

Date: 24 March 2012  
 Opposition: Wigan Athletic  
 Competition: League

Telegraph	Echo	Sun Telegraph	Sunday Mail
Guardian	Wigan Today	Sunday Mirror	Mirror
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**THE**  **TIMES**

**the guardian**

Martinez's damning praise only highlights problems facing Dalglish  
 Roberto Martinez may well be the Premier League's most polite manager but he was unintentionally damning in his praise of his opponents after this match when he ventured: "Credit to Liverpool, they didn't just come to make up the numbers." It says something when the manager of Wigan feels moved to congratulate Liverpool for their pluck - at Anfield.

What this says is that Liverpool are far from the force they once were and far from the Premier League force that the club's owners thought they would become after Kenny Dalglish was given more than pounds 100m to spend since replacing Roy Hodgson as manager in January 2011.

Liverpool now have three points fewer than they had at this stage last season and are jostling to stay above Everton, Sunderland and Swansea City rather than keeping pace with Arsenal, beleaguered Chelsea or even Newcastle. The doctrine of Dalglish infallibility has been renounced at Anfield, where there is increasing doubt about his judgment.

The chief criticism concerns his transfers. Dalglish complained that a busy fixture list had left his team jaded going into the game against Wigan and he would have liked to have been able to rotate more during the three fixtures the team had in the last week.

But Andy Carroll, for instance, has started only one of the last six league matches and Jordan Henderson has completed only two of the last 10. Grumbling about the squad being overstretched sounds hollow when the manager regularly chooses to park players for whom he paid over pounds 50m on the bench.

Nor is the quibble over fixture congestion convincing. While it is true that Liverpool have fielded strong sides as they advanced in both domestic knockout tournaments - winning the Carling Cup and set to compete in the semi-finals of the FA Cup - their schedule has been eased by not competing in Europe for the first time since 1999.

Dalglish's tactical acumen is also under fire. He has changed his formations and personnel frequently this season and often they have seemed incompatible. Against Wigan the players seldom seemed on the same wavelength and at times the strategy was counterintuitive.

Liverpool began with a 4-1-4-1 apparently designed to provide Luis Suarez with the regular support he often lacks but their best balls in the first half were the sort of sumptuous crosses from Steven Gerrard and Stewart Downing that Carroll might have relished. Yet when Carroll came on at half-time with Liverpool a goal down to Shaun Maloney's penalty, the crosses dried up. Liverpool did equalise through Suarez but soon fell behind again to a Gary Caldwell goal and never looked like recovering.

The inability of Liverpool's midfield to discomfort Wigan when they had the ball did lend credence to Dalglish's claim that his players were tired from their heavy recent schedule but raised questions as to why he had chosen to introduce Carroll for Henderson rather than Dirk Kuyt or Jay Spearing, as the well-rested Henderson was the one midfielder who seemed full of energy and his passing had been no more wasteful than most of his team-mates.

None of that, of course, is of any concern to Wigan who, with this victory, received a mighty boost to their more modest ambition of simply staying in the league.

Like Liverpool, however, Wigan have failed to garner sufficient points at home this season - this was their fourth league win on the road but they have prevailed only once at the DW Stadium. However, Martinez is convinced that pattern will change in time to keep them up.

"We've had six draws at home this season and I could go through each of them and explain why we didn't win because we were better than the opposition in every department but we just did not have the composure in front of goal and maybe a bit of luck," he said.

"If we had five more wins at home to our name, no one could be surprised but those are the margins. We are in the position we are in because we have not scored enough goals despite creating enough chances. Clearly we are a very good side but just not a lucky side. Against Liverpool we had the composure and possibly the luck, so we can take big belief from that.

"Overall we deserved three points and that is a major statement when you consider who we are and who Liverpool are. It is a huge boost. We played well in our previous six games - except for Swansea - and we never got the wins; we got four draws and that is eight dropped points. Eight points could put you halfway up the table but where we are now eight points are so difficult to get.

"Every win is extra important and in many ways it can give you belief and confidence and make things easier. Winning at Anfield gives you things you cannot control on the training ground: belief, confidence and a feelgood factor."  
 Man of the match Gary Caldwell (Wigan Athletic)

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# The Mail

# The Daily Telegraph

Fading Liverpool are like a sad old lush  
 Liverpool 1 Suarez 47  
 Wigan Athletic 2 Maloney 30 pen, Caldwell 63 Att: 44,431  
 Aside from those institutions that adjoin Stanley Park, one of Liverpool's most famous clubs is called The Grafton.  
 A once grand ballroom that fell into disrepair, it was a location where ladies of a certain vintage relived their golden days, throwing on the lipstick for one more shot at rapture alongside a fresh generation. Every now and again they would strike lucky too, as visitors in awe of the sheer novelty value of the 'grab a granny nights' succumbed to its particular charms.  
 In so many ways, Liverpool Football Club have something in common with the ladies of The Grafton.  
 They are like an old lush, sat in the corner telling the world how attractive and marvellous they are, utterly affronted when anyone blind to their natural beauty suggests otherwise. Friends, lovers and acquaintances nod enthusiastically each time the club attest to their own greatness, but neutrals and rivals think their better days have long since passed.  
 Every so often the reminders are more potent. A magical one&#x2013;night stand in Europe, or (as this season's Carling Cup final demonstrated) an occasional trophy, but the most serious threat to Liverpool's enduring significance is not the criticism or pity of onlookers, it is their own lack of self&#x2013;awareness.  
 Defeat at home to a bottom&#x2013;three side such as Wigan is still looked upon at Anfield as a shock, a performance which belies form or tradition.  
 Why? Wigan have not lost to Liverpool for three years. They are one of 10 teams to have left Anfield this season enthused by their opponents' inability to win at home. Shaun Maloney's penalty and Gary Caldwell's 64thminute winner condemned Liverpool to their worst Anfield run since relegation in 1953.  
 In applauding his own side's "historic" win, Wigan manager Roberto Martinez generously suggested Anfield remains a special, iconic football venue. That view is based increasingly on the place's sense of the past. Liverpool might as well be playing in their museum.  
 Walk around Old Trafford, the Etihad Arena or the Emirates on matchday. Pause, soak in the scale of the view and keep convincing yourself Anfield does not look like the remnant of another era. One day you will wake up and those Malaysian fans you keep fluttering your eyelids at will be wearing City scarves.  
 Look at the league table for the last 22 years and ask how many genuine title challenges there have been. Two? Three perhaps? Thoroughly examine why the club have fallen from their lofty perch. It is not because they have been pushed off by others, been victims of some bizarre FA or Sir Alex Ferguson&#x2013;led conspiracy, been sidelined by high finance or have suffered two decades of bad luck.  
 It is because successive managers have wasted millions on inadequate players. Those still inaccurately perceived as their closest rivals (a 28&#x2013;point gap to United is a loose definition of 'close') have used their resources infinitely better.  
 When a [pounds sterling]35million striker and a [pounds sterling]20million midfielder turn out to be appalling, the simplistic demand is for another cheque to be signed. Supporters work out the profits from sales, subtract the fees from purchases and use this an excuse for buying pap. It is desperately feeble.  
 The other option is another managerial change and the recycling of mitigating factors for 12 more months of rebuilding. That has not worked much, either.  
 Kenny Dalglish is destined to get one more chance next season regardless of the debate about whether he should.  
 Not because it has been a fantastic season (it clearly has not), not because the league table tells fibs (it does not) and not because his signings are good enough (they certainly are not).  
 He will get another season because there is no appetite to write him off after one trophy winning campaign, which could still end with the FA Cup.  
 When Rafael Benitez came seventh and Roy Hodgson flirted with a relegation scrap, you could call anyone at Liverpool and aside from a handful of sycophants, 90 per cent of employees from the board down to the secretaries did not just crave change, they lobbied for it.  
 The fundamental difference between then and now is the same enquiries provoke the opposite view. Dalglish is not just liked, or respected.  
 He is adored and trusted. Liverpool were booed off on Saturday, but Dalglish's name was still sung (although not as much as it was when he still a club ambassador).  
 For the club's American owners, the challenge is brutal. Chief among them is convincing their fan base to share in a communal period of selfrevelation.  
 "Slow and steady progress," is their mantra. The emphasis is on slow.  
 They may also have to add the word 'agonising'. Expecting them to repair two decades of fierce cultural resistance to any view suggesting the Liverpool way is no longer the correct one will take courage and a willingness to flirt with unpopularity to do what they believe is essential and right.  
 "There's a word we have been using for the last 12 months," managing director Ian Ayre said last week. "Unity."  
 That is all well and good, but here is another one the club better get used to if they do not accept, confront and deal more urgently with the problem of their current place in English football. Irrelevance.

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### Dalglish's smoke and mirrors really insults our intelligence

Having spent more than [pounds sterling]100m on a Liverpool team which looks increasingly unfit for purpose, Kenny Dalglish is not exactly awash with options before he faces a critical re-assessment of his performance by American owner John W Henry.

Of the few he has, one should be seized upon without a moment's delay. It is, beyond a professional obligation to pass on basic information with some small degree of civility, a vow of omerta. Silence, certainly, would have been invested with a particularly golden hue during the Liverpool collapse against Wigan, which followed so quickly a statement from the manager which betrayed, utterly, the tradition of a club he enhanced so brilliantly, first as a player, then a manager in his first term.

Dalglish's always prickly demeanour has hardened markedly in the first months of a year disfigured by the Luis Suarez controversy and Premier League form which has left Liverpool bracketed with Queen's Park Rangers in 18th place, better only than disintegrating Wolves.

Even so, this was hardly adequate preparation for a pre-match slighting of his critics in which he seemed to separate himself from the meaning of all Liverpool's past success.

Dalglish said: "People should take an intelligence check. Judging our performance by league position alone is disrespectful. There's a bigger picture. In 30 years' time it will be remembered they won the Carling Cup - and maybe the FA Cup - in 2012. If that happens, the league position will be overlooked." Bigger picture?

Unfortunately not. This is smoke and mirrors without licence. Indeed, the smoke might be coming from the rabbit hole housing Alice's Wonderland and the Mad Hatter's Tea Party. The league position of Liverpool, as Bill Shankly and Bob Paisley never tired of saying, is not some disposable guide to the team's progress but an unshakeable measurement of its intrinsic worth.

Even Dalglish's old team-mate and staunch friend Alan Hansen recently agreed that "Liverpool are not a cup team".

Of course they are not - the cup triumphs, including their English record-breaking haul in Europe, have always been seen as the inevitable outcrop of deep and relentlessly reseeded strength. No doubt the last success in the Champions League in Istanbul was something of an exception in that it happened, in the most extraordinary circumstances, seven years ago and without any significant impact on the domestic league front.

Now, bizarrely, Dalglish announces that a Carling Cup win - an extremely tentative one against Cardiff City - is some landmark of inexorable progress. As John McEnroe might observe, he cannot be serious.

The team they supplanted at Wembley was, of course, Championship-bound Birmingham City, who found in a random 90 minutes the will to wreck an Arsenal team which a few weeks earlier had been contending for all the game's major honours.

Liverpool have taken eight points from their last 11 games. Roy Hodgson, the man who was banished from Anfield with mocking laughter in his ears and was hired to save West Bromwich Albion's Premier League life, managed to glean more than that.

Mere statistics, you may say, but they do happen to be irrefutable in what they say about Liverpool's current plight.

They also happen to be rather dear to the heart of the American ownership and a key part of their appraisals of the progress of the baseball branch of the business prosecuted by the Boston Red Sox.

Having handed Dalglish and the club's director of football, Damien Comolli, the money to buy Andy Carroll, Jordan Henderson, Stewart Downing, Jose Enrique, Sebastian Coates and Charlie Adam - and complete the pursuit of Suarez - the Fenway Sports Group is not likely to be either enamoured or feeling any need for an intelligence check when it applies some of the same criteria to the soccer division.

Indeed, the sharp edge of Fenway's analysis is likely to get especially acute when it measures the distance that still separates Liverpool from [pounds sterling]30m worth of Champions League revenue.

After the Carling Cup triumph, Comolli suggested that there were still other boxes to tick, including at least fourth place in the league and success in the FA Cup. It seemed like a bad attack of hubris at the time and recent results have only confirmed the diagnosis.

Beyond the damaging statistics, of which the starkest is surely Liverpool's failure to win more than five of 15 home league matches, is Dalglish's willingness to question the foundation of all of Liverpool's past achievements.

It was defined simply enough by Shankly - and always endorsed by Paisley.

Shankly said: "The league is a marathon not a sprint. It is where you find out if you are entitled to believe in how good you are."

If the contradicting of this historical truth does not bring on omerta, nothing will.



### THE pounds 133M QUESTION; Will success in both the Cups REALLY keep heat off big-spending Kenny during one of most disastrous seasons in Anfield history?

THEY'VE lost five of their last six league games and won only two this year, are near the foot of the form table and playing without any self-belief.

No, it's not relegation-threatened Wigan, but a Liverpool side which has had pounds 133.5million lavished on it in the past year.

After 30 Premier League games, Kenny Dalglish's side are a place and three points worse off than at the same point last year, which was one of the worst seasons in modern Anfield history.

These are worrying times for Liverpool, because their season is now distilled into one game. Lose their upcoming FA Cup semi-final at Wembley and the pressure from fans being piled on to new signings like Jordan Henderson, Stewart Downing and Charlie Adam, could switch to their previously untouchable boss.

It was Liverpool's worst performance of the season and despite his empty moans about a goal disallowed for Luis Suarez's handball and having to play three games in a week, Dalglish knows he has big problems.

Afterwards, he began to trot out his old familiar lines then checked himself.

"All we can do is to continue to do as we have done," he said, then long pause.

"We try to pass it to each other but we never passed it to each other today as well as they are capable of." It was an illuminating sentence, revealing as it did the doubt Dalglish is beginning to feel after months of what seemed total denial.

He admitted for the first time they may have to do something different.

"I don't think it's a deep-rooted problem.

We have got a problem winning games in the league. We have to educate ourselves. Maybe we don't play the lovely football we have been," he conceded. And when asked if that meant a more direct approach, he added: "Maybe we have to change our philosophies."

Drastic action is required because some of this Liverpool squad could be destroyed by the pressure they are under. Henderson was taken off at half time and cheers rang out when the change was announced, not for his replacement Andy Carroll, but the mere fact the young midfielder had been substituted.

Every Liverpool player was booed at the end, but along with Henderson, it is Downing, Carroll and Adam who are usually singled out.

Wigan took the lead when Shaun Maloney converted a penalty awarded when Martin Skrtel recklessly kicked Victor Moses in the head.

Liverpool were gifted an equaliser just after the break. Wigan twice had the chance to clear, but somehow allowed Dirk Kuyt to feed Steven Gerrard, whose cross was turned in by Suarez.

Gary Caldwell calmly turned in the box to dummy Carroll and fire through Pepe Reina for the winner. It was Wigan's first ever win at Anfield and represents hope for their boss Roberto Martinez.

He said: "It is sometimes better to be a lucky team than to be a good one and I think we have been good at times this season, but not lucky. Maybe this result can be a turning point."

As for Dalglish, when asked if he can turn things around, he was hardly upbeat. "I'm not a clairvoyant, I don't know if there are better times around the corner." If he looks into the immediate future, he will see a massive game ahead.

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LIVERPOOL'S league form plummeted to a new low this afternoon as relegation threatened Wigan Athletic won the points at Anfield.

Goals in either half from Shaun Maloney and Gary Caldwell handed the Latics a first ever Premier League win on this side of Stanley Park and boosted their chances of survival. Luis Suarez had equalised early in the second half but his goal was a rare moment of cheer for Reds supporters who witnessed the most disappointing game at home this season. Manager Kenny Dalglish was adamant that Liverpool's season would not peter out but for large spells his call to arms fell on deaf ears as they turned in an awful performance. Liverpool's record in the league since the turn of the year has scuppered any chance of them qualifying for the Champions League and defeat today was their fifth in six Premier League matches. To make matters worse for Reds fans, Everton – so soundly beaten in the 217th Merseyside derby - have reduced the gap between the clubs to just two points with their win at Swansea.

Rightly there was anger and frustration at the full-time whistle as Liverpool turned in yet another sub-par display but the faithful were buoyed by the senior debut of Raheem Sterling. The speedy winger came on with five minutes left and his introduction makes him the third youngest player to have represented the Liverpool first team.

But make no mistake, Sterling's debut in no way softened the blow of this defeat and the boos which rang out at the end were wholly justified.

With a queue forming at the Melwood treatment table, enforced changes for the game but Liverpool had ample to see off a struggling Wigan side.

Jordan Henderson earned a recall to the starting line to replace Charlie Adam, who sustained a serious knee injury at Queens Park Ranger on Wednesday night, but his afternoon lasted just 45 minutes as he substituted for Andy Carroll at half-time.

John Flanagan, meanwhile, won a first senior start since the Carling Cup tie with Exeter City in August and served up a committed performance.

Indeed Flanagan, in for the injured Martin Kelly, helped Liverpool to a positive start to the game as they applied early pressure.

However, for all their good intentions quality was lacking.

Wigan were allowed to settle and Martin Skrtel had to defend smartly to block Victor Moses' effort as he found a worrying amount of space in the Liverpool area. The accuracy of the Reds' passing was equally as alarming though a rare moment of saw Stewart Downing exchange passes with Suarez before volleying marginally wide. Such link-up play was an exception to the rule and the mood worsened significantly just a minute later.

Moses latched onto Gary Caldwell's flick back into the area and fell under the challenge of Skrtel.

Referee Lee Mason pointed to the spot and following a lengthy delay as Moses received treatment, Shaun Maloney fired low and hard beyond Pepe Reina, who was making his 250th league appearance for Liverpool.

Despite going a goal behind, Liverpool's standards remained low though Suarez fired from outside the area to bring the best out of a fully stretched Ali Al Habsi. Suarez, easily the Reds' best player of the first half, fed Steven Gerrard but again the Wigan goalkeeper was equal to it.

Half-time provided Liverpool fans with a welcome respite from the drudgery of the opening 45 minutes and gave manager Kenny Dalglish the chance to inspire his players. It took less than two minutes for Liverpool to muster a response.

Following Skrtel's thumping tackle on the half-way line, the home side won back possession. Suarez played Gerrard into space on the right wing and collected a return inside then area which he swept out of Al Habsi' reach to make it 1-1.

The Uruguayan thought he put Liverpool in front soon after but his goal was ruled out for handball, an offence for which he received a yellow card.

It appeared as though the Reds had finally got a grip of the game but once more they were hit with sucker punch.

After they failed to clear a free-kick, Wigan fired the ball back into the area.

Deflecting off Jamie Carragher, the ball luckily found its way into the path of Gary Caldwell, six yards from goal and with a calm head the Latics' captain slotted past Reina to make it 2-1.

Liverpool toiled thereafter, lacking a spark. The biggest cheer was saved for Sterling who replaced Dirk Kuyt with five minutes remaining.

The 17-year-old showed few signs of nerves in his cameo.

Suarez forced Al Habsi into smart stop late on after striding onto Carroll's flick on but Wigan held on for an historic victory.

LIVERPOOL (4-2-3-1) Reina, Flanagan, Carragher, Skrtel, Enrique, Spearing, Gerrard, Kuyt (Sterling 85), Henderson (Carroll 46), Downing (Shelvey 73), Suarez. Not used: Doni, Aurelio, Coates, Ecclestone.

Goals: Suarez (47) Cautions: Suarez

WIGAN (4-3-3) Al Habsi, Boyce, Alcaraz, Caldwell, Figueroa, McCarthy, McArthur, Beausejour (Watson 63), Moses (Crusat 42), Di Santo (Sammon 81), Maloney. Not used: Kirkland, Thomas, Watson, Gomez, Stam. Goals: Maloney (30 pen)

Cautions: Di Santo, Figueroa

Referee: Lee Mason Attendance: 44, 431



GARY Caldwell capped a real captain's knock with a superbly-taken winning goal as wonderful Wigan recorded their first-ever victory at Anfield.

Latics had been unbeaten in their last four meetings with the Reds, and they deservedly extended that record to move to within three points of fifth-bottom Blackburn. Caldwell and fellow defensive rocks Antolin Alcaraz and Maynor Figueroa were simply magnificent, while dynamic duo James McCarthy and James McArthur ran the midfield against Steven Gerrard and company.

After taking a first-half lead through Shaun Maloney's coolly-taken penalty, Latics were pegged back by Luis Suarez's equaliser at the start of the second half.

But Roberto Martinez's men kept at it, continued to play their football and were rewarded when McCarthy's shot deflected into the path of Caldwell, who bided his time before slotting past Pepe Reina in front of the Kop.

With eight games left, Latics have given themselves a real chance of avoiding the drop, and the challenge is to repeat both the performance and the result against mid-table Stoke next weekend. Martinez had, unsurprisingly, named an unchanged side, with Hugo Rodallega not fit enough to return after a knee problem. The Reds were still smarting from their midweek capitulation at QPR - a result that arguably did as much damage to Latics as themselves.

And they came flying out of blocks with some quick passing that Latics initially struggled to come to terms with. Wigan, though, did eventually get a foothold in the game, and should have opened the scoring inside the first 10 minutes.

Victor Moses did ever so well to get free down the right-hand side but, with the unmarked Maloney screaming for the ball, the winger elected to cut inside on to his left foot - and the shot was blocked.

Latics then threatened down the other flank when Jean Beausejour got free and swung over a deep cross that Emmerson Boyce nodded back but the defence was able to clear. McCarthy was perhaps lucky to escape a caution for catching Gerrard full in the face with a high foot but, that aside, it was a relatively comfortable opening quarter for the visitors.

Stewart Downing then had a brief sight of goal as the ball bounced up to him, but his volley flew wide of the far post with Ali Al Habsi at full stretch.

There was another dangerous, high-foot incident on the 25-minute mark - and this one resulted in Latics taking a shock lead. Maloney's left-wing free-kick was only half-cleared to Caldwell, who lobbed the ball back into the danger area.

Moses was first to react and headed goalwards, before nearly having his head removed from his neck by a lunging Martin Skrtel.

After initial hesitation, referee Lee Mason pointed to the spot - before Moses received almost five minutes of treatment on the edge of the six-yard box.

Thankfully the Nigerian was able to regain his feet without the use of the waiting stretcher, and it got better for Latics when Maloney placed the ball on the spot and tucked it confidently into the left-hand corner despite Reina guessing right.

It was Maloney's first goal for the club and just reward for an both enterprising opening quarter and, indeed, a lively last couple of games.

The home fans had already begun to get on the back of their side, and the goal was the signal for that to intensify. Jordan Henderson in particular was getting it in the neck, and he showed his frustrations by going in on late on Maloney and somehow escaping a yellow card. Moses tried to come back on but eventually had to give way to Albert Crusat, but Latics managed to overcome being a man down temporarily to maintain the upper hand. Franco di Santo was putting in another sterling shift up top, but his over-exuberance almost landed him in hot water when he slid in to try to charge down a Skrtel clearance and caught the defender very late. Fortunately the official only saw it as a yellow, which didn't go down well with the home supporters.

The Liverpool faithful were up in arms again moments later when James McArthur went to to ground after taking the ball full-pelt in the stomach from point-blank range, wrongly believing the Scot was time-wasting as he went to ground. McArthur was quickly back to his feet and in the thick of the action, and his side successfully negotiated the remainder of the half without further alarm.

Liverpool showed their concern at the situation by making a change at the break, sending on Andy Carroll for Henderson. And the home side were back on level terms within two minutes of the restart. The new-boy had nothing really to do with it, Suarez sending Gerrard free down the right, and then slotting home the reverse pass beyond Al Habsi into the bottom corner.

After having such high hopes as they started the second period, Latics were now staring down the barrel of an awfully long remaining 43 minutes with the home side smelling blood. A bad mistake by Figueroa five minutes later saw the Honduran pull-back Suarez on the edge of the area. The free-kick from Gerrard was met at the back post by Skrtel, and Suarez bundled the ball over the line past Caldwell.

As Liverpool celebrated, referee Mason had a think and whistled for a Latics free-kick right on the goalline. The home fans - not to mention the players and the management - were furious, but TV replays showed the Uruguayan had clearly used his hand to deliver the telling touch and was rightly penalised.

Latics made their second change just after the hour mark with Ben Watson appearing for Beausejour. And for the second time, a goal materialised within moments. Again the replacement had no direct involvement, with McCarthy's long-range shot smashing into the hand of Jamie Carragher and deflecting into the path of Caldwell.

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It would have been easy for the centre-back to have got a rush of blood to the head and put his left foot through it. But, 10 yards out, Caldwell dragged the ball back on to his favoured right foot, taking a further moment before sliding it past an exposed Reina. As the Latics players celebrated in front of the Kop, it was the small pocket of visiting supporters in the opposite end that were making the noise, with chairman Dave Whelan leading the orchestra from his position in the Directors Box. There then followed a period of quality possession by Wigan, with the introduction of Watson helping them to keep the ball despite the home side's desperation to win it back.

Kenny Dalglish played his final hand by sending on first Jonjo Shelvey and then Raheem Sterling for the more established frontmen Downing and Dirk Kuyt. Martinez responded by giving Conor Sammon the last 10 minutes in place of Di Santo, who'd had a couple of run-ins with Skrtel and was probably being saved by his boss from a possible dismissal having already been booked. Sterling was quickly into the game, which brought the home fans to their feet in anticipation, and it needed a timely interception from Figueroa - not for the first time - to snuff out the danger. Left-back Jose Enrique was coming into it more and more as the closing stages approached, and one of his driving runs to the byline resulted in Al Habsi confidently coming to collect the ball with Carroll sniffing round for scraps. But the expected onslaught never really materialised, Latics keeping their opponents at arm's length and holding on for what could be the most crucial three points of the season.

Liverpool: Reina; Flanagan, Carragher, Skrtel, Enrique; Downing, Gerrard, Spearing, Henderson, Kuyt; Suarez. Subs: Doni, Aurelio, Carroll (for Henderson, 46), Coates, Sterling (for Kuyt, 84), Shelvey (for Downing, 73), Eccleston. Latics: Al Habsi 7; Alcaraz 8, Caldwell 9, Figueroa 8; Boyce 7, McArthur 8, McCarthy 8, Beausejour 7; Moses 7, Maloney 7; Di Santo 7. Subs: Kirkland, Stam, Thomas, Crusat (for Moses, 41) 7, Watson (for Beausejour, 63) 7, Gomez, Sammon (for Di Santo, 81).

Star Man: Gary Caldwell - An imperious display at the back topped off with a magnificently-taken winning goal.



Caldwell skips in to deepen Dalglish's woes

"Stand by for Operation Anfield exercise" came the message over the Tannoy after 26 minutes. If it was a coded call designed to rouse the home team after a subdued start, it did not work, and a gleeful Wigan Athletic took full advantage to claim their first-ever win at Liverpool.

Shaun Maloney's first-half penalty and captain Gary Caldwell's close-range finish after 63 minutes, sandwiching a Luis Suarez strike, secured a famous victory for the Lancashire club to revive their hopes of avoiding relegation, and leave their manager, Roberto Martinez, hailing his players. "It is a historic day for us," said the Spaniard. "Wigan Athletic beating Liverpool at Anfield - that is why we are involved in football, [to] defy the odds and the history."

Wigan have now lost just once in seven matches and climbed level on points with third-bottom QPR, but the story of this game was also about Liverpool after a day that intensified the spotlight on their failings in the Premier League this season. The Merseyside club have won the Carling Cup and booked a Wembley return in the FA Cup semi-finals, but this humbling reverse was their fifth defeat in six in the League and means they have taken just eight points from a possible 33 since the start of 2012.

It was the last thing that Kenny Dalglish would have wanted after the late capitulation at QPR on Wednesday, and the manager's excuse of tiredness is unlikely to appease the supporters who booed Liverpool off at the end. "We looked a wee bit tired, we had a lot of possession but gave away the ball quite a lot. If you play Sunday, Wednesday, Saturday, it is going to take its toll."

In the spring sunshine Liverpool were sluggish, and Wigan profited after 30 minutes. When Maloney blocked a Jordan Henderson clearance the ball span to Caldwell, who lifted it back into the Liverpool box, where Jamie Carragher's weak header presented an opportunity for Victor Moses. As he nodded goalwards, he was caught on the chin by a boot from Martin Skrtel and Lee Mason pointed to the spot. Moses, who suffered cuts to his face and suspected concussion, required lengthy treatment, but Maloney held his nerve and steered his spot-kick low to Pepe Reina's right for his first goal since joining Wigan from Celtic last August.

Until then Liverpool's only threat of note had been a Stewart Downing effort that flashed just past the far post. They drew a couple of saves from Ali Al Habsi through Suarez and Steven Gerrard, but evidence of Liverpool's frustration came as Kenny Dalglish had a heated exchange with Martinez on the touchline.

Yet when Suarez levelled two minutes after the restart, playing in Gerrard down the right and tucking the ensuing cross past Al Habsi, it seemed likely Liverpool would go on and win the game. And they might have done had Suarez not been penalised for using his hand to turn the ball in on the line after Skrtel's back-post header had bounced over Al Habsi.

Dalglish argued that Suarez had used his shoulder and said that the referee had got the decision wrong. "There is no rhyme nor reason why the second goal should be chalked off," he said.

A reprieved Wigan regained the advantage when from a half-cleared free-kick James McCarthy drove the ball back into the Liverpool box and it deflected off Carragher to Caldwell, who finished like a centre-forward, sidestepping Andy Carroll and slipping the ball under Reina. Martinez said of his captain: "I think he surprised the whole Anfield crowd and he surprised even our bench." Dave Whelan, Wigan's owner, was on his feet in the directors' box as the away fans sang: "We are staying up". Around the rest of Anfield there were only groans. Liverpool (4-1-4-1): Reina; Flanagan, Carragher, Skrtel, Enrique; Spearing; Downing (Shelvey, 73), Henderson (Carroll, 46), Gerrard, Kuyt (Sterling, 84); Suarez.

Wigan (3-4-3): Al Habsi; Alcaraz, Caldwell, Figueroa; Boyce, McCarthy, McArthur, Beausejour; Moses (Crusat, 42), Di Santo (Sammon, 82), Maloney. Referee: Lee Mason. Man of the match: Caldwell (Wigan) Match rating: 7/10

## The Sunday Telegraph

Liverpool humiliated as Wigan claim first win at Anfield

Liverpool 1 Suarez 47

Wigan 2 Maloney 30 pen, Caldwell 64

Att: 44,431

The cups may offer consolation, but Liverpool's league form is rapidly decomposing. If the most sympathetic description of recent performances was infuriating, a home defeat to Wigan crossed the border into humiliation. Manager Kenny Dalglish has regularly appealed for dissenters to consider the 'bigger picture' when assessing the season, but this putrid effort resembled The Scream by Edvard Munch.

The ghastly performance was Liverpool's fifth defeat in their last six Premier League games, Gary Caldwell grabbing the 64thminute winner which Roberto Martinez's side never looked like surrendering.

Identifying the side fighting relegation and the one who are so adamant they are in a false position was unfathomable from the first whistle. Liverpool were booed off by their own fans, who generously applauded the visitors.

Wigan outplayed Dalglish's side, the host's attempts to reassert authority ranging from the conniving to the sheer desperate.

First came the accusations of duplicity when Luis Suarez, who earlier scored a neat equaliser, attempted to escape with handballing Martin Skrtel's header over the line. As he tried to disguise any wrongdoing by celebrating, he was correctly summoned by Lee Mason and shown a yellow card.

Dalglish insisted the goal should have stood. "There is no reason why the goal should be chalked off. I don't see it," he said. "If it hit his hand I must have a different telly. It hit him on the shoulder. That's what I thought, but we can't control referees we can control ourselves."

This, as well as a suggestion fatigue was the biggest factor in their defeat, had a ring of desperation. So too did the manager's last-gasp attempt to grab a point when he summoned 17 year-old Raheem Sterling to become the third youngest player in Liverpool's history. He had four minutes to make an impression, and did more in that time than the rest of his team in the previous 86.

The rot began on 27 minutes when Skrtel was penalised for a high kick on Victor Moses, which left the striker concussed and sent to hospital as a precaution.

Shaun Maloney, who has invigorated Wigan, scored his first goal for the club from the resulting penalty. Suarez's clever finish from Steven Gerrard's pass two minutes into the second half threatened to shift the momentum. It didn't last.

Caldwell benefited when Ben Watson's deflected shot fell at his feet and he beat Pepe Reina at The Kop end. This was Wigan's first victory at Anfield, and in their quest for survival could be one their most valuable.

Not surprisingly, Martinez differed in his view of Suarez's ruled-out goal. "We all know Suarez is an artist at getting freekicks and good situations for himself," he said. "Lee Mason is a strong referee and had to be."

Liverpool have decied their luck too often this season for the claim to avoid hollowness this time.

Whether it is misfortune, tiredness or sheer lack of quality, they are confronted with a league table which suggests remaining in the top 10 is their priority. The more they argue their natural place is in the top four, the less convincing they sound.

They have to start living up their own billing because a third consecutive seventh-placed finish, or worse, should never be acceptable at such an illustrious venue. There will come a time when the stream of mitigating factors put forward need to give way to a blunt acknowledgement this is not good enough.

Wigan have escaped relegation with a late rally before and look capable of repeating the trick.

For Liverpool, it is now a case of forgetting the league and concentrating on the cups.

Liverpool (4-2-3-1) Reina; Flanagan, Carragher, Skrtel, Enrique; Gerrard, Spearing; Henderson, (Carroll 45) Downing (Shelvey 73), Kuyt (Sterling 84); Suarez. Subs: Doni, Aurelio, Coates, Eccles. Booked: Suarez.

Wigan (4-3-3): Al Habsi; Boyce, Alcaraz, Caldwell, Figueroa; Moses (Crusat 42), McArthur, McCarthy, Beausejour (Watson 63); Maloney, Di Santo (Sammon 82). Subs: Kirkland, Thomas, Gomez, Stam. Booked: Di Santo; Figueroa.

Referee: L Mason (Lancashire).

Date: 24 March 2012  
 Opposition: Wigan Athletic  
 Competition: League

Telegraph	Echo	Sun Telegraph	Sunday Mail
Guardian	Wigan Today	Sunday Mirror	Mirror
	Sun Independent	Observer	Independent

24 March 2012



## The Observer

Caldwell goal leaves Anfield rumbling

LIVERPOOL 1 Suarez 47

WIGAN 2 Maloney 30pen Caldwell 63

Creating history can seldom have been this comfortable. Wigan recorded their first-ever win at Anfield without having to conjure anything ingenious: their diligence and determination, added to the deficiencies of their hosts, were enough. Even the visiting manager, Roberto Martinez, admitted his team had played better in each of their last six matches without winning, though that obviously did not deflate his delight at a result that will buoy their survival bid. Having lost four of their five previous league matches, including Wednesday's alarming capitulation against another team in the relegation zone, Queens Park Rangers, Liverpool needed an authoritative victory to subdue minor rumblings of Anfield heresy: suggestions that Kenny Dalglish is not the managerial messiah the club crave despite the conquest of the Carling Cup. A settled formation is not something Dalglish appears to believe in and for this outing he decided that a 4-1-4-1 would be the best way of ensuring Luis Suarez, that paradoxically dangerous but goal-shy striker, got ample support up front.

The ploy worked almost too well in the fifth minute when Suarez and Jordan Henderson got in each other's way after Jay Spearing had served the first defence-splitting pass of the match. And that set the tone for the home team's display, as their disjointedness drew constant groans from the crowd.

By the 15th minute, the discontent was evident on the pitch too, as Suarez berated Downing for darting one way as the Uruguayan put an intended pass the other. Frequently attempted one-twos became one-nones. Their first chance of the match came from a Steven

Gerrard free-kick to the back post, to which Martin Skrtel could not apply a telling connection. It took 25 minutes for Liverpool players to be sufficiently in tune with each other to truly threaten Wigan, Suarez and Downing finally exchanging cutting passes before the latter cracked a fierce low drive narrowly wide from a difficult angle 16 yards out.

Moments later, however, more Liverpool uncertainty led to the concession of a penalty. Jamie Carragher's attempt to clear a clipped Gary Caldwell cross resulted only in a weak back-header - Skrtel and Victor Moses challenged for it and the forward got there first, only to be inadvertently kicked in the head by the defender. Shaun Maloney fired the spot-kick past Pepe Reina.

Moses, meanwhile, was taken to hospital to be assessed. "He was concussed for a while and when he came around he was not really himself," said Martinez. "We are concerned it could be a fracture."

The mood among the Anfield faithful, meanwhile, threatened to turn from anxious to rebellious. During the 10 minutes that it took Wigan to decide to replace Moses, the visitors played with a numerical disadvantage that Liverpool could not exploit, long shots from Suarez and Gerrard being the best they could muster. Ali Al-Habsi dealt with both.

Dalglish introduced Andy Carroll for the second half as the hosts switched to 4-4-2. Within two minutes Liverpool were level thanks to their most vaunted duo. Suarez flipped a pass wide to

Gerrard before getting it back again and doing what he has frequently failed to do this season - finish smartly, his low shot from 10 yards finding the corner of the net.

Liverpool thought Suarez had doubled his tally in the 54th minute but the referee ruled that he had turned the ball into the net from close range with his arm. Dalglish insisted it had brushed the striker's shoulder and the goal should have stood.

Then Liverpool lapsed back into lethargy. Wigan, who were compact and tenacious but rarely dangerous, regained the lead in the 63rd minute. James McCarthy's speculative shot from the edge of the area after another poor Liverpool clearance deflected off Carragher into the path of Caldwell, who showed unexpected deftness to sidestep

Carroll, who had kept him onside, and slot the ball under Reina and into the net. "I think Gary surprised the whole Anfield crowd with his composure and he also surprised our whole bench," quipped Martinez. "But it is fitting that it was him because he is a leader, a rare breed. He has been through difficult times with us and always stood up so I am happy for him that his name is inscribed in our history with that goal."

Including stoppage time, Liverpool had half an hour to find an equaliser. They never looked like getting one.

Suarez did bring a save from Al-Habsi in the 89th minute after collecting a flick-on from Carroll but that was a mere shower - there was no storm for Wigan to weather.

LIVERPOOL

Reina; Flanagan, Carragher, Skrtel, Jose Enrique; Spearing; Downing (Shelvey 73), Henderson (Carroll ht), Gerrard, Kuyt (Sterling 84); Suarez (Booked)

Subs not used Doni, Aurelio, Coates, Ecclestone

WIGAN

Al Habsi; Boyce, Alcaraz, Caldwell, Figueroa (Booked); Moses (Crusat 42), McArthur, McCarthy, Beausejour (Watson 62), Maloney; Di Santo (Booked) (Sammon 81) Subs not used Kirkland, Thomas, Gomez, Stam

Anfield 44,431 Game rating 5/10 Referee Lee Mason

Date: 24 March 2012  
 Opposition: Wigan Athletic  
 Competition: League

Telegraph	Echo	Sun Telegraph	Sunday Mail
Guardian	Wigan Today	Sunday Mirror	Mirror
	Sun Independent	Observer	Independent

24 March 2012



### Dalglish disasters plumb new depths

1 LIVERPOOL Suarez (47) 2 WIGAN Maloney (30, pen), Caldwell (63) By Mark Ryan  
 THE words of Wigan manager Roberto Martinez were even better than the performance which gave his side real hope of escape from relegation.

What a shame the same could not be said of Kenny Dalglish, whose team slipped to yet another humiliating failure at home, one which eliminated any lingering illusion that this Liverpool side possess Champions League quality.

Martinez was wonderfully eloquent in victory. 'This was an historic day for us, beating Liverpool at Anfield. That's why we're involved in football - defying odds, making history. I'd like to present this to the fans for the way they have supported us through tough times. 'As for my captain Gary Caldwell's winning goal, I think true captains are a rare, dying breed, and he deserved to be the one who scored the winner. Real composure is the sign of a real leader.' James McCarthy's hopeful volley seemed to catch Jamie Carragher unawares and Caldwell sneaked into tap home his side's clincher.

Liverpool's equaliser earlier had been simplicity itself as Steven Gerrard passed to Luis Suarez, who sidefooted in his finish nonchalantly.

Anfield breathed a collective sigh of relief after a dismal first half from Dalglish's men.

Martin Skrtel had kicked Victor Moses in the face after a poor Carragher header and referee Lee Mason awarded a penalty, which was delayed for three minutes as Moses recovered. Shaun Maloney scored from the spot-kick.

At the other end Stewart Downing had flashed an excellent chance wide and Skrtel had failed to take advantage of a Gerrard free-kick.

But Suarez was hopelessly isolated ahead of Liverpool's dysfunctional midfield and the Anfield faithful's exasperation grew.

Not until the 40th minute did Suarez swivel and unleash a shot which left Ali Al-Habsi stretching to save.

Moses never did recover properly from that swipe of Skrtel's boot and was substituted before half-time.

Al-Habsi saved a Gerrard halfvolley and the Anfield crowd roused themselves only to boo at half-time.

Jordan Henderson was replaced by Andy Carroll, who was not much more effective as the pair failed to live up to joint transfer fees of more than [pounds sterling]50million.

Dalglish cannot hide his dreadful performance in the transfer market.

Suarez oozes class, yet he had already been earmarked by Roy Hodgson before the former manager was shown the door.

The Uruguayan appeared to handle deliberately yesterday in a bid to earn his side an advantage.

'We can't control the referees,' said Dalglish of Mason's decision to book Suarez.

'We can only control ourselves.' Yet it seems they cannot even do that. 'It's not because they can't pass to each other, it is because they are tired,' said Dalglish.

'We have injuries and we don't have enough players available to give people an adequate rest.' Burnout is an issue and Dalglish has done so admirably in the cups, but his squad have played more matches than they might have liked.

Yet this is not the reason why Liverpool are struggling in the league. Dalglish's buys have simply failed to perform.

LIVERPOOL (4-5-1): Reina; Flanagan, Carragher, Skrtel, Enrique; Downing (Shelvey 73min), Henderson (Carroll 46), Spearing, Gerrard, Kuyt (Raheem Sterling 84); Suarez.

Subs (not used): Doni, Aurelio, Coates, Sterling, Ecclestone. Booked: Suarez.

WIGAN (3-4-2-1): Al Habsi; Alcaraz, Caldwell, Figueroa; Boyce, McArthur, McCarthy, Beausejour (Watson 62); Moses (Crusat 42), Maloney; Di Santo (Sammon 81). Subs (not used): Kirkland, Thomas, Gomez, Stam. Booked: Figueroa, Di Santo.

REFEREE: L Mason.



### KENNY'S A KOP OUT; Fans' boos ring around Anfield as Liverpool manager makes his excuses

LIVERPOOL 1

WIGAN 2

KENNY DALGLISH blamed the referee and a congested fixture schedule for Liverpool's latest flop.

But not all the fans saw it that way.

Manager Dalglish's side left the Anfield pitch to boos after slumping to a defeat against relegation-threatened Wigan - their fifth loss in six league matches.

And Twitter was buzzing with criticism from fans at the Reds' performance.

Luis Suarez scored Liverpool's equaliser, but had a second disallowed by Lee Mason for handball before Wigan captain Gary Caldwell plundered the winner.

Dalglish said: 'There was no reason for the referee to chalk off that goal. It hit him on the shoulder - that's what I thought. We can't control the referee - only ourselves.

'They looked a bit tired. We had a lot of possession in the game, we gave away the ball quite a lot in vital positions and it is not because they cannot play, but tiredness.

'If you play Sunday-Wednesday-Saturday, it is going to take its toll and a lot of the lads have played three games.

'For us, that would be a reasoning behind our own performance.

'We were disappointed because a lot of the final balls in good positions we didn't deliver and we put that down to tiredness.'

It was Liverpool's 10th defeat of the season.

Asked whether he thought better performances were around the corner, the Dalglish replied: 'I'm not clairvoyant.

'We have extolled the virtues of the players here many times and it (defeat) is not because we cannot pass to each other, it is because we have not had enough players at our disposal to give them adequate rest.

'It is a problem we face, but it is a problem dictated to clubs and players by television schedules and maybe the fact we have done well in two cup competitions, which has given us a lot of extra fixtures.'

Liverpool have won the Carling Cup and reached the semi-finals of the FA Cup, but their hopes of Champions League qualification are in tatters.

But for some on Twitter, it was not good enough.

One of the tweets said: 'This isn't pessimism. This is realism. Liverpool are just not good enough. No time for sentiments. Kenny is god but time to move on.'

Another read: 'The worst Liverpool team and performance for many years. Awful signings and clueless on the pitch. Kenny has to go, sorry.'

And a third added: 'The only things saving Kenny at the moment are his cup runs and his name. This league form is abysmal given the money spent.'

Wigan manager Roberto Martinez dismissed Dalglish's complaint about the disallowed goal, insisting: 'I've seen the replay and it was clearly handball.

We all know Suarez is an artist at getting free-kicks and good situations for himself, but Lee Mason was strong and has to be congratulated.

'It is a historic day for Wigan to win at Anfield - to defy the odds and history. I don't think anyone can argue that we didn't deserve it. I want to dedicate the win to our fans.'

Arsenal strengthened their hold on third place as Arsene Wenger hailed his Gunners after a seventh league win on the spin set them up for more Champions League football.

After watching his side beat Aston Villa 3-0 at the Emirates to move three points ahead of Tottenham, Arsenal boss Wenger said: 'We have gone through difficult times and I never expected to be in this position a month ago. It was a dream to be in third place.

'The great thing is we have kept a very positive attitude, although when the results were not as good I never felt we were playing badly.

Kieran Gibbs' first ever league goal for the club set them on their way - and goals from Theo Walcott and Mikel Arteta completed the Villains' misery. 'You need full backs who go forward,' added Wenger. 'There is a lot of confidence and we are scoring goals from all over now, not just through Robin van Persie.'

'There is now more variation in our play. Theo put in a very good performance and scored a great goal. But it was made by a great pass by Alex Song who, for a defensive midfielder, gets an incredible number of assists.'

'But Champions League football is not guaranteed. There are eight games left and they are all finals.'