Premier League existence to beat Liverpool at the Britannia for a second successive season.

Jon Walters netted the only goal of the afternoon after winning a 21st minute penalty against Jamie Carragher.

But City were indebted to some fine goalkeeping, and even better defending, to repel an increasingly menacing Liverpool offensive.

That's now eight points from the first four games - and still unbeaten in eight league and cup games - during a remarkable start which has still seen Stoke concede only two goals.

The standing ovation to welcome Peter Crouch on his Stoke debut had barely died down by the time his strike partner grabbed the limelight to smash City in front on 21.

For it was Walters winning the penalty when shielding Jermaine Pennant's hook into the Liverpool area before being manhandled by Carragher.

There was definitely an arm around the waist as Walters sank to the floor and looked expectantly - and successfully - towards referee Mark Clattenburg.

And it was Walters himself, atoning for his penalty miss at Norwich last month, who went for power by blasting past Pepe Reina for 1-0.

That merely cranked up the volume during a first half in which Liverpool's best chance saw Martin Skrtel crash one over from 15 yards as Matthew Etherington dithered over a clearance.

Stoke's diligent defence, in which Matthew Upson was making his league debut, had earlier produced three superb blocks from Upson himself, Marc Wilson and Ryan Shawcross to prevent Asmir Begovic being called into any serious first-half action.

Begovic's only save before the break saw him drop low at his near post to safely snaffle Luis Suarez's shot on the spin.

Half-time: Stoke 1, Liverpool 0.

Another block, this time from Robert Huth, stifled an attempt from Lucas as Stoke continued to put everything on the line whenever needed at the back during Liverpool's domination of possession and territory after the break.

And such defending was evident in a truly remarkable incident in the 61st minute when Stoke survived FIVE attempts on their goal.

It all started when Jordan Henderson broke through the middle, completely unchecked, and twice shot against Begovic.

Henderson's third attempt on goal then struck a retreating Upson before Charlie Adam followed up with one effort against Shawcross and a second against Begovic.

Five attempts on goal in the space of around 15 breathless seconds.

Kenny Dalglish had seen enough - throwing on Andy Carroll and Craig Bellamy - while Crouch applauded the home fans in the mistaken belief he was being subbed instead of Matthew Etherington when Kenwyne Jones came on for Stoke. Begovic was well placed to grab Stewart Downing's far-post header as the visitors pressed again for that elusive equaliser.

Bellamy was busying himself to set up a shooting chance for Suarez, but Dean Whitehead underlined his fine contribution by producing the latest in a long line of blocks in and around the Stoke area.

The noose was tightening, you felt, and Stoke were under severe pressure again when Begovic was wrongly adjudged to have tipped way a cross shot from Suarez to concede another corner entering the final 10 minutes.

Downing then skewed one across the face of goal to rouse the home crowd into a timely and vocal reminder of their support for Stoke's back-tracking players.

Bellamy headed wide of the far post before unwisely going nose-to-nose with Shawcross over something of nothing a couple of minutes later as the clock ticked towards the magical 90.

Liverpool were screaming for a penalty at the start of five minutes of extra time when Suarez's chipped cross clipped off Upson's knee on its way to hitting his arm... but it would have been a harsh spot kick.

And there was still time for another great escape when Crouch impeded Begovic for a high ball to leave Suarez with a near open goal, but he summed up the entire afternoon by poking wide.

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TEAMS

Stoke: 1 Begovic, 4 Huth, 12 Wilson, 17 Shawcross, 20 Upson, 16 Pennant, 24 Delap, 18 Whitehead, 26 Etherington, 19 Walters, 25 Crouch. Subs: 28 Wilkinson (for Huth,64), 9 Jones (for Etherington,68), 40 Palacios (for Delap,71). Not used: 29 Sorensen, 6 Whelan, 30 Shotton, 33 Jerome.

Liverpool: 25 Reina, 37 Skrtel, 3 Enrique, 23 Carragher, 5 Agger, 18 Kuyt, 26 Adam, 21 Lucas, 14 Henderson, 19 Downing, 7 Suarez. Subs: 9 Carroll (for Kuyt,67), 39 Bellamy (for Henderson,67), 2 Johnson (for Skrtel,82). Not used: 32 Doni, 9 Carroll, 11 Rodriguez, 16 Coates, 20 Spearing.

Referee: M Clattenburg (Tyne & Wear).

Att: 27,592.

Cards: Stoke - none. Liverpool - Suarez (dissent,90).

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POTTERS POWER; Walters on the spot to keep Pulis riding high
STOKE 1 Walters 21 (pen)
LIVERPOOL 0

TONY PULIS has shown his ambition by spending pounds 18million on Peter Crouch and Wilson Palacios - and now it's about time the rest of football showed him a bit of respect.

His team's style of play may divide opinion - but their fans don't care. "We're Stoke City," they sang yesterday. "We'll play how we want."

And why not?

The Potters might have a reputation as a robust, direct side who win games by scaring opponents - but all the evidence is that their system, while failing to please the purists, actually works.

Reinforced by the deadline-day signing of the 6ft 7in Crouch and Honduras midfielder Palacios from Tottenham they are now even more of a big, physical team - and they continue to take no prisoners when competing for the ball.

All eyes were on new boy Crouch, the former Liverpool striker who was making his debut after his club-record pounds 10m move.

But it was his striking partner Jonathan Walters whose aggression earned Pulis' side the three points - and inflicted the first defeat of the season on Kenny Dalglish's men.

Walters, who is a Merseysider by birth, is most definitely a Stoke type of player and he earned and scored the game's only goal.

The opening 20 minutes were all about Liverpool pressure - but then Stoke won a penalty with their first real attack of the game.

Another former Anfield star, Jermaine Pennant, started the move by hopefully hooking an overhead punt into the Liverpool area.

Walters outmuscled Jamie Carragher to set himself up with a golden opportunity - and the former England defender was controversially judged by referee Mark Clattenburg to have pulled down the 27-year-old forward.

Walters confidently stepped up to power the spot-kick past Pepe Reina for his first league strike of the season.

Dalglish will rue Liverpool's inability to take their chances.

They should have been ahead long before conceding with Luis Suarez (right) having two half-chances to open the scoring.

First the Uruguay striker, who was recently named the Reds' player of the month, shot just over from 25 yards. Then Suarez - who has started the season with a bang, scoring three goals - failed to connect with a Charlie Adam corner when only a few yards out.

Suarez had an immediate chance to equalise, just after Walters had given Stoke the lead, when Asmir Begovic tipped Jordan Henderson's cross straight into his path - but Ryan Shawcross bravely dived in his way to block the shot.

Then Suarez set up Martin Skrtel a few yards out but the Slovakia defender blasted the ball over.

Dalglish attempted to redress the balance by "bringing on the heavyweight pairing of Andy Carroll and Craig Bellamy for the second half. Both men had a point to prove. The pounds 35m Carroll, whose lifestyle was criticised by England boss Fabio Capello earlier in the week, was desperate for a goal to silence Stoke fans who sang "You're still drunk".

And Bellamy, who came on for Jordan Henderson, wanted to show Liverpool that they were wrong to get rid of him four years ago.

Henderson had to come off, really, following a remarkable sequence in which the England midfielder missed a hat-trick of chances, two of the saved by Begovic - before Adam and then Henderson again were thwarted. Such brilliant goalkeeping - and another heroic block by Shawcross - was typical of the fighting spirit Pulis has instilled in his troops.

Stoke are riding high in the Premier League at the moment - and we should all rejoice at their ascent.

CLAVANE'S VERDICT

Stoke fully deserved this win - despite Liverpool complaining about the penalty. With Crouch and Palacios they will cause more upsets this season.

The Sunday Telegraph

Familiar defeat tempts Dalglish to take action

Stoke 1

Walters pen 21

Liverpool 0

Att: 27,592

Kenny Dalglish may have spent just short of [pounds sterling]120 million since his second coming at **Liverpool** but still he cannot find the formula to banish **Liverpool's** Britannia blues.

Many illustrious managers have departed from this unforgiving venue with their noses bloodied and Dalglish was condemned to his first defeat of the season as **Stoke** extended their unbeaten run against **Liverpool** to four Premier League home games.

Jon Walters, born just ten miles away from Anfield in Moreton, Merseyside, provided the telling contribution with his 21st-minute penalty to ensure the feel-good factor buzzing around the Potteries continues to thrive.

Dalglish, however, was left nursing a burning sense of injustice over the performance of referee Mark Clattenburg, and admitted he will speak to owner John W Henry before making a complaint to the Professional Game Match Officials Limited over the standard of refereeing so far this season.

He said: "The first four league games have all had contentious decisions and every one of them has gone against us. We would like to be respectful towards the referees but, more importantly than respecting referees and their campaign, they should have respect for my football club.

"I think I'll just need to go down the same route as some other people and see if we can get some benefit from that. I'll speak to the owners and seek their advice." At least this was an improvement on **Liverpool's** last chastening experience here, when Roy Hodgson's side were swatted aside after a timid performance.

There is a steely resilience to Dalglish's new-look **Liverpool** but after 20 minutes their determination to match the abrasive approach of their opponents went too far when Jamie Carragher foolishly hauled down Walters in the area. Walters picked himself up to emphatically power the penalty past Jose Reina.

Liverpool were denied an equaliser on the hour when **Stoke** goalkeeper Asmir Begovic produced a stunning hat-trick of saves to deny Jordan Henderson twice and then Charlie Adam as the hosts somehow clung on.

Clattenburg then piled the agony on the visitors when he waved away late penalty claims. Tony Pulis can now reflect on eight games without defeat this season. "I'm pleased as punch," he said.

Stoke (4-4-2): Begovic; Huth (Wilkinson 65), Shawcross, Upson, Wilson; Pennant, Whitehead, Delap (Palacios 71), Etherington (Jones 68), Crouch, Walters. Subs: Sorensen, Shotton, Whelan, Jerome

Liverpool (4-4-2): Reina; Skrtel (G Johnson 82), Agger, Carragher, Enrique; Henderson (Bellamy 67), Adam, Lucas, Downing; Suarez, Kuyt (Carroll 67).

Subs: Doni, Coates, Maxi, Spearing Referee: M Clattenburg (Durham)

Date: 10 September 2011
 Opposition: Stoke City
 Competition: League

Observer	Times	Guardian	Mirror
Sentinel	Telegraph	Echo	Sunday Times
	Sunday Mirror	Sun Telegraph	Mail on Sunday



10 September
2011

The Mail

Walters spot on to punish Dalglish; Liverpool boss loses his cool after penalty inflicts a first defeat

STOKE 1

Walters (21 pen)

LIVERPOOL 0

KENNY DALGLISH has been around long enough to know that a decision or two can go against you. So it was extraordinary to hear him talk as though he was on the verge of going to war against Premier League referees.

The penalty that Jon Walters won and scored was harsh but at least debatable, and therefore hardly worthy of the Scotsman's burning anger.

By dropping to the Potteries turf so readily after his shirt had been tugged by Jamie Carragher, Walters gave himself the chance to outshine all the big-name marksmen on show. His spot-kick was dispatched into Pepe Reina's net.

Liverpool's first defeat of the season was rough justice, given that Luis Suarez might have had a double hat-trick had he taken all his chances. It was the Uruguayan's superb movement that had created most of them in the first place, so you could almost forgive him for firing wide when Stoke goalkeeper Asmir Begovic dropped the ball at his feet in the dying seconds.

Dalglish later insisted this chance was by no means as easy as it looked, but he was being generous. Suarez had lost his composure by then because of another contentious decision by referee Mark Clattenburg.

When a Suarez cross struck Matthew Upson's leg and then his arm in the box, Suarez slid at the referee's assistant so venomously you wondered whether he was about to lash out and earn himself a lengthy ban. A yellow card sufficed, but the South American still had not calmed down when he was handed that final platform to make amends.

Suarez, as Tony Pulis pointed out, was a constant threat, 'different class, he graces the Premier League', the Stoke manager added.

And if anyone could be blamed, aside from the referee that is, for Liverpool's failure to take so much as a point, then perhaps Jordan Henderson was a more suitable candidate.

Clean through after an hour, he had two opportunities as he sought to beat Begovic and failed both times. Twice helped by defensive blocks as shots rained in on his goal, Begovic pulled off a third miraculous save inside a few seconds.

'That incident showed the DNA of our club,' said Pulis. 'People thought it might change if we signed players like Peter Crouch and Wilson Palacios, but it hasn't.' Stoke showed the greater appetite, the fiercer spirit, and that made the difference as much as any controversial decision by Clattenburg.

Liverpool's attack, though buzzing, remained blunt. Andy Carroll was left on the bench until the 67th minute. In the little amount of time he was given, Carroll headed downwards for Suarez before the attack was intercepted, had a weak shot blocked by what looked suspiciously like a Stoke hand and generally made a nuisance of himself without ever truly striking fear into the home defence.

Craig Bellamy, who came on at the same time as Carroll, missed a wonderful chance by planting his header into the side-netting

And Crouch fluffed the two half-chances he had, though no one really seemed to care.

Walters scored, that is what mattered, and then celebrated in front of Liverpool's travelling army. It was just as well the missiles thrown at him were no harder or sharper than the odd match programme.

Perhaps this was meant to be Stoke's day after Crouch received a tremendous reception from his new fans.

His glamorous Liverpoolian wife, Abbey Clancy, had nailed her colours firmly to the new mast when she tweeted about her daughter: 'Must get Sophia a Stoke kit ... go daddy!'

Just before kick-off she added: 'I have never said I did not want to move to Stoke, it's a load of lies. I will always stand by and support my husband in everything.'

As for Dalglish, his reaction last night said everything about the immense pressures in the race for Champions League qualification.

And if he is crying foul after a few games, what sort of a state will he be in come spring?

STOKE (4-4-2): Begovic; Huth (Wilkinson 64min), Shawcross, Upson, Wilson; Pennant, Whitehead, Delap (Palacios 71), Etherington (Jones 68); Crouch, Walters. Subs (not used): Sorensen, Whelan, Shotton, Jerome.

LIVERPOOL (4-4-1-1): Reina; Skrtel (Johnson 81), Agger, Carragher, Enrique; Henderson (Bellamy 67), Lucas, Adam, Downing; Kuyt (Carroll 67); Suarez. Subs (not used): Doni, Maxi, Coates, Spearing. Booked: Suarez.

Referee: M Clattenburg.

Super Stoke

STOKE have only lost one of their last 11 Premier League games at home.

They are also unbeaten in all eight of their competitive matches so far this season -- giving them their best start to a Premier League campaign. After four games, they already have eight points.

The Observer

Dalglish unveils new conspiracy theory

STOKE CITY 1 Walters 21 LIVERPOOL 0

After a start to the season that took them to the top of the table for the first time in two years, there had been growing talk of Liverpool having developed into genuine title contenders. But at a ground that has consistently proved to be a graveyard of success for the club came the feeling that even at this earliest of stages, their championship hopes may just have died a little. It is now four Premier League fixtures out of four without victory for Liverpool here, with this the team's second defeat in succession, and while their most recent performance was encouraging for large spells - in no way as poor as the 2-0 defeat last season under Roy Hodgson - the visitors played with a wastefulness that suggests that for all the progress made under Kenny Dalglish since replacing Hodgson, they lack the killer instinct to challenge for the ultimate prize. Not that Dalglish sees it like that.

The Scot, who has been the personification of joviality and warmth since returning to Anfield in January, was left in a rage by proceedings here, claiming that it was the referee, Mark Clattenburg, who ultimately sealed his team's first defeat of the season by awarding Stoke the penalty from which Jonathan Walters scored the game's only goal, after 21 minutes, and then denying Liverpool one of their own on 90 minutes when Matthew Upson, stationed just inside the host's area, appeared to block a right-sided cross from Luis Suarez with his hands as he slid on to the turf. The Scot hinted later of a conspiracy against his side and said he was contemplating speaking to Liverpool's American owners about how to deal with the issue. "We would like to be respectful to the referees, but more importantly is them having respect for my football club and if I feel we're suffering in any way, shape or form then I may need to go the same route as some other people go and see if I can gain some benefit from that," warned the Liverpool manager, somewhat cryptically. "The first four league games have had contentious decisions in them and every one has gone against us." Tony Pulis, understandably, took a counter view to Dalglish. "I think Kenny will be as biased [to his team] as I am to Stoke," he said. "I respect his opinion and whether the decisions were [less than impartial] or not I don't know." For all his anger, Dalglish did concede that his team had the chances to garner at least a point, no more so than during an incredible burst of play just after the hour mark when, having been put clear by Jose Enrique's long pass, Jordan Henderson failed to score what would have been his second goal in two games for his new club with three attempts in a matter of seconds, two of which were saved by the Stoke keeper, Asmir Begovic, while the other was blocked by Upson. Having regained possession, Henderson then laid the ball off to Charlie Adam at the edge of the area only for the Scot to see his two efforts at goal also blocked, the first by the outstanding Ryan Shawcross and the second by the increasingly remarkable Begovic. It was a stunning sequence of play that sent an already typically fervent crowd into raptures and suggested that Liverpool had missed their chance, or indeed chances, to score here, but deep into second-half stoppage time Suarez wasted arguably the visitors' best opportunity when, having been perfectly placed to seize on Begovic's failure to catch Adam's straight cross, the Uruguayan poked his resulting shot wide of an empty net. He is human after all. That effort was Liverpool's 20th of the game and summed up their general dominance. But, as Dalglish also conceded, their passing was consistently erratic - particularly from Henderson - and their five blocked shots and Suarez's late effort aside, the visitors did not threaten too greatly, even after Andy Carroll and the returning Craig Bellamy came on as substitutes after 67 minutes. This was the third match in a row that Carroll has started on Liverpool's bench, and while Dalglish continues to defend the pounds 35m striker, no more so than following Fabio Capello's insistence during the international break that he needs to "drink less", he still appears reluctant to trust fully in the 22-year-old. Following this defeat, however, Carroll may just sense that he could return to the starting line-up for next Sunday's visit to Tottenham. Such matters will not concern Stoke after their fifth win of the season and fourth league game without defeat. The focus prior to kick-off had been on Peter Crouch following his pounds 10m move from Tottenham on deadline day, but the 30-year-old made a relatively quiet performance against one of his former sides. Instead it was Crouch's strike partner, Walters, who shone on a windy day in the Potteries, capping an energetic and robust performance with his first league goal of the season that he created himself after running at Jamie Carragher and forcing the defender to haul him to the ground.

For all of Dalglish's complaints, Clattenburg's decision to penalise Liverpool's stand-in captain appeared a fair one. For Stoke there now comes a historic first match in the Europa League group stages; away to Dynamo Kyiv on Thursday. For Liverpool, there are regrets and a lingering sense of fury regarding what could have been. A league title could still come their way this season but for that to happen, a club reborn may well need something else special to come their way.

The impending return of their captain, Steven Gerrard, to action cannot come soon enough. STOKE Begovic; Huth (Wilkinson 64), Shawcross, Upson, Wilson; Etherington (Jones 68), Delap (Palacios 71), Whitehead, Pennant; Crouch, Walters Subs not used Sorensen, Shotton, Whelan, Jerome

LIVERPOOL Reina; Skrtel (Johnson 81), Carragher, Agger, Jose Enrique; Henderson (Bellamy 67), Lucas, Adam, Downing; Kuyt (Carroll 67), Suarez; Subs not used Doni, Coates, Spearing, Rodriguez Britannia Stadium 27,592 Game rating 7/10 Referee Mark Clattenburg

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