

Date: 1 May 2012
 Opposition: Fulham
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1 May 2012

THE TIMES

Dalglish's stand-ins fail to spark

Liverpool 0

Fulham 1

If a quirk of fate decreed that two of Roy Hodgson's former clubs should meet on the very day he was presented as England manager, it was one of his mistakes in the transfer market that helped Fulham to their first victory over Liverpool at Anfield.

Alex Kacaniklic may still be largely unknown outside Craven Cottage after being allowed to move to Fulham by Hodgson during his ill-fated spell as Liverpool manager, but the Swedish winger helped to condemn his former club to a third defeat in their past four home matches by playing a key role in the game's decisive goal.

An understrength Liverpool team clearly had Saturday's FA Cup Final against Chelsea on their minds, but the loss means that they have now dropped a staggering 30 points at home. Their cup form may be impressive, but their performances in the Barclays Premier League continue to underwhelm, as shown by Fulham drawing level with them after this win.

Dalglish made nine changes to the Liverpool team who had eased to victory away to Norwich City on Saturday and the disruption created by such alterations was evident from the outset, with Fulham taking control.

Having not scored in their five previous visits to Anfield, it was still something of a surprise when Fulham took the lead after five minutes, although it required an own goal for them to do so. Martin Skrtel got the final, inadvertent touch that wrong-footed Alexander Doni after Kacaniklic had attempted to score from John Arne Riise's cross.

Kacaniklic's presence was particularly poignant as the winger moved to Fulham in the summer of 2010 as a makeweight in the transfer that took Paul Konchesky to Anfield. Konchesky has since departed from Liverpool, having failed to make a positive impression, in stark contrast to the promising Kacaniklic at Fulham.

Without Steven Gerrard and Luis Suarez among others, Liverpool lacked creativity and cohesion and the largely second-string side went through the motions.

Fulham could have doubled their lead after 15 minutes only for Doni, who was deputising for Pepe Reina, to make a sprawling save from Pavel Pogrebnyak after Clint Dempsey had found the forward with a piercing through-ball. That prompted a response of sorts, with Dirk Kuyt sending a speculative volley wide and Jonjo Shelvey having a scuffed shot halfsaved by Mark Schwarzer, before Brede Hangeland cleared the loose ball in front of his goal.

With Martin Jol once again absent because of a chest infection, the responsibility fell to Billy McKinlay, his assistant, to demand an improvement and the Fulham players duly responded with a tightening of their defence and a more industrious approach in midfield.

Having never previously recorded a league double over Liverpool, and given that they went into the game trailing their Merseyside rivals by only three points, there was a clear incentive for Fulham to record their first league win at Anfield.

By contrast, the Liverpool players did not seem to believe that the enticement of being part of Dalglish's Cup Final team was really on offer. Jordan Henderson was withdrawn at half-time, another indication that Dalglish's focus was on Chelsea at Wembley rather than Fulham at Anfield, with Stewart Downing being introduced in an attempt to bring more out of Andy Carroll, who was one of precious few Liverpool players to impress.

The change failed to elicit an immediate improvement, although Downing did shoot wide from 25 yards as he went in search of his first league goal of an unproductive season. If that was a warning sign that Liverpool were belatedly stirring, Fulham failed to heed it and it took an outstanding last-ditch tackle from Hangeland to thwart Maxi Rodriguez as he bore down on goal.

By that stage, Fulham's strategy had altered from taking the game to Liverpool to looking to hit them on the counter-attack and the plan suited them, particularly after Kerim Frei came on for the tiring Kacaniklic.

Frei stated his intent with a feint inside Martin Kelly and a shot that clipped the outside of the post and Fulham went close shortly after, when Riise galloped free only to see his shot parried.

Dempsey should have made the points safe after he was put through on goal, but his shot was also saved.

the guardian

Martin Skrtel gifts Fulham win against safety-first Liverpool

History was made at Anfield and it was a slice that drew fierce condemnation of Liverpool from Kenny Dalglish as Fulham recorded their first ever league win on Merseyside at the 49th attempt. This was no way to prepare for an FA Cup final. The only consolation for Liverpool is that this team will not be appearing in it. Dalglish invited several fringe players to push their claims to face Chelsea at Wembley on Saturday. They declined en masse, producing the lowlight of an already dismal home campaign and allowing Fulham, with the manager Martin Jol absent because of a chest infection and the assistant Billy McKinlay in temporary charge, to take three points for the first time on Merseyside soil. Their return from 48 previous trips to Anfield and Goodison Park read 37 defeats and 11 draws. The end of that dismal sequence should have been much more emphatic. "The attitude wasn't right," the Liverpool manager said. "If you're going to go into games with a bad attitude, you will get nothing from the game – and that's what we got. A bad attitude leads to a bad performance. I am culpable too, because I gave people an opportunity to put themselves in the frame for Saturday. I suppose that was a contributory factor." Dalglish delivered a similar rebuke after the league defeat at Bolton that preceded wins in the Carling Cup and FA Cup against Manchester City and United.

In terms of selection, performance and atmosphere, Liverpool could not have appeared more in Cup final mode had Dalglish selected Craig Johnston to perform the "Anfield Rap" in the centre circle. Only Jonjo Shelvey and Jordan Henderson remained from the side that defeated Norwich City on Saturday as the Liverpool manager's protection policy ahead of the FA Cup final extended as far as the goalkeeper José Reina. The Spaniard's replacement, Doni, was the Liverpool sponsor's man of the match. At the opposite end Mark Schwarzer was rarely troubled.

Fulham were smarting from a comprehensive 4-0 defeat at Everton four days previously but, with Clint Dempsey dominant from the start, they evidently knew this was their chance to redress their Merseyside form. They prospered from their first meaningful attack when Dempsey broke through Liverpool's weak central midfield and found John Arne Riise lurking in his old position down the flank at Anfield. His low cross found Alex Kacaniklic unmarked in front of goal and, though a slice followed from the former Liverpool trainee, – exchanged as part of the deal that brought Paul Konchesky to Anfield under Roy Hodgson – the ball struck Martin Skrtel and deflected beyond the wrong-footed Doni.

There was hardly a sound inside Anfield as Fulham celebrated but groans ultimately filled the stadium in recognition of an anaemic Liverpool display littered with misplaced passes. A response belatedly arrived when the supply improved to Andy Carroll but Schwarzer was equal to one powerful header from the centre-forward and got a touch to a Shelvey shot, thus enabling Brede Hangeland to clear off the line.

Fulham remained vibrant on the counterattack and Doni prevented Pavel Pogrebnyak, Damien Duff, Riise and Dempsey twice from doubling their advantage. A superb covering tackle by Hangeland denied Maxi Rodriguez an equaliser once he broke clear of Aaron Hughes but that was a rare moment of promise from a subdued Liverpool side. Only the introduction of the 17-year-old Raheem Sterling offered Anfield cause for optimism but overall this was a display to forget. Dalglish said: "This will not affect Saturday in any way but that doesn't mean it's right to go about your work in that way."

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The Mail

New home humiliation for Reds as Dalglish rests stars

Some things will not change. Liverpool might finish the season winning two trophies but they still cannot win at home.

Such has been the extraordinary nature of Liverpool's campaign, it was probably unrealistic to expect a routine, comfortable win to prepare for the FA Cup final. But how Kenny Dalglish must wish that was what his team produced. Instead, on a night when Fulham won on Merseyside for the first time, Dalglish found himself reading the riot act to his squad and being confronted by a welter of alarming statistics.

This, truly, was no way to prepare for a season-defining showdown with Chelsea and Dalglish was blunt with his message for those who had hoped to stake a late claim for Wembley.

'The attitude and approach was all wrong,' said Dalglish, who made nine changes to the side that won 3-0 at Norwich on Saturday. 'If you go into the game with a bad attitude you get a bad performance. In fact you couldn't describe it as a performance.'

'I have to take part of the blame as I wanted to give everyone an opportunity to get minutes on the pitch and a chance to push their case. We can't play at that tempo, we have to play higher. One or two did well but apart from that it wasn't a good night for us.'

That is putting it mildly. Defeat, which was inflicted by Martin Skrtel's fifth-minute own goal, means Liverpool have squandered an incredible 30 points at Anfield. Should they fail to beat Chelsea in their last home league game next Tuesday, a tally of five wins would be their lowest since 1948-49.

They also need to score five against their Wembley opponents to avoid this being their lowest home scoring campaign since 1903-04. Dalglish may have argued that this game would have no bearing on what happens at Wembley but it has hardly filled supporters with confidence.

Perhaps a lack of cohesion and unfamiliarity with one another contributed to Liverpool's sloppy start and their sluggishness enabled Fulham to pilfer an early lead they never looked like relinquishing.

Clint Dempsey, scorer of the goal that won the reverse fixture in December, started the move, ushering in former Liverpool left back Jon Arne Riise. His cross was scuffed by Alex Kacaniklic, another Anfield old boy, but the ball ricocheted into Skrtel and Liverpool's captain on the night was powerless to stop it diverting beyond Alexander Doni, the Brazilian who is understudy to Pepe Reina.

With Fulham bringing only a handful of supporters, the goal was greeted with an eerie silence. The visitors could scarcely believe their good fortune, while the home supporters shook their heads wearily. It was a scene they have witnessed many times this season.

Jonjo Shelvey came closest to securing parity before the break but, after being picked out by Maxi Rodriguez, the midfielder's shot was eventually cleared off the line by Brede Hangeland via a parry from Schwarzer. Andy Carroll, meanwhile, saw a looping header sail over the bar.

Having stood with his hands stuffed into his sports coat for much of the 45 minutes, occasionally barking out orders in exasperation, Dalglish took the opportunity to regroup during the break and replaced Jordan Henderson with the more direct Stewart Downing.

Yet that did not lead to a stream of chances. Too many passes went askew and Liverpool needed Doni to be alive to the danger when Damien Duff burst through to prevent them falling further behind.

Hangeland was arguably Fulham's best performer but there were others, such as Moussa Dembele, Riise and the tireless Dempsey, who made big contributions. To put it another way, they were never hanging on for dear life.

Riise, Dempsey and substitute Kerim Frei all had opportunities to extend Fulham's lead late on and they now have given themselves a real chance of finishing above Liverpool in the table after bouncing back spectacularly from last weekend's 4-0 drubbing at Everton.

'We are delighted with the way we played because we had a few good chances late on to wrap it up,' said Billy McKinlay, who was overseeing operations for manager Martin Jol, after the manager had failed to recover from a chest infection.

'The response to Saturday's poor performance was evident. It was a terrific response, just what we were looking for, and the players deserve a lot of credit. Anfield is still a difficult place to come, there's no doubt about that.'

'Being level with Liverpool on points shows what a good season we've had. Hopefully this result will cheer Martin up a bit — put it this way, I'll enjoy our conversation more than I did after Saturday's match.'

And he will have enjoyed it a good deal more than the ones which were held inside the home dressing room.

MATCH FACTS

Liverpool: Doni, Kelly, Coates, Skrtel, Aurelio (Jose Enrique 65), Henderson (Downing 46), Shelvey, Spearing, Maxi, Carroll, Kuyt (Sterling 76).

Subs Not Used: Jones, Carragher, Flanagan, Robinson.

Fulham: Schwarzer, Kelly, Hangeland, Hughes, John Arne Riise, Duff, Murphy, Dembele (Baird 86), Kacaniklic (Frei 58), Dempsey, Pogrebnyak (Etuhu 80).

Subs Not Used: Stockdale, Orlando Sa, Kasami, Briggs.

Goal: Skrtel 5 og.

Att: 40,106 Ref: Lee Probert (Wiltshire).

The Daily Telegraph

Ghost of Hodgson still haunting Liverpool

Liverpool 0

Fulham 1

Skrtel og 5 Att: 40,106

If there is a Roy Hodgson appreciation society in hiding anywhere in England, it really is party time. His former club Fulham triumphed against those stains on the new national manager's CV, Liverpool, in the same way as his current employers, West Bromwich Albion, a fortnight ago.

For the second successive Anfield fixture, Hodgson's name chimed from a section of the ground. And for the second successive Anfield fixture, it was emanating from the away end. An own goal from Martin Skrtel signalled yet another humiliating defeat for a side which has forgotten how to win at home.

As Liverpool prepare for a visit to the venue they dub 'Anfield south', restoring a touch of impregnability to Anfield north wouldn't go amiss. Liverpool are more vulnerable at home than a Trojan when a wooden horse arrives at the door.

Manager Kenny Dalglish was seeking the victory that would give him the same number of wins on home soil as QPR and Blackburn.

Given a more pressing engagement in London at the weekend, Luis Suarez, Steven Gerrard and Daniel Agger were given the night off. Even Pepe Reina was protected, presumably to remove the possibility of another Wembley ban, with Alexander Doni handed another start.

Hodgson's fan club could point at Brede Hangeland's goal-line clearances and give a knowing nod, recalling how the centre-half was plucked from Scandinavian obscurity and made the linchpin of a side which stopped flirting with relegation.

Others looked at Fulham winger Alex Kacaniklic - an Anfield makeweight in the deal which reunited Paul Konchesky with Hodgson at the start of his ill-fated reign - and present an alternative perspective on the England manager's eye for talent. Predictably, Kacaniklic was involved in Fulham's somewhat comical opener after just five minutes, an own goal by Skrtel, Liverpool's captain for the evening. John Arne Riise, the former Liverpool left-back, made the kind of overlapping run familiar to the home fans. His vicious cross was flicked on by Kacaniklic, striking the shoulder of the Slovakian defender before bouncing past Doni.

The ongoing absence of Fulham manager Martin Jol, at home due to a chest infection, was not proving detrimental as the visitors sought a second. Doni had to be alert to push aside a Pogrebnyak volley in the 15th minute. When Hangeland was forced to clear a Jonjo Shelvey shot off the line just before the interval, a subdued crowd finally found its voice.

After 36 games, Dalglish patience with Jordan Henderson finally reached its snapping point at halftime, the midfielder's substitution for Stewart Downing unlikely to be protecting him for Wembley.

Briefly, there was a response. Maxi Rodriguez was denied a goal by a late Hangeland tackle, the Norwegian seemingly gliding through against a lightweight attack. It didn't signal a shift in momentum. Instead, Fulham substitute Kerim Frei was the width of the post away from doubling the lead and Doni had to deny Riise after an hour. It needed an even more acrobatic save from Liverpool's Brazilian keeper to prevent Clint Dempsey continuing his goal run.

Dalglish sent on 17-year-old Raheem Sterling with the manager's hopes of surpassing the worst Liverpool home performance of the season rapidly extinguishing.

"There's only one Roy Hodgson," bellowed the Fulham fans. There are some ex-managers who are ghosts on the wall. Liverpool must feel like they're being haunted by a poltergeist dressed in a smart new England blazer.

Liverpool (4-4-1-1): Doni; Kelly, Skrtel, Coates, Aurelio (Jose Enrique 65); Kuyt (Sterling 76), Spearing, Henderson (Downing h-t), Maxi; Shelvey; Carroll. Subs: Jones (g), Carragher, Flanagan, Robinson.

Fulham (4-4-2): Schwarzer; Riise, Hughes, Hangeland, Kelly; Duff, Dembele (Baird 86), Murphy, Kacaniklic (Frei 58); Pogrebnyak (Etuhu 80), Dempsey. Subs: Stockdale (g), Briggs, Kasami, Sa.

Referee: L Probert (Wiltshire)..

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THE INDEPENDENT

Dalglish despair as fringe players fail Cup audition

Kenny Dalglish had billed this game as an opportunity for his fringe players to stake a claim for a place in the FA Cup final. On the evidence of last night most of this lot will be wearing suits come kick-off time at Wembley.

Even by the standards of a season in which Liverpool have won five times at Anfield, two fewer than when they were relegated in 1954, this was a nadir. Fulham had never won here in their history and the blank facts are that they should have done so by a rather greater margin than a single goal.

Had Kerim Frei's shot not struck the outside of the post or Alexander Doni not saved superbly when Frei slipped Clint Dempsey through, Fulham, who a few days before had been disembowelled in the traditional manner at Everton, would have had an even more comfortable evening.

These games are, admittedly, no guide to FA Cup finals. In 1988 Liverpool had warmed up for a final they would lose to Wimbledon by crushing Sheffield Wednesday 5-1 at Hillsborough. However, as a guide to Liverpool's strength in depth it was indisputable.

These were two clubs that had diametrically opposite opinions of the new England manager. Those Fulham fans who, given their team's abysmal record on Merseyside, must have truly loved their club to have made yet another journey to Liverpool, chanted Roy Hodgson's name. Anfield made no reply.

The mood at England's most atmospheric stadium was sullen. For the opening 20 minutes, Liverpool were jaw-droppingly incompetent. With Dalglish having made nine changes from the side that at Norwich last Saturday produced one of the club's most complete performances of the season, this was a team of understudies. Their impact was so limited that it was hard to imagine Dalglish not turning back to his leading men at Wembley. Jordan Henderson, one of those who started at Carrow Road, was hauled off at half-time.

Dempsey was at the heart of everything good about Fulham and he began by running at the defence, before switching the ball to the left flank, where John Arne Riise delivered a low, blisteringly hard cross. It was probably meant for Alex Kacaniklic but struck Martin Skrtel on the chest and gave Doni no chance. There was so little noise it appeared at first as if the goal had been disallowed.

Liverpool's best chance came after Andy Carroll had done what he had been brought here to do – get in the goalkeeper's face and provoke a mistake. Mark Schwarzer dropped the ball; Maxi Rodríguez played it to Jonjo Shelvey, whose shot slithered under Schwarzer's body and was cleared off the line by Brede Hangeland.

DAILY MIRROR

FINAL STRAW FOR THE KOP

STATISTICS can sometimes be misleading, but the fact that Fulham secured the first top-flight victory at Anfield in their history tells a perfect story of this game. The visitors hadn't won a league game on Merseyside in 41 attempts, but the win here was never in doubt after they took a fifth-minute lead through a Martin Skrtel own goal.

Liverpool, watched by their lowest league crowd of the season, were as bad as the scoreline suggests, and as bad as they have been on their home ground in a season that has seen them win only five times here in the Premier League.

And the goal summed up the game. Former Red John Arne Riise's cross was touched on by another ex-Liverpool player, Alex Kacaniklic, and the unfortunate Skrtel saw it cannon off him into the net.

Even more worrying for boss Kenny Dalglish was the fact his side simply didn't respond to that setback - especially given the date they have in the diary for this weekend. They created little in the first half and nothing in the second, and were booed from the pitch at the end.

With nine changes from the side that strolled to victory at Norwich, if anyone hadn't worked it out before, then Dalglish's priorities were clear as he navigated a game he - and many Liverpool fans judging by the atmosphere - could have done without.

Against Blackburn before the FA Cup semi-final, the likes of Andy Carroll and Jordan Henderson took the opportunity to cement a Wembley berth, but here, it seemed for much of the contest the aim was, at most, injury avoidance, as the home side tiptoed through the game.

The home support waved banners suggesting they were heading to Anfield South at the weekend, where Liverpool have looked at home this season. It's a shame the same can't be said for Anfield North.

But for two brief spells at the end of both halves, they showed little desire or intent in taking the game to Fulham.

Carroll at least showed some commitment and in the first half his aerial power proved troublesome to a visiting defence still reeling from the demolition they suffered at Everton.

It was his knock-down that allowed Dirk Kuyt a shooting chance that whistled wide, and another that gave Maxi a similar opportunity, with a similar outcome. The big striker then teed-up Jonjo Shelvey for another chance, and again the shot was wide.

On the stroke of half time, the centre forward created his own chance from Fabio Aurelio's cross, but though he showed strength in reaching the ball, Fulham keeper Mark Schwarzer was equal to the task.

If anything, Fulham were unlucky not to extend their lead.

On 53 minutes Dempsey should have scored from Duff's corner, and substitute Kerim Frei's fine run finished with an impressive shot that rattled the post.

Riise also came close on his return to his old club and home keeper Doni produced a fine save to deny Dempsey.

LIVERPOOL: Doni 6, M Kelly 6, Coates 6, Skrtel 6, Aurelio 5, Spearing 7, Henderson 5 (Downing 46, 6), Kuyt 6 (Sterling 76, 6), Shelvey 6, Maxi 6, Carroll 7.

FULHAM: Schwarzer 6, S Kelly 6, Hangeland 7, Hughes 7, Riise 6, Duff 7, Dembele 7, Murphy 8, Kacaniklic 6 (Frei 58, 6), Dempsey 6, Pogrebnyak 6 (Etuhu 80).

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No flourish before FA Cup final as LFC fringe stars fail to shine SO MUCH for a Wembley send-off. So much for Liverpool FC heading for their date with destiny with momentum behind them.

There was one team applauded off at Anfield last night but it was those wearing the white of Fulham.

Kenny Dalglish's hopes that a much changed line up would rise to the challenge and stake a claim for FA Cup final places were dashed. There will be no selection headache for the manager after his understudies flopped badly.

Most of the faces were different but the outcome was painfully familiar as once again Liverpool were found wanting on home turf.

The Cottagers, who had been hammered 4-0 across Stanley Park three days earlier, comfortably secured their first ever away win over the Reds courtesy of Martin Skrtel's unfortunate own goal.

It means an eye-watering 30 points have been squandered at Anfield this season. Liverpool must win their final two league games to avoid their lowest ever Premier League points total.

The lack of energy, desire and intensity on display was galling but in the grand scheme of things it changes nothing. This league campaign of under-achievement has long since been written off.

Whether Dalglish's side finish seventh or eighth is largely irrelevant. The most important battle with Everton was the one fought out at Wembley last month and that was won.

This season will be defined by what happens in the capital on Saturday evening. If Liverpool add the FA Cup to the Carling Cup it will be a year to cherish.

Beat Chelsea and no-one could use the word failure to describe these rollercoaster nine months. In years to come it will be recalled as the season Dalglish guided the Reds to a dream domestic cup double, not mid-table mediocrity.

Dalglish made nine changes following the emphatic win at Norwich. Just Jordan Henderson and Jonjo Shelvey remained as Pepe Reina, Daniel Agger, Glen Johnson, Steven Gerrard and Luis Suarez were all rested ahead of the final.

Whether those who stepped up were already resigned to the fact they would miss out at Wembley only they will know but there was a lethargy running throughout the side.

The lack of understanding between the back four was glaring and it cost Liverpool inside five minutes.

Clint Dempsey got away from the attentions of Henderson and Sebastian Coates far too easily before picking out John Arne Riise whose drilled cross found the unmarked Alex Kacaniklic in the box.

The Swedish youngster scuffed his shot but it struck Skrtel and left Alexander Doni wrong footed as it rolled into the net.

Kacaniklic was on Liverpool's books until two years ago but Roy Hodgson gave him to the Cottagers along with Lauri Dalla Valle and £3.5million as part of the agreement to lure Paul Konchesky to Anfield. No prizes for guessing who got the better of that deal.

With the empty seats, Fulham's pitifully small away support and the low key atmosphere it had the feeling of a pre-season friendly.

Skrtel almost atoned for his own goal when he nodded Fabio Aurelio's free-kick just wide but the Reds were lucky not to fall further behind.

Dempsey has plundered 22 goals this season and the American international is a class act. His clipped pass teed up Pavel Pogrebnyak but his volley was parried behind by Doni.

The visiting fans did their best to provoke a reaction with chants of 'There's only one Roy Hodgson' but there was no response.

It was only when Henderson lost a 50/50 challenge with Mousa Dembele that the decibel levels were raised but only with groans of frustration.

As the first half progressed Liverpool improved and were unfortunate not to get restore parity before the break.

Maxi Rodriguez went close from long range before Dirk Kuyt's effort from the edge of the box dropped agonisingly wide after neat interplay between Carroll, Shelvey and Henderson.

Carroll at least staked a claim for inclusion at Wembley as he put himself about and won his aerial duels.

Mark Schwarzer spilled a cross under pressure from Carroll and Shelvey's strike was cleared off the line by Brede Hangeland.

Carroll was at the heart of everything best about the Reds in the first half and his header back across goal was nodded over by Rodriguez.

Shelvey also impressed at times, using possession intelligently, although he ended the night with his shirt hiding his face after ballooning a promising free-kick halfway up the Kop. The 20-year-old won't make the cut at Wembley on Saturday and still has much to learn. But the young midfielder built on his promising display at Norwich and has shown he's not out of place A first Premier League goal continues to elude him but he went close with a sweetly struck angled drive from Carroll's pass. This was likely to be the last time Aurelio graces Anfield with his contract expiring this summer. On the stroke of half-time the full-back provided the cross from which Carroll was denied by Schwarzer.

Dalglish introduced Stewart Downing at the expense of Henderson at the start of the second half. Spearing pounced on Dempsey's slip and forced a save before Rodriguez burst through only for Hangeland to make a perfectly timed last-ditch tackle before he could pull the trigger. As the Reds ran out of ideas and Carroll's impact waned, Fulham threatened to add to their account.

Substitute Kerim Frei struck the outside of the post with a thumping drive and then Riise was thwarted by Doni's block. Jose Enrique replaced Aurelio but fans had to wait until 14 minutes from time for the substitution they wanted.

Raheem Sterling has had to be patient following his long-awaited debut against Wigan in March. But the 17-year-old finally got another shot on the big stage and didn't disappoint. He whipped in one inviting cross which Carroll failed to capitalise on. It needed Doni to spare Liverpool further embarrassment late on as twice he thwarted Dempsey.

A smattering of boos rung out at the final whistle. Next stop Wembley.

LIVERPOOL: Doni, Kelly, Coates, Skrtel, Aurelio (Enrique 66), Henderson (Downing 46), Shelvey, Spearing, Maxi, Carroll, Kuyt (Sterling 76).

Not used: Jones, Carragher, Flanagan, Robinson. Bookings: None.

FULHAM: Schwarzer, Kelly, Hangeland, Hughes, Riise, Duff, Murphy, Dembele (Baird 87), Kacaniklic (Frei 58), Dempsey, Pogrebnyak (Etuhu 80).

Not used: Stockdale, Orlando Sa, Kasami, Briggs. Bookings: None.

REFEREE: Lee Probert

ATTENDANCE: 40,106.

London Evening Standard

Martin Jol stand-in makes history at Anfield

In time it will become a quiz question. Who was in charge for Fulham's first-ever victory at Anfield? Billy McKinlay, deputising for Martin Jol who was still recovering from a chest infection, was, like many of his players, not even aware this was Fulham's maiden win at Liverpool.

The conversation McKinlay would have had with his manager on the journey home would have been rather less awkward than the one in the wake of the 4-0 rout at Everton on Saturday where in the Scot's words: "Everything that could possibly go wrong, did go wrong", adding: "Hopefully, it will cheer him up."

What would please Jol most is that a side he inherited because Fulham's "ambition" did not match that of Mark Hughes, are now level on points with Liverpool, requiring four more to equal their highest total in the Premier League — the 53 they achieved under Roy Hodgson in 2009.

Naturally, the supporters for whom another journey to Merseyside must have been laced with trepidation, chanted the name of England's new manager at a ground that had witnessed his most spectacular failure.

It was Hodgson's signings as well as home defeats to Northampton and Wolves that turned Anfield against him and none was more resented than that of Paul Konchesky. In return, Hodgson offered Fulham a young Swedish midfielder, Alex Kacaniklic, as part exchange. Last night Anfield was made aware who had got the better deal.

It was a cross delivered by a rather more famous former Liverpool player in the bustling shape of John Arne Riise that earned Fulham their little bit of history. It struck the Swede, hit Martin Skrtel squarely in the chest, and dealt Liverpool a blow from which they rarely looked like recovering — even after just five minutes. Indeed, Fulham might have won by more.

"I didn't know we hadn't won at Anfield before so, of course, it is very special to be part of the first Fulham team to do that," Kacaniklic said. "It is a great achievement that puts us level on points with Liverpool but we already knew we were a good team so I am not overly surprised that we won."

Anfield was not just surprised but astonished by the result.

Kenny Dalglish, the man who oversaw a 10-0 humiliation of Fulham here in 1986, may have used this match to audition understudies for the FA Cup Final but they delivered performances unworthy of a B-movie.

Watching the displays of Kacaniklic and Kerim Frei, who struck the outside of the post, it appeared Fulham possessed better young footballers — better certainly than Jordan Henderson, a man on whom Dalglish had spent £20m. The announcement of the midfielder's substitution was almost the only occasion when the old stadium became animated.

Afterwards, Dalglish attacked his players in a way he had done only once before this season, after a defeat at Bolton. Then, Liverpool reacted by beating Manchester City to reach the Carling Cup Final. However bad they were, Chelsea cannot be complacent at Wembley. Four years ago, Fulham saved themselves on the final day with a 1-0 win over Portsmouth, whose mind was on the FA Cup, which they won.

"Our performance was very poor," said Dalglish, although he stumbled when asked to pay "tribute" to Hodgson's appointment as England manager. There are many who believe that Dalglish's presence undermined his predecessor and in successive home matches he had lost to the club Hodgson manages and the team he built. It was a reckoning of sorts.