

Date: 8 May 2012
 Opposition: Chelsea
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8 May 2012

THE TIMES

Liverpool get measure of revenge with Chelsea eyes on Munich

Liverpool 4 Chelsea 1

Rarely can such brilliance have been so untimely. Three days after losing the FA Cup Final to Chelsea, Liverpool ran their Wembley conquerors ragged to leave Roberto Di Matteo needing to win the Champions League a week on Saturday to ensure they return to European football's top table next season.

For Liverpool, the margin of victory and the style in which it came will provoke feelings of what might have been. If only they had played with such style when it mattered most, if only the penny had dropped with Andy Carroll long before the campaign was drawing to a close. Those were far from the only regrets on a night when their creativity finally produced goals, something that has happened at Anfield far too rarely during a season of struggle. The concerns that such a chastening defeat will cause Chelsea are different but, given the proximity of the Champions League final, actually the more pressing. At the very least it added to the pressure on Chelsea to beat Bayern Munich, given that a failure to do so will mean they will not compete in the next instalment of the competition.

At worst, such an excruciating ending of their chances of finishing in the Barclays Premier League top four could impact on their confidence, although Di Matteo will point out that few of the players who featured at Anfield are likely to start in Munich.

Had Liverpool beaten Chelsea at Wembley on Saturday, the likelihood is that they would have had the FA Cup on display before kick-off. As it was, the only prize on offer to them was one of dubious revenge in the knowledge that the three points that were being contested could not possibly make up for the trophy they had missed out on just three days earlier. That Chelsea's main priority is the Champions League final was underlined in their starting line-up, with Di Matteo choosing to retain only three of the players who had started at Wembley. Kenny Dalglish also made changes, with Steven Gerrard and Jose Enrique both being absent through injury, while Jay Spearing and Craig Bellamy were left on the bench after poor performances in Saturday's final. The changes seemed to unsettle Chelsea more than Liverpool in the early stages, with Fernando Torres labouring in a lone role up front in contrast to Luis Suarez and Carroll, who were once again showing signs of developing the partnership that Dalglish had envisaged when he invested the proceeds of Torres's [pounds sterling]50 million sale in the pair 14 months ago. Suarez stated his intent after just seven minutes, beating John Terry with a trademark nutmeg only to fire wide. It would not be the last time that the Chelsea captain was so discomfited, not only by the quicksilver movement of the Uruguayan, but also by Carroll's aerial prowess. Against the run of play, Branislav Ivanovic came close to giving Chelsea the lead after 17 minutes, when his header from Florent Malouda's corner thudded against the post after Jamie Carragher and Daniel Agger had collided with the ball still in mid-flight. It turned out to be a costly miss as just two minutes later Liverpool took the lead, much to the delight of the fans who were desperate for a victory to ease the pain caused by an inadequate season and to make Torres's return as uncomfortable as possible. Michael Essien helped them on their way to both objectives, scoring an own goal after another Suarez nutmeg. The forward then evaded Oriol Romeu before cutting the ball into the six-yard box, where Essien got the final touch.

Terry's status as Chelsea's defensive weak link on the night was confirmed after 25 minutes when he slipped attempting a routine clearance to cut out Maxi Rodriguez's through-ball. The error allowed Jordan Henderson a clean run through on goal and the midfielder demonstrated the kind of belief he has lacked this season, drawing Ross Turnbull before calmly beating Petr Cech's deputy with a curling shot into the bottom corner. It was Henderson's first goal since August.

Two goals to the good and fuelled by the fear of becoming the first Liverpool side since 1963 to lose three successive home games, Dalglish's side piled on the pressure and, faced with the onslaught, Chelsea continued to wilt.

Turnbull thought he had stemmed the tide when he tipped over Suarez's lob but the reprieve was only temporary as, from the resultant corner, Liverpool scored their third goal with 29 minutes of the game gone. Jonjo Shelvey took the corner and Agger was the player who got his name on the scoresheet. However, once again it was Carroll who played the decisive role, towering above the Chelsea defence to head the ball to the Denmark defender, who nodded over Essien and into the back of the net. Anfield duly gloried in Chelsea's discomfort, but the overriding emotion must surely have been one of regret as this was turning into a brilliant first-half performance from Liverpool that contrasted wildly with their efforts at Wembley. Torres showed some resistance, striking the underside of the crossbar with a powerful strike from an acute angle, but that was the limit of Chelsea's adventure and had it not been for the intervention of the woodwork they could have gone in trailing by five goals.

On both occasions Stewart Downing, who went into the game without a league goal all season, missed out. In the first instance he was unfortunate as his volley struck the crossbar, but in the second he was wasteful as he struck a penalty against the foot of a post after Ivanovic had elbowed Carroll.

The half-time whistle brought a welcome respite for Chelsea, but it also presented Di Matteo with a dilemma -- whether to give up the ghost on a top-four finish or go for broke. Whatever his decision, he certainly instilled more determination in his players and five minutes into the second half Ramires bundled home Malouda's free kick to give Chelsea hope of an unlikely recovery.

Any such aspirations were eradicated after 61 minutes, when Liverpool restored

their three-goal cushion. Again, Chelsea were architects of their own downfall as Turnbull's weak clearance landed at the feet of Shelvey, who was 40 yards from goal. The midfielder took one touch before firing home a thunderous half-volley. Final fixtures (Sunday, 3.0): Chelsea v Blackburn Rovers; Everton v Newcastle; Manchester City v Queens Park Rangers; Norwich City v Aston Villa; Stoke City v Bolton Wanderers; Sunderland v Manchester United; Swansea v Liverpool; Tottenham v Fulham; West Bromwich Albion v Arsenal; Wigan v Wolverhampton Wanderers.

Liverpool (4-4-2): J M Reina - G Johnson, J Carragher, M Skrtel, D Agger - S Downing (sub: R Sterling, 84min), J Henderson, J Shelvey, M Rodriguez (sub: D Kuyt, 84) - A Carroll, L Suarez. Substitutes not used: Doni, S Coates, J Spearing, M Kelly, C Bellamy. Booked: Agger, Henderson.

Chelsea (4-1-4-1): R Turnbull - P Ferreira, B Ivanovic, J Terry, R Bertrand - O Romeu - Ramires, M Essien, F Malouda, D Sturridge (sub: R Lukaku, 68) - F Torres. Substitutes not used: Hilario, A Cole, F Lampard, J Mata, S Kalou, S Hutchinson. Booked: Ferreira, Ivanovic, Terry, Essien. Referee: K Friend.

the guardian

Liverpool exact final revenge thanks to Chelsea errors

Chelsea must win it to stay in it. Champions League qualification was always a distant hope through the Premier League for Roberto Di Matteo but, as though the club's first European Cup was not incentive enough, there is no alternative now but to beat Bayern Munich in their own backyard after the lowest league finish of the Roman Abramovich era was confirmed at Anfield.

A top-four finish was obliterated from the equation for Chelsea by a rampant Liverpool team swaggering with a self-belief and adventure absent from their FA Cup final display at Wembley three days previously.

Kenny Dalglish's biggest league win of the season arrived too late to alter the complexion of the club's season but, with Andy Carroll again a dominant force and an impressive home performance reflected in goals for a change, Liverpool signed off at Anfield with a flourish and a flicker of hope.

Chelsea departed in the sure knowledge that several players had ruined their prospects of starting at the Allianz Arena but with minds focused. Given the trials that preceded Di Matteo's appointment as interim manager nine weeks ago, following the dismissal of André Villas-Boas, win or bust at the Allianz Arena is an acceptable return. A repeat of this ramshackle defensive display on Saturday week, however, and the Kop's taunt of "Bayern Munich, they'll win it five times" will ring true. The visitors arrived with their Premier League campaign alive but the night was not without incentive for Liverpool, however demoralised the club may have been by Saturday's defeat and their performance against the same opponents in the FA Cup final. Victory avoided equalling the lowest return of home wins in a top flight campaign at Anfield – the five of 1948-49 – maintained hope of finishing above Everton in the table and restored some optimism ahead of Dalglish's end-of-season review with the club's owners. Against another team Liverpool might have struggled to rouse itself but not against Chelsea and not against a side containing Fernando Torres, back on Anfield soil for the first time since his acrimonious £50m exit 16 months ago.

The obligatory boos reverberated around Anfield every time the Spain international touched the ball. Torres must have been tempted to join in, such was the paucity of the performance around him and particularly of a visiting defence destroyed by the channelled aggression of Carroll and skill of Luis Suárez.

Di Matteo made eight changes to the team that began at Wembley but the rotation policy that has served him so well of late failed him here. Even so, he had every right to expect more from John Terry, his captain, and Branislav Ivanovic in central defence although, in mitigation to the established pair, they were exposed frequently by those around them, including Ross Turnbull in goal. Chelsea started strongly and should have opened the scoring when Ivanovic planted a free header from Florent Malouda's corner against a post.

But, unlike at the Cup final, Liverpool showed up from the first whistle. Out of the ashes of their misery the Liverpool manager had urged his players to find confidence in their rousing finale at Wembley and they stunned Di Matteo's makeshift team with three goals in nine remarkable minutes. From a Chelsea perspective all three were easily avoidable.

Suárez engineered the first when he held off Oriol Romeu down the right wing, nutmegged the Chelsea captain as he entered the area and cut the ball back into Michael Essien who diverted it into his own goal.

A slip by Terry as he moved to collect a pass from Maxi Rodriguez enabled Jordan Henderson to go through on goal and beat Turnbull with a cool finish into the bottom corner and then, with the Chelsea keeper AWOL at a Jonjo Shelvey corner, Daniel Agger glanced Carroll's header into the unguarded net.

Torres's duel with the recalled Jamie Carragher simmered nicely and the Chelsea forward was denied another goal in front of the Kop when his angled drive cannoned off the underside of the crossbar. At the other, busier, end Carroll was thwarted by Turnbull as he cut into the area and Stewart Downing struck the bar with a delightful volley from Suárez's knock-down.

The moment for Downing to break his Premier League duck for Liverpool arrived on the stroke of half-time when Ivanovic conceded a ludicrous penalty for elbowing Carroll in the chest as they awaited Henderson's cross.

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Ivanovic was only booked but, from 12 yards and having sent Turnbull the wrong way, Downing smacked his spot-kick against the post and out. Liverpool's seventh penalty miss of the season set an unwanted club record and extended their number of strikes against the woodwork to 46.

Chelsea were being embarrassed and responded at the start of the second half when Ramires unwittingly bundled Malouda's inviting free-kick beyond José Reina. But any thoughts of a recovery ended when Turnbull scuffed a hopeless clearance into the path of Shelvey and the Liverpool midfielder drilled the return high into his unguarded net.

The Mail

Reds romp to sweet revenge as Blues blow top four hopes

If only. Those words have been muttered regularly by Liverpoolians during this bewildering campaign but never have they carried as much meaning as Tuesday night. If only Liverpool had played like this at Wembley three days earlier, they would have completed a cup double. If only Luis Suarez and Andy Carroll had dovetailed so sweetly sooner, the league table would not look so horrid. If only they had been this ruthless in 18 previous home games. If only.

But, as Kenny Dalglish argued, it was better late than never, a fine riposte to losing the FA Cup final. Even if Chelsea had fielded the same XI as they did on Saturday, Roberto Di Matteo's men would have found it difficult living with Liverpool in this rampant mood. But in scoring four goals, Liverpool obliterated Chelsea's faint hopes of finishing in the top four and if Di Matteo is to lead his club into the Champions League next season, he will have to do it by masterminding a win in the Allianz Arena, the fortress of Bayern Munich, on May 19. 'I didn't think, "What if?"', said Dalglish. 'I just thought, "What a performance and what a result"; with the last half-hour at Wembley and this performance, we have put together two hours of fantastic football. We have seen performances like that before but not married them up with a result.' All fears that Fernando Torres would return to haunt them were expunged by a relentless display that contained three goals in nine first-half minutes and a mesmerising performance from Suarez, who was intent on causing havoc from the first whistle. He may have failed to get on the scoresheet but, working in tandem with Carroll, the little Uruguayan caused mayhem and provided some much-needed succour to the embattled Dalglish. Given what had happened at Wembley, it had been generally assumed that the atmosphere around Anfield would be morose, with thousands of Liverpool fans staying away. But, not for the first time, waves of defiance rolled off the Kop. The vocal backing for Dalglish was especially significant.

Whether it was the noise being generated or a response to Dalglish's pre-match appeal that it was 'vital to sign off with a home win', Liverpool certainly began at a tempo that was far removed from their insipid beginning at Wembley.

True, they enjoyed good fortune when Branislav Ivanovic rose unmarked to head Florent Malouda's 17th-minute corner against a post, but it was no surprise when the home side went ahead. Evoking memories of the day he slalomed between four Manchester United defenders to set up a goal for Dirk Kuyt in March 2011, Suarez had only one thing on his mind when he took possession in the 19th minute and embarked on a mazy run that carried him past three blue shirts.

Having hoodwinked John Terry with a nutmeg, Suarez tried to find strike partner Carroll but, in his desperation to clear, Michael Essien succeeded only in turning the cross into his own net. It was a goal that opened the floodgates.

Flustered by the way Suarez was buzzing around, Terry was horribly out of sorts and moments after he was booked for clattering into Carroll, his slip allowed Jordan Henderson to speed on to a pass from Maxi Rodriguez. The 21-year-old then displayed great poise to double Liverpool's lead.

Soon after, two became three. Jonjo Shelvey's corner picked out Carroll and his knockdown was headed home by Denmark defender Daniel Agger. Liverpool wore a logo bearing 'Seeing is Believing' on their shirts to promote a charity that supports the blind and this scoreline did take some fathoming.

'I thought Liverpool were inspired,' acknowledged a solemn Di Matteo. 'They were the better side and scored their goals at the right times. You have to give credit to them. It is not the points we have lost here that mean we will not finish fourth.' Chelsea mustered a response when Torres — who was a peripheral figure — burst into the Kop End penalty area and smashed a drive against the underside of the bar but that attack was not in keeping with the pattern of play and Liverpool could easily have been five up by half-time.

Stewart Downing, enjoying one of his best nights in a red shirt, was desperately unlucky to see a dipping left-foot volley crack the woodwork. He should have scored his first Barclays Premier League goal for the club in added time at the end of the half but his penalty, after Carroll was felled by Ivanovic, hit a post.

That was Liverpool's seventh failure from the spot of the season (excluding the Carling Cup final shootout) — a club record — but, unlike earlier misses, this was not costly, even if within minutes of the restart Ramires had pulled a goal back, heading in Malouda's free-kick. But it was not the sign for a concerted spell of Chelsea pressure. If anything, Liverpool looked the side most likely to score again and so it proved when Shelvey scored the fourth. It came after more desperate defending from Chelsea but, even so, Shelvey had plenty on when the ball fell to him 25 yards out. It didn't matter as he swept his shot into the net to complete the rout, ensuring the post-match lap of honour went smoothly.

'There is no other place in the Premier League where supporters would show appreciation like that,' said Dalglish. 'It was a fantastic night.'

Such a shame for him there were not a few more.

The Daily Telegraph

Chelsea and Terry suffer as Liverpool turn it on too late

Liverpool 4 Essien og 19, Henderson 25, Agger 28, Shelvey 61
 Chelsea 1 Ramires 50 Att: 40,721

This was a game of great entertainment but little significance. Liverpool were dominant, punishing a much-changed Chelsea side, but Anfield must have been left with a feeling of why Andy Carroll, absolutely outstanding against John Terry, did not start the FA Cup final.

The England striker failed to score here but earned the post-match rendition of 'Sweet Carroll Nine'. Along with the excellent Jonjo Shelvey and typically lively Luis Suarez, Carroll ensured that Chelsea now cannot finish in the top four. A Michael Essien own-goal, composed Jordan Henderson finish and neat Daniel Agger header gave Liverpool a 3-0 lead before Stewart Downing wasted a penalty. Ramires made it 3-1 just after the break but Liverpool were in control, confirmed when Shelvey capped a fine display with his strike from 30 yards.

It was a game of some ugly moments, a two-footed challenge by Michael Essien on Carroll, a Branislav Ivanovic elbow on Carroll and Suarez forearm on Ivanovic. Carroll began here as he finished at Wembley, scaring Terry with his persistence, linking well with Suarez. Liverpool's attacking, bringing three goals in nine minutes, was assisted by some wretched defending by Chelsea and Terry in particular. The England centre-half was troubled when Carroll came on after an hour at Wembley, muscling him out the way, losing him at corners. Talk persists about whether Terry should go to the Euros because of any impact he might have on the dressing-room dynamic; on this evidence, there are significant footballing reasons for leaving him behind.

Suarez had nutmegged Terry once even before the goal-rush.

The goals began to flow after 20 minutes. Suarez drove in from the right, totally embarrassing Terry with the most elegant and quickly-executed of nutmegs. The Uruguayan cut the ball back from the byline, hitting Michael Essien and cannoning into the net. The announcer credited the score to Suarez but it was clearly an own-goal off Essien. The pain continued. Terry looked a ghost, soon nutmegged again, this time by Carroll, and responding by fouling the Liverpool striker.

Terry was booked, and his evening deteriorated three minutes later. He was again bamboozled by the swift movement and passing of Liverpool, this time Maxi Rodriguez releasing Henderson through the middle.

There has always been the suspicion with Henderson that he feels inhibited in the presence of Steven Gerrard. With the captain absent with a back injury, Henderson seemed almost released from an imaginary cage. Running on to Maxi's pass, Henderson glided through the middle and placed the ball with a touch of fade around Ross Turnbull and in. Chelsea's defence was breached again three minutes later. Shelvey whipped in a corner from the left, Carroll again lost Terry and headed back for the stooping Agger to provide the coup de grace.

Liverpool were rampant, Chelsea playing like strangers, seemingly operating an open-door policy. Suarez fired over. Downing unleashed a marvellous dipping shot that clipped the bar. He should have had his first goal for Liverpool, when he was instructed to take a penalty as the half closed. Kevin Friend had awarded the kick after Ivanovic had thrown his elbow back, catching Carroll in the chest, and going into Friend's book. The target-man held his face much to the anger of the Chelsea fans. Their mood improved when Downing drove his penalty against the post. Downing's failure was highlighted further when Robbie Fowler's young son, Jacob, joined in the half-time shoot-out, converting his effort from 12 yards in front of the Kop. Chelsea were stunned, although their hopes of making the top four had largely ebbed anyway. Any visiting Bayern Munich scouts will not have learned much from Chelsea's starting XI as only Essien, possibly Paulo Ferreira, at a push Fernando Torres, could conceivably begin the Champions League final. Essien was poor, Ferreira was soon cautioned for catching Suarez while Torres was roundly booed on a first return to Anfield.

Chelsea still had a few chances, and a few grievances. Shelvey kicked Florent Malouda in the head, guilty of carelessness at the very least.

Ivanovic headed a Malouda corner against the post. Torres rolled back the years in front of the Kop, controlling the ball, darting into the box and crashing a shot off the underside of the bar and clear. "You should have stayed at a big club," the Kop chanted at Torres, who will soon be making plans to leave for Munich and the Champions League final. Torres may be on the bench at the Allianz Arena but he has played his part on the road to Munich, and may come on if Plan A, Operation Drog, fails. Chelsea made a fight of this after 50 minutes. When Malouda bent in a free-kick from the right, Ramires responded quickest, racing towards the ball which hit his stomach and flew past the struggling Pepe Reina.

Any idea of a comeback was brutally ended on the hour. In front of a cackling Kop, Turnbull made a shocking clearance, clearing straight to Shelvey. The midfielder's response was majestic, the ball drilled first time into the empty net. It was a goal of the highest class. Di Matteo sent on Romelu Lukaku, who immediately wasted a glorious opportunity. When Ramires clipped over the most inviting of balls, Lukaku headed straight at Reina. The keeper celebrated strangely, kicking the post. Liverpool kept attacking. Glen Johnson swept in a cross that Carroll knocked wide. Then Suarez hounded Ivanovic, bringing a forearm into his face. Friend saw little wrong.

Liverpool fans were given a glimpse of the future when Raheem Sterling was sent on by Dalglish.

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THE INDEPENDENT

Liverpool start as they finished at Wembley as Terry slips off pace
 It is now the European Cup or bust for Chelsea and, should they perform this badly against Bayern Munich, bust it will be - or the Europa League, which in owner Roman Abramovich's eyes amounts to the same thing.
 Since his takeover in 2003, Stamford Bridge has only ever staged Champions League football. Now, unless they can overcome Bayern in their own stadium, Chelsea will be dipping their toes into some of European football's more distant waters.

There were eight changes last night from the side that had beaten Liverpool in the FA Cup final and they suffered Chelsea's heaviest league defeat of the Abramovich era. Since few of this team are likely to play in the Allianz Arena on 19 May, it would be harsh to read too much into this debacle, although the match climaxed with the Kop chanting: "Bayern Munich, they'll win it five times".

Nothing here would discourage the Germans. Given the suspensions Roberto Di Matteo's side will take into the final, Michael Essien or Florent Malouda may have to be pressed into service in central midfield, where last night they were overrun. "You have to be objective; we have played 37 games in the Premier League and the points we have lost today are not the reason we have failed to finish fourth," Di Matteo said.

He justified his selection by arguing that, "with everything we have been through we needed to use players who were fresh mentally and physically." They would have been worn down by the finish. John Terry endured such a dreadful first half that someone tweeted Bayern would be appealing to Uefa to have his ban for the final overturned.

Chelsea's situation, however, is identical to Liverpool's when they won the European Cup in Istanbul seven years ago and this was a night that would have made Kenny Dalglish's end-of-season review with the club's owners a little easier. Liverpool began as they had finished the FA Cup final - and that when the season is summed up here will be a matter for lasting regret.

"No, I don't have a feeling of 'what if?'" said Dalglish. "I have a feeling of: 'what a performance'. The last half-hour at Wembley and this performance make up a fantastic two hours of football. The supporters can go away with a smile on their faces."

There were moments last night to give Bayern's representatives pause for thought. Branislav Ivanovic thundered a header against the post when the scores were still level. Fernando Torres, returning to Anfield for the first time since Chelsea made him the Premier League's most expensive footballer, accelerated away from Daniel Agger and sent a shot crashing on to the crossbar beneath the Kop.

Pepe Reina, who has admitted publicly to having endured a poor season, was wrong-footed by Ramires as he met Malouda's free-kick to spark a flicker of a comeback that was extinguished the moment Ross Turnbull sent a clearance straight to Jonjo Shelvey, who drove it back with interest into the net.

That was Liverpool's fourth and final goal, although there might have been more. Just before half-time, Ivanovic barged over Andy Carroll, whom Dalglish thought as unplayable as he had been in the final half hour at Wembley, and conceded a penalty. Stewart Downing has never scored for Liverpool in the league and maintained that record by hitting the post with his kick.

It scarcely seemed to matter. Liverpool were three up and in total command. The rout began with Luis Suarez reaching the byline and pulling the ball back for the approaching figure of Carroll. It missed its target, hit Essien and rolled over the line for the first of three goals in nine minutes.

While Carroll's reputation had been revived by the FA Cup final, Jordan Henderson's had plummeted further. When John W Henry decided to sack Damien Comolli as director of football, the principal complaint was that he had signed players who were wildly overpriced. Henderson, bought from an astonished Sunderland for [pounds sterling]20m, was the chief witness for the prosecution.

However when Maxi Rodriguez aimed a loose pass in the general direction of Terry and saw the pillar of Chelsea's defence slip to the floor, Henderson was the one to benefit and you would have had to possess a granite heart not to have willed him to score, which he did in some style.

Carroll may not have scored - however, he contributed to Liverpool's third with surprising delicacy, heading Shelvey's corner across the face of the area for Agger to head home. As he ran towards the Kop in the second half, the great stand stood and chanted his name. It has taken a while but Carroll is becoming the player Dalglish thought him to be.

DAILY MIRROR

KOP WINNERS 4 CUP WINNERS 1

REVENGE may not have been exactly sweet for Liverpool.

Three points meant little compared to their lost silverware.

But if this is the last home game of Kenny Dalglish's second coming, it left a sense of what might be a brighter Anfield future.

Four days after their FA Cup Final siege came to nothing, the Merseysiders feasted on Chelsea's Wembley hangover, to leave Roberto Di Matteo's men knowing it is Munich or bust if they want to play Champions League football next season.

Three goals in nine first-half minutes saw Liverpool, inspired by Luis Suarez - who showed both sides of his character - and Andy Carroll, left Chelsea's shadow selection shell-shocked as they finally found the home form that has deserted them all year and leaves Dalglish's position uncertain.

A night John Terry - and keeper Ross Turnbull - will want to forget brought Anfield delight as Suarez induced a Michael Essien own goal after 19 minutes before Jordan Henderson and Daniel Agger and Jonjo Shelvey joined the party.

With the Liverpool fans relishing the chance to bait Fernando Torres on his Anfield return, even when the pounds 50million man hit the bar, it could have been meltdown.

Stewart Downing, still looking for his first league goal for the Reds, struck the post with a penalty seconds before the break.

But even though Ramires fluked his 12th goal of the season, Liverpool stepped up the pace again, a blunder by the hopeless Turnbull - showing just how much Chelsea rely on Petr Cech - was capitalised on by Shelvey.

Torres was one of eight changes from Chelsea's Wembley side, signalling their priorities were very much on Munich, rather than the fleeting chance of still making the top four.

But it was Liverpool's approach, taking up from where they left off despite the absence of Steven Gerrard, with Carroll and Suarez tremendous, that made Turnbull's first Premier League start in over two years a debacle.

Not that the Chelsea keeper was helped by Terry's nightmare, hinted at early on when he was nutmegged by Suarez before the Uruguayan flashed wide.

Maybe it might have been different had Chelsea gone in front after 17 minutes when Daniel Sturridge's shot deflected inches wide off Agger and then Branislav Ivanovic, c, unmarked six yards out, thundered his header from the resulting Florent Malouda corner against the post. t, r t st But within two minutes, s, Liverpool were ahead. Within 10, it was all over. d. l The opener came when Suarez, seemingly boxed in wide on the right, somehow wriggled his way clear, played through Terry's legs as he hared inside and saw his driven cross bounce in off the helpless Essien. n d t, ayh ed en he Then the hapless Terry's slip saw Henderson waltz y's tz through on to Maxi Rodriguez's simple ball through the middle to steer past the keeper into the bottom corner. And when Terry - booked for a foul on Carroll - lost the big Geordie from Shelvey's corner on 28 minutes, leaving Agger a free d for a foul he big vey's es, e header into the Blues net, Chelsea were utterly bereft.

Torres, jeered throughout, smashed a shot off the bar after latching on to a loose ball but Chelsea were a mess, looking like a side with g ut ess, with their minds on other things. other Carroll was denied by Turnbull and Downing flicked the bar with a superb volley.

But the winger left the pitch shaking his head after stroking his injury-time penalty against the post and out after Ivanovic lost his marbles, smashing his elbow into Carroll's chest as they waited for Henderson's cross.

his elbow as t Hen s The escape briefly sparked Chelsea, who pulled one back when Malouda floated in a freekick and Ramires tricked the ball past Pepe Reina off his groin.

Turnbull parried from Martin Skrtel but when the keeper miscued a simple fr wh mis clearan th h clearance straight to Shelvey on the hour, the midfielder gleefully picked his spot from 35 yards for his first Premier League goal.

Reina partially redeemed himself with a point-blank save from substitute Romelu Lukaku before Suarez risked a red card with a swinging right forearm that caught Ivanovic.

Liverpool pushed to the last, Carroll twice off target and youngster Raheem Sterling missing with his first touch.

This was a battering.

7DH(SER{ LIVERPOOL: Reina 5, Johnson 7, Carragher 6, Skrtel 6, Agger 7, Downing 6 (Sterling 84), Henderson 8, Shelvey 7, Maxi 7 (Kuyt 83); Suarez 9, Carroll 8 CHELSEA: Turnbull 3, Ferreira 5, Ivanovic 5, Terry 4, Bertrand 5, Essien 5, Romeu 5, Malouda 6, Ramires 5, Torres 5, Sturridge 5 (Lukaku 68, 5) REF: Kevin Friend ATT: 40,721 LIVERPOOL v CHELSEA MAN OF THE MATCH LUIS SUAREZChelsea simply could not handle him BALL POSSESSION 47% B 53% SHOTS ON TARGET 2 6 SHOTS OFF TARGET 5 S 11 CORNERS 47 OFFSIDE 0 3 FOULS 14 17

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If only for LFC after Anfield hammering is finally dished out AS Kenny Dalglish's Liverpool FC players embarked on the traditional end of season lap of honour two words summed up the mood perfectly – if only. Make no mistake this was the perfect tonic following the agony of FA Cup final defeat. Rarely has gloom been lifted so swiftly and the standing ovation was richly deserved. Dalglish had demanded his side provided a "little bit of solace" for supporters short-changed too often on home soil this season – and they responded emphatically to their manager's call. The Reds saved their best until last at Anfield as they demolished Chelsea to exact at least a modicum of revenge for their FA Cup final defeat. Yet there was a sense of what could have been. If only this performance had been served up 72 hours earlier at Wembley. If only the outstanding Andy Carroll had started that final. If only it hadn't taken until their final home fixture for the Reds to display the kind of ruthless streak fans had longed to see since August. This classy display when the pressure was off offered a glimpse into what this season could have delivered, rather than mid-table mediocrity and the Carling Cup. Forget the fact Chelsea fielded a much changed line-up. Any XI they put out would have been overwhelmed by the intensity, desire and class Liverpool hit Roberto Di Matteo's side with. Reds fans arrived wishing the season was already over and departed wishing it was only just beginning. Their biggest league victory of the season lifted Liverpool back into eighth place and if they beat Swansea City on Sunday they could still leapfrog Everton into seventh. The four goals also ensured this wasn't the worst tally of home league strikes in the Reds' history – it simply equals the 24 netted in 1903/04. For some, like Maxi Rodriguez, this was farewell, but others will be hoping it's only goodbye. Certainly, the Kop spoke with one voice as they chanted the name of Dalglish towards the end. If principal owner John Henry was watching the message was clear. Carroll simply carried on where he left off at Wembley. He tormented and embarrassed John Terry from start to finish. What a contrast to Liverpool's former No 9 who failed miserably on his return to Anfield. Fernando Torres, whose every touch was booed, spent most of the night in Jamie Carragher's pocket. Dalglish made four changes from his Wembley line up as Carroll, Maxi Rodriguez, Jonjo Shelvey and Carragher replaced Craig Bellamy, Steven Gerrard, Jay Spearing and Jose Enrique. From the start the atmosphere was surprisingly upbeat. The supporters were determined to enjoy themselves and it was soon apparent that the Reds shared that desire. Suarez set the tone early on as he nutmegged Terry before dragging his shot wide. Carroll then curled an effort over after an intelligent knockdown from his strike partner. Liverpool were dominant and they soon made it count, but not before they enjoyed a huge let off. Branislav Ivanovic should have put the visitors in front when he rose to meet Florent Malouda's corner six yards out but crashed his header against the post. The Reds' response was emphatic as they blew Chelsea away with three goals in the space of 10 first-half minutes. Suarez kick-started the rout in the 19th minute. The Uruguayan picked up possession on the right flank and embarked on a mazy run which took him past Oriol Romeu and Terry. His pull-back from the touchline was bundled into his own net by Michael Essien. Chelsea simply couldn't handle Carroll's physicality. Terry was booked for cynically halting him and the defender's torment soon worsened. Rodriguez's pass was misplaced but Terry's comical slip presented Jordan Henderson with a clear run on goal. The midfielder has had critics during an underwhelming first season at Anfield, but this time he took the plaudits. Henderson showed great composure to beat Ross Turnbull and end a goal drought stretching back to August. Suarez's curler was tipped over and the incessant pressure was rewarded with a third in the 29th minute. Shelvey's corner was headed back across goal by Carroll and Daniel Agger was on hand to nod home from close range. Turnbull then denied Rodriguez and Carroll to save Chelsea from further embarrassment. Torres was largely a passenger and when he did steal a yard of space the woodwork came to the Reds' rescue. There was little respite for Chelsea as Stewart Downing displayed the kind of self belief so sadly lacking for much of the campaign. The £20million winger sent a stunning dipping volley from 25 yards out crashing against the bar. On the stroke of half-time Downing was presented with a golden chance to finally net a first league goal for the Reds. Ivanovic somehow escaped with a yellow card for cynically elbowing Carroll in the box and Downing took responsibility from the spot. He sent Turnbull the wrong way but the ball bounced back off the post and Carroll couldn't put away the rebound. It was an historic miss, as for the first time Liverpool have spurned seven penalties in one season. Early in the second half there was a sniff of a Chelsea comeback as Ramires was allowed to sneak in to convert Malouda's free-kick but by the hour mark Liverpool's three-goal lead was restored. Turnbull's dismal clearance kick was pounced on by Shelvey who took a touch to steady himself and then emphatically finished into the unguarded net from 30 yards. It was the youngster's first Premier League strike. Substitute Romelu Lukaku could have reduced the deficit but Pepe Reina thwarted him with a stunning save. Dalglish rang the changes late on as Rodriguez and Downing made way for Raheem Sterling and Dirk Kuyt. Liverpool should have added to their account but Sterling fired over before Suarez shot wide after a neat one-two with Kuyt. The logo on the home shirts said 'Seeing is Believing'. It was fitting on a night when the frustration of failure was washed away.



Roberto di Matteo's Chelsea stand-ins fluff lines as they audition for grand finale
 £50m Torres among the bit-part players who failed to take chance to force their way into manager's planning for Munich
 Chelsea's Premier League campaign has long been usurped by their cup competition exertions but those squad members hoping to press their case for inclusion in the greatest challenge ahead badly failed their audition.
 Roberto di Matteo made eight changes from the side that won the FA Cup Final against Liverpool just three days earlier but instead of an energised display the Blues fell flat on a chastening evening at Anfield.
 A top-four finish? Chelsea were fortunate to only concede four as Kenny Dalglish's side gained a little bit of revenge for their defeat at Wembley.
 Di Matteo handed a chance to several players suddenly within touching distance of an unlikely appearance in a Champions League Final given injuries and suspensions elsewhere.
 Yet Paulo Ferreira, Michael Essien, Daniel Sturridge and Oriol Romeu all failed to produce anything like the level required to force their way into Di Matteo's strategy for beating Bayern Munich in 10 days' time.
 Di Matteo's team selection was not the sole factor as those already absent for the Allianz Arena were abject. John Terry – nutmegged time and again – can hardly have had a worse game in a Chelsea shirt.
 Branislav Ivanovic was fortunate not to be sent off when elbowing Andy Carroll to concede a penalty on the stroke of half-time, Essien fouled the same player with a reckless two-footed lunge that deserved a dismissal, while Sturridge and Florent Malouda failed to form any cohesion in the final third to aid an isolated Fernando Torres.
 Chelsea's exhausting recent schedule played its part – Di Matteo's reluctance to summon Ashley Cole, Frank Lampard, Juan Mata or Salomon Kalou from the bench indicated as much – but this was nevertheless a dismal showing from a side then still capable of finishing third in the table.
 Arsenal, Tottenham and Newcastle all failed to win last weekend, opening the door for the Blues to create the most unlikely of escape routes ahead of an eminently presentable final day home fixture against newly-relegated Blackburn Rovers.
 But instead they folded cheaply and consigned themselves to the worst finish in Roman Abramovich's era as owner and billed the forthcoming final as Munich or bust for the right to compete in next season's Champions League.
 "By putting out a team that were energetic and fresh physically and mentally, I thought it would give us a better chance," said Di Matteo. "It was a similar side to the one which played at Arsenal and we've been using the strength in our squad to be here. We still had a mathematical chance but we've lost many points throughout the season, it's not just about last night."
 Di Matteo certainly inherited a difficult situation – although the Blues were only three points outside the top four when he took over – but this result will be a blow to his already slim chance of taking the manager's job on a permanent basis. The Italian claimed his first silverware as manager last weekend and in tandem with navigating a path to the Champions League Final, his tenure can only be regarded as a success no matter what the outcome on May 19.
 But the doubts about whether he has the capacity to attack on three fronts, despite taking over a squad midway through transition, will linger again as their League form took a terminal blow. The highest-placed team Chelsea have beaten in the League since Di Matteo took charge are Stoke, who currently sit in 14th place.
 Any chance of improving on that record dissipated after an awful start in which Luis Suarez's jinking run climaxed with Essien bundling the ball into his own net before Terry slipped to allow Jordan Henderson to convert a second and Daniel Agger headed a third.
 Stewart Downing missed a penalty in a brief respite either side of half-time that saw Ramires force home a reply but Ross Turnbull's poor clearance enabled Jonjo Shelvey to restore Liverpool's three-goal advantage with a well-taken fourth goal that the hosts were unfortunate not to add to. Chelsea had one eye on Munich and thoughts turned to the availability of injured defenders David Luiz and Gary Cahill given the calamitous rearguard showing last night. "We are working towards their [Luiz and Cahill] fitness and trying to get them back as soon as we can but I can't put an exact date on it," said Di Matteo.
 For Liverpool, this result papers over the cracks of a hugely disappointing League campaign that leaves Dalglish uncertain over his future at Anfield and the Scot desperate to maintain a healthy relationship with the club's support, many of whom stayed to applaud the team on their lap of honour to mark the final home game.
 "The supporters can go away for the last game of the season with a little smile on their face," he said. "The way they stayed behind and showed their appreciation speaks volumes."
 By contrast, Chelsea's squad players showed surprisingly little given what is to come.