

Date: 28 November 2012
 Opposition: Tottenham Hotspur
 Competition: League

Times	Telegraph	Echo
Guardian	Mirror	Evening Standard
Independent	Mail	BBC

28 November
2012

THE TIMES

Own goal a mere afterthought as Bale's wizardry stuns Liverpool

Tottenham Hotspur 2

Liverpool 1

Gareth Bale ended up with a booking for diving and an own goal to his name, but still the mesmerising manner in which he took this game to Liverpool will live longer in the memory.

The Wales winger was sufficiently sensational in the opening quarter to render Liverpool's subsequent recovery too little too late -- Brendan Rodgers's team have now won only once in nine games -- and it was refreshing to be lauding Tottenham's prodigious talent rather than lamenting the sick terrace chants in the games against Lazio and West Ham United.

Bale started off like a child returning for a kickabout in his old primary school playground. It was almost unfair. After a quarter of an hour, he had all but won his team the game.

He was able to run past people with so much ease, it was as if Glen Johnson had not yet got changed and was still drinking his milk.

When he is in this mood, Bale is unplayable. For the neutral, he is a joy to behold. He had already persuaded Pepe Reina to punch, unconvincingly, his free kick from 30 yards out before he was slipped in by Jermain Defoe, only to drill his low shot just wide of the far post.

So it was hardly a surprise when he made one goal and scored another. In the seventh minute, Bale simply glided past four would-be defenders, all on the outside, barely a trick required, before arcing the perfect low cross around the back of the defence but in front of the goalkeeper for Aaron Lennon to sidefoot in at the far post.

Liverpool were always granted space to counter-attack -- Mousa Dembele's return was more a nod to adding creativity to the Tottenham midfield than to closing opponents down -- and Luis Suarez had one low shot saved by Hugo Lloris before Jordan Henderson missed an open goal that could fill him with nightmares for weeks to come.

Henderson, the England Under-21 captain, nicked the ball off Defoe midway in his own half before Suarez played a delightful through-ball for Jose Enrique to chase that Kyle Walker was relieved to cut off.

The England right back, however, paid little concern to where the ball went and, as the outrushing Lloris was cut out, Henderson arrived, with perfect timing but imperfect accuracy, to slot the ball wide of the gaping Tottenham net.

To compound his sense of disorientation, Henderson then committed the foul, on Clint Dempsey, that offered Bale a shooting opportunity from 25 yards. His free kick was dangerous, but once it diverted off Henderson's head to wrongfoot Reina, it was lethal.

Tottenham were 2-0 up, back in the groove and on their way. Surely.

Liverpool were so leaden-footed, Steven Gerrard in particular. Tottenham have been the only team to score four goals in a game against them in the past 31/2 years, in this corresponding fixture last season after Martin Skrtel was sent off early on, and a repeat looked on the cards at this stage.

But if Henderson's offence was a foul, Gerrard looked to have been brought down in the penalty area nine minutes before half-time, as he was wrestled groundwards by Dembele.

Phil Dowd, the referee, gave nothing and the ball ricocheted for Suarez, whose shot was booted from the line by Walker, William Gallas taking care to keep out the way of the clearance for fear of deflection.

Considering how annihilated Liverpool had been in the opening stages, they did well to make a fist of the game. Raheem Sterling never stopped asking for the ball and Johnson did what he does best, attack from deep.

When the England right back got to the byline and pulled his cross back, Jonjo Shelvey, who had just replaced Henderson, was unlucky to see his near-post effort deflected wide.

From Shelvey's corner, Daniel Agger nodded on for Gerrard, whose header was cleared off the line by Lennon. Unfortunately for Tottenham, the ball smashed into the face of Bale, who must have known very little as the rebound went over the line.

There was still time for Bale to run so fast at the Liverpool defence that Dowd missed Agger's foul and instead booked the winger for diving.

Suarez volleyed dramatically over, the momentum all Liverpool's, before he tumbled under Gallas's challenge in the box as Tottenham lost control of the game.

The ball seldom stuck up front with Defoe and, in midfield, Sandro and Dembele sat too deep.

For Liverpool, it was just another close-run disappointment.

Tottenham Hotspur (4-2-3-1): H Lloris - K Walker, M Dawson, W Gallas, J Vertonghen - Sandro, M Dembele (sub: T Huddlestone, 88min) - A Lennon, C Dempsey (sub: G Sigurdsson, 63), G Bale - J Defoe. Substitutes not used: B Friedel, K Naughton, J Livermore, A Townsend, T Carroll. Booked: Bale.

Liverpool (4-2-3-1): J M Reina - G Johnson, M Skrtel, D Agger, S Downing (sub: O Assaidi, 78) - J Allen, S Gerrard - R Sterling, J Henderson (sub: J Shelvey, 63), J Enrique - L Suarez. Substitutes not used: B Jones, N Sahin, J Carragher, Suso, A Wisdom. Booked: Skrtel, Enrique.

Referee: P Dowd.

the guardian

Bale causes butterflies at both ends as Spurs hold off Liverpool

With one glorious assist, one goal at the right end, one at the wrong end and a yellow card for supposed simulation, Gareth Bale was integral to nearly everything that Tottenham did at White Hart Lane. Spurs fans should enjoy it while it lasts, because with Bale's reputation still soaring, Andre Villas-Boas suggested other clubs will attempt to lure the winger away.

"He is performing extremely well for Spurs and we are amazed by what he can do for us," Villas-Boas said. "He's on to a great career and obviously Tottenham want to keep him here as long as we can but we understand that players like this have propositions in the market. That's the nature of the game."

Bale's renown may be luminous but Liverpool found that to be forewarned is not to be forearmed. Tottenham had the visitors reeling in the opening minutes and Bale was the tormentor-in-chief. First he confounded Pepe Reina with a 30-yard free-kick that wobbled in the air and forced the goalkeeper into an improvised save. Then, after Jermain Defoe dispossessed Steven Gerrard in midfield, Bale galloped down the left wing before firing just wide. A breakthrough was already looking inevitable and, sure enough, in the seventh minute Bale embarked on another jagged dash down the left.

After leaving three opponents panting in his wake, the Welshman delivered a low cross that Aaron Lennon turned into the net at the back post.

That woke Liverpool up and Hugo Lloris had to make an urgent save from Luis Suarez moments later. Spurs were full of swagger going forward but shaky at the back and Jordan Henderson spurned a prime opportunity to take advantage of that in the 14th minute when, after a mix-up between Lloris and Kyle Walker, he failed to find the unguarded net from 20 yards.

Such wastefulness contrasted with the shot that Bale produced to double Tottenham's lead in the 16th minute, his 25-yard free-kick swerving outrageously, aided by a slight deflection, before landing in the opposite side of the goal to the one where Reina was heading.

Liverpool did not panic. That is not Brendan Rodgers's way. Instead they kept probing and began to pull the Spurs defence to and fro. They may have cut the deficit in the first half had most of the chances not fallen to Jose Enrique, whose general play was impressive but finishing awry.

Liverpool could have had a penalty for what Rodgers - bristling with indignation at the referee Phil Dowd's performance - later termed a "near assault" on Gerrard, who fell in the box under a challenge by Mousa Dembele. Liverpool stopped appealing when the ball broke to Suarez, who poked it towards the net from 10 yards, only for Walker to clear it off the line. Still, Rodgers, constantly scribbling notes on the sideline, was being shown ample ways that his side might get back into the game. Giving the ball to Suarez must have been top of the list, as usual. Spurs kept feeding Bale, who troubled Reina with another long-range shot just before the break.

Liverpool were on top for most of the second half, their snappy passing and movement depriving the hosts of the ball for long periods. Bale only threatened intermittently now, another wondrous free-kick from him in the 69th minute hurtling inches wide. Later he launched an increasingly rare counterattack and tumbled under a challenge from Daniel Agger. Replays suggested there was nothing dishonest about the fall but Dowd suspected a dive and booked Bale. That, too, reflected an aspect of his reputation. "It's very difficult for referees to judge players of his pace and ability," was Villas-Boas's explanation.

Two minutes later Bale's fortunes nosedived. After Spurs failed to repel a Liverpool corner, Lennon booted a Gerrard header off the line but straight into the face of Bale, whose pain was compounded by the ball bouncing into the net. Liverpool sought an equaliser in vain, Suarez rasping a shot inches over from 10 yards in the 80th minute. To Rodgers's incredulity, Suarez, like Gerrard earlier, also had a strong penalty claim rejected as Tottenham held on for three points. "It's incredible that we have gone through the season and haven't had a penalty," raged Rodgers. "Statistics will tell you we've been in box as much as anyone and although we know we need to be more clinical, to arrive at this stage of season and not get a penalty . . . I can go through a whole raft of [incorrect] penalty decisions and offside decisions that were actually pretty straightforward."

Doubtless others may debate that but it would be hard to disagree with the Liverpool manager when he declared that his team would have warranted at least a point from this performance. "After the way we played we would have been disappointed not to win, so to come away with nothing is hard. But if we keep playing like that we'll win plenty."

Tottenham 4-4-1-1

Lloris; Walker, Dawson, Gallas, Vertonghen; Lennon, Sandro, Dembele (Huddlestone, 87), Bale*; Dempsey (Sigurdsson, 63); Defoe.

Subs not used Friedel, Naughton, Livermore, Townsend, Carroll.

Liverpool 4-5-1

Reina; Johnson, Skrtel*, Agger, Downing (Assaidi, 78); Sterling, Allen, Gerrard, Henderson (Shelvey, 63), Enrique*; Suarez.

Subs not used Jones, Sahin, Carragher, Suso, Wisdom.

Referee P Dowd

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The Mail

WHITE-HOT BALE; Even an own goal can't spoil the show

TOTTENHAM 2 Lennon 7, Bale 16.

LIVERPOOL 1 Bale 72 (og).

ANDRE Villas-Boas compared Jermain Defoe favourably with free-scoring Colombian Radamel Falcao, so where does that leave Gareth Bale? Bale seemed to be an irresistible force in the first half only to help Liverpool back into the game with a hapless own goal before he was booked for diving.

For the most part, Bale was strong, direct and fast, against a team who adopt an open -- and sometimes flimsy -- passing style and a full back who loves to attack. It was a reminder of how destructively he can be when everything goes his way. Martin Skrtel thought he had the answer but he was booked for a cynical foul which stopped a Bale break.

The Wales winger had Tottenham two up inside 16 minutes, creating the first for Aaron Lennon and scoring the second with a little help from Jordan Henderson, who had 60 seconds or so to forget.

Henderson missed a sitter, chased back, conceded a free-kick and then stood in the wall and unwittingly deflected Bale's shot beyond his goalkeeper Pepe Reina. Luck returned to bite Bale when Lennon attempted to clear a corner only to smash the ball into his team-mate's face and into the net. It set up a nail-biting finish.

Villas-Boas has seen his Spurs react well to the embarrassment of leaking five at Arsenal and are thrilling to watch. Liverpool, too, deserve credit for their role in a highly entertaining game, played at a blistering pace.

Whether Brendan Rodgers can take comfort is unlikely. His team, for all their intent, were simply unable to resist and the setback to their recovery is a reminder that the campaign for them will probably revolve around mid-table.

Two years ago on the same date, Lennon struck in added time as Spurs beat Liverpool 2-1 at White Hart Lane.

Last night he pounced in the seventh minute to tap into an open goal after an electrifying burst by Bale down the left.

Bale had already been close twice. First with a free kick punched unconvincingly away by Pepe Reina and again on the break after Defoe had stolen the ball from Steven Gerrard.

Liverpool, who arrived in London unbeaten in eight Premier League games, seemed to be stunned but they responded. Hugo Lloris saved from Luis Suarez and then Jordan Henderson squandered a wonderful chance.

Tottenham's opening two-goal salvo was part of a breathless opening passage and set the pattern for a wonderfully fluent game, with the ball slicked around on a wet surface, often at great tempo.

Tottenham controlled the first half-hour but all the time looked vulnerable.

Lennon teased Stewart Downing, playing again at left back, but Glen Johnson had just as much trouble trying to patrol Bale on the opposite flank.

Liverpool gathered momentum as the interval approached. William Gallas scrambled a low cross from Downing away as Suarez lurked and Lloris saved on the turn from Enrique. Another cross, this time whipped in by Johnson on the right, was glanced away by Michael Dawson, who kept his place because Steven Caulker had fallen ill.

Gerrard and Suarez linked up on the edge of the penalty area and the England skipper called for a penalty when his route to goal was foiled by a sliding challenge from behind.

Tottenham were clinging on at this point and were fortunate when Dawson slammed a volleyed clearance into Gallas and froze as it rebounded narrowly over the bar with Lloris unable to react.

The visitors started the second half well. Suarez turned Gallas with a wonderful touch and Liverpool spread the play wide to Johnson via Gerrard but as the full back sought a target in front of goal there was no-one available. He turned back and the attack lost impetus.

Raheem Sterling, quiet in the first half, began to enjoy more possession but still there was no way past Lloris, who showed his courage and mobility with a fine smothering save at the feet of Suarez.

Bale almost added another with a free kick which dipped wide at the last second, 20 minutes from time.

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CROWD WATCH

THANKFULLY there was nothing like the vitriol in evidence at White Hart Lane which had been produced by some West Ham fans three days earlier. Liverpool supporters were noisy, although somewhat stunned by Tottenham's exhilarating start.

MATCH FACTS

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR (4-2-3-1): Lloris 7; Walker 7, Dawson 6, Gallas 6, Vertonghen 7; Sandro 6, Dembele 6 (Huddleston, 88); Lennon 7, Dempsey 6 (Sigurdsson 64min, 6), Bale 8; Defoe 7. Subs not used: Friedel, Naughton, Livermore, Townsend, Carroll. Booked: Bale.

LIVERPOOL (4-3-3): Reina 5; Johnson 5, Skrtel 5, Agger 6, Downing 5 (Assaidi, 78); Henderson 5 (Shelvey 62), Allen 5, Gerrard 6; Sterling 5, Suarez 7, Enrique 6. Subs not used: Jones, Carragher, Wisdom, Sahin, Suso.

Booked: Skrtel, Enrique. Man of the match: Gareth Bale. Referee: Phil Dowd, 6.

Attendance: 36,162.

The Daily Telegraph

Bale returns to shop window in style for Spurs

Tottenham Hotspur 2

Lennon 7, Bale 16

Liverpool 1

Bale 72og Att: 36,126

Andre Villas-Boas is yet to impose his will on Tottenham, but until he does he is fortunate to be able to rely on the brilliance of Gareth Bale.

The Welshman was irresistible at White Hart Lane last night, the spotlight tracking him as closely as the European clubs who still seek his signature in the summer. He scored once and made another for his side, brought Liverpool back into the game with an own-goal and picked up a booking for diving.

But Tottenham hung on for a second successive victory that lifts them to fifth in the league, and left the home support hailing the winger.

Liverpool were left to bemoan poor fortune and finishing in a game they controlled for long periods without reward, or the benefit of the officials' doubt.

The game brought together two clubs in search of consistent form led by men seeking to establish their credibility in the Premier League. Villas-Boas and Brendan Rodgers, young coaches long on theory but short on track-record, were on the men-mostlikely list for both Liverpool and Tottenham this summer.

Football's sliding doors could have conspired to see them in the opposite dugouts at White Hart Lane. Rodgers was among the names being considered by Daniel Levy while he pondered Harry Redknapp's future. Liverpool blinked first and hired him, but only after Villas-Boas turned down an interview at Anfield.

Both still acclimatising to new clubs, they pitched positive teams into a fixture that might provide a springboard for their season. But it was Bale who re-emphasised his huge value to Tottenham, and to a chairman braced for the inevitable offers to roll in.

It took the Welshman just seven minutes to set the tone for the game, outstripping Raheem Sterling and Steven Gerrard with a burst from the halfway line that ended with a rolled cross that Aaron Lennon sidefooted home.

It was Bale's third decisive intervention in as many minutes. The first came from a dipping free-kick from 35 yards that Pepe Reina fended away. The second was laid on by Jermain Defoe but Bale's shot rolled wide of the far post. It was hard to say which was the bigger surprise; that Defoe passed when just 18 yards from goal, or that Bale missed.

Within 10 minutes Bale made amends, his second free-kick from distance stretching Tottenham's lead after a deflection off Jordan Henderson in the wall left Reina flat-footed. Henderson will consider himself triply unfortunate, having been penalised for the free-kick when clipping Clint Dempsey's heels 30 yards from goal to give Bale the opportunity.

Two minutes earlier the Liverpool midfielder had missed his side's best chance of the half, steering wide with the goal gaping after indecision between Hugo Lloris and Kyle Walker left him with an unguarded net.

Liverpool's misfortune continued as they established a grip on the game, thanks largely to the industry of Luis Suarez.

On 36 minutes Gerrard appeared to be shoved in the back by Moussa Dembele as he bore down on Lloris. Referee Phil Dowd was unmoved but Liverpool should still have profited as the loose ball fell to Suarez. His scuffed finish lacked pace however, allowing Walker to scramble the ball off the line.

As the half ended even the deflections went Tottenham's way, with Michael Dawson's clearance ricocheting off Gallas and over the bar.

The visitors' momentum continued into the second half. They emerged with Joe Allen, previously deployed to collect the ball from Reina or the centre-halves, playing further forward. Henderson and Gerrard, suffering a chastening evening against Sandro and Dembele, were also more progressive. It produced an immediate dividend, with Suarez almost the beneficiary.

After a poor Dawson pass created a chance for Jose Enrique, Suarez wriggled in on goal on Tottenham's left and was only foiled by Lloris saving at his feet. His energy also did for Dowd, who was left sprawling when the Uruguayan accidentally barged into him. Suarez resisted the urge to brandish an imaginary card at the referee for diving.

After 72 minutes Liverpool's effort was rewarded, although Bale was once again the pivotal figure in comical fashion, with Lennon's goal-line clearance from a Gerrard header cannoning in off the Welshman's head from two yards.

The goal raised Liverpool's intensity and Suarez should have levelled for the visitors on 80 minutes. Set up by Daniel Agger, the chance fell perfectly for Suarez on the penalty spot, but he volleyed over to his disgust and general astonishment. There was time for Bale to complete his full-house of interventions in the game with a yellow card for diving. There was contact as he bore down on Agger, but Bale might have stayed on his feet. As long as he stays in this form, his manager will not care.

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'Unbelievable' Bale allows AVB to plan confident future for Spurs
 For as long as Gareth Bale plays like this, Tottenham have a good chance for the Champions League. Spurs climbed into fifth place last night after overcoming Liverpool in a thrilling game at White Hart Lane.

This was precisely what a winter Premier League match should be like. It was played under lights, surrounded by sound and with enough pace, energy and movement to warm the whole crowd.

Tottenham and Liverpool were both excellent, with a shared commitment to expansive, attacking, attractive football. The whole game felt like the final five minutes of a cup tie, with the ball hurtling from end to end all evening. Spurs can feel that the three points were justified. They now move ahead of both of Everton and Arsenal in the table.

Liverpool were probably the dominant team for the majority of the night. Their manager, Brendan Rodgers, said he was "bitterly disappointed" not to have won. They certainly had enough chances. They had Luis Suarez on characteristically brilliant form. But they did not have Bale, arguably the only man in the Premier League more explosive than Suarez and less stoppable. He was so good, in fact, that Andre Villas-Boas said that keeping him at Tottenham might not be possible for ever.

Bale was the mastermind of the 16-minute storm which won Spurs the game. He did more good work in that opening session than most wingers do in six months. It started with a swerving free-kick which Pepe Reina saved, before he flashed a shot wide from Jermain Defoe's lay-off.

The next time he had the ball he was ruthless. Taking it near the halfway line, Bale tore past Steven Gerrard and Glen Johnson, galloping untouchably towards the byline. He swung in a perfect cross to the far post where Aaron Lennon could tap the ball in.

The second goal in the 16th minute did owe something to fortune. Jordan Henderson tripped Clint Dempsey. Bale struck the 25-yard free-kick, it hit the wall and flew past Reina.

Villas-Boas must know that Bale, more than anyone else, carries his hopes of Champions League football with him, playing probably the best football of his career so far.

"He is scoring more than last season by this stage," the Spurs manager said. "It is unbelievable his physical freshness, his motivation towards playing, what he does offensively and defensively, he takes over the whole of the left wing and it is never ending."

Of course, the better Bale plays the greater the fear he will do so elsewhere, as Villas-Boas admitted. "We have no doubt he can become a top player in the future," he said. "He is onto a great career. Tottenham as a club want to keep him here as long as we can but we understand player like this will have propositions, have a market which is the nature of the game."

After Bale's burst, though, Liverpool were the better team. They started to attack with pace and width, with Suarez teasing the veteran combination of Michael Dawson and William Gallas throughout. Henderson missed a good chance, before Hugo Lloris in the Spurs goal had to save from Suarez and Jose Enrique. Liverpool might have had two penalties for tackles on Steven Gerrard and Suarez, while Suarez volleyed over a good chance to make it 2-2.

"Obviously we're bitterly disappointed having dominated the game," Rodgers said. "Our tempo and rhythm were relentless, we certainly deserved something." When Liverpool did score, the source might not have been a surprise. Daniel Agger headed at goal, Lennon cleared and it hit a team-mate and went in. For the only time of the night, Gareth Bale was powerless.



PERFECT BALE GETS HIS POINT OVER

LUIS SUAREZ ran himself into the ground but was still upstaged by Gareth Bale in a pulsating duel at White Hart Lane.

Not only did it produce one of the best games of the season but also a fabulous shoot-out between two of the best players in the Premier League this season. There was only one winner and that was Bale, who scored a goal, made another and was even responsible for an own goal.

It was not quite enough to save LIVERPOOL from defeat but Bale's virtuoso performance demanded the three points to really give Andre Villas-Boas' season lift-off. LIVERPOOL arrived in north London on the back of an eight-game unbeaten run but their failure to turn draws into wins still left them languishing mid-table.

They are clearly still finding their feet under Brendan Rodgers' leadership and the lane always poses a stern test for them as their last win at TOTTENHAM came under Rafa Benitez five seasons ago.

It is a record which clearly gave TOTTENHAM confidence, especially on the back of their resounding win over WestHam on Sunday, which has kept Villas-Boas believing they can finish in the top four. Their under-0. gave ially ing ay, y, as n Certainly, if TOTTENHAM can keep Bale playing in his current form they will take some stopping. Bale was the architect of West Ham's defeat and was too hot for LIVERPOOL to handle as he single-handedly destroyed them with his pace n s ke he feat at at ol to edly pace and power. The Welsh flier signalled his intentions early on with a swerving free-kick, which forced a fine save from Pepe Reina.

Not to be denied again, Bale set up TOTTENHAM's seventh-minute opener, tearing down the left with a run which was impossible for any LIVERPOOL defender to get near, let alone stop. Bale then sent over a low cross and Aaron Lennon used his pace to lose his marker - LIVERPOOL's makeshift left-back Stewart Downing - at the back post and the England winger fired into an empty net.

Liverpool refused to let their heads drop and should have levelled two minutes later but for an amazing miss by Jordan Henderson. Suarez, Liverpool's outstanding player yet again, began the move with a pass to Jose Enrique, who nicked the ball past Kyle Walker and into Henderson's path. Henderson was under pressure but still had a gaping goal in front of him and the PS16million flop steered his shot wide of the target with Spurs keeper Hugo Lloris stranded outside his area.

It was a major let-off for which Liverpool were punished soon afterwards and Henderson was again the villain as he conceded a free-kick 25 yards out for a foul on Clint Dempsey. Bale stepped forward and hit a fierce effort which clipped the wall and the deflection wrong-footed Reina.

That might have demoralised Liverpool and Suarez then Jose Enrique both had good shots saved by Lloris. Liverpool will wonder how they did not score in the 37th minute. Steven Gerrard was sent tumbling by Moussa Dembele's challenge and the ball broke for Suarez, who turned it goalwards but Walker was able to make a last-ditch clearance. Rodgers went crazy on the touchline but TV replays showed that referee Phil Dowd had called both decisions right.

Liverpool started the second half well but failed to threaten Lloris's goal. Similarly, Tottenham could not shut the game down either. Rodgers brought on Jonjo Shelvey to spare Henderson further embarrassment and the substitute's 72nd-minute corner caused havoc in the Spurs box. Gerrard headed goalwards, Lennon cleared off the line but the ball hit Bale's face and cannoned into the net.

It was hard on Bale and the Welsh flier was booked shortly afterwards for a dive, even though TV replays suggested he had been fouled by Daniel Agger. TOTTENHAM: Lloris 7; Walker 7, Gallas 7, Dawson 7, Vertonghen 6; Lennon 7, Sandro 6, Dembele 7, Bale 8; Dempsey 6 (Sigurdsson, 64, 6), Defoe 7. LIVERPOOL: Reina 6, Johnson 6, Agger 6, Skrtel 6, Downing 5, Allen 6, Henderson 4 (Shelvey, 63, 6), Gerrard 6, Jose Enrique 6, Sterling 6, Suarez 7. REF: Phil Dowd ATT: 36,162 TOTTENHAM v LIVERPOOL MAN OF THE MATCH GARETH BALE Stepped up a level, unplayable BALL POSSESSION 65% B 35% SHOTS ON TARGET 57 SHOTS OFF TARGET 5 SHS 7 CORNERS 12 1 OFFSIDE 10 FOULS 18 8 CARDS 21 0

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ANOTHER trip to White Hart Lane. Another painful defeat. For the sixth successive occasion, Liverpool left this corner of North London with nothing to show for their efforts. Brendan Rodgers was ultimately left to rue a dismal start as the Reds' eight-game unbeaten run in the Premier League was ended in the capital. Goals from Aaron Lennon and Gareth Bale left Liverpool with a mountain to climb but they almost scaled it with a gutsy fightback. For the final 70 minutes they outplayed Tottenham but once again it was a familiar story as they paid the price for their lack of firepower. Chances went begging and key decisions went against them as referee Phil Dowd rejected two strong appeals for a penalty. Bale's own goal gave them hope late on but they couldn't find the equaliser which their performance deserved. The sight of Spurs duo Gylfi Sigurdsson and Clint Dempsey celebrating victory only rammed home the failings in the transfer window which left the Reds so bereft of forward options. Rodgers had named an unchanged side following Sunday's goalless draw at Swansea City. Substitutes Andre Wisdom and Oussama Assaidi returned to the squad at the expense of Sebastian Coates and Joe Cole. Dealing with the pace and trickery Spurs possess in wide areas was always going to be key to the outcome but early on Liverpool were terrorised down both flanks. Inside five minutes Bale's dipping free-kick was spilled by Pepe Reina before it was hacked to safety. Spurs then broke dangerously after Steven Gerrard had lost possession in the centre with Defoe releasing Bale who dragged his shot wide of the far post. The warning was clear but the Reds failed to heed it and in the seventh minute they fell behind. Bale skipped past challenges from both Gerrard and Glen Johnson before eluding Martin Skrtel and crossing for Lennon to convert at the back post. Stewart Downing against Lennon was a painful mismatch and his lack of defensive awareness was exposed by allowing the Spurs winger to get away from him to score. Liverpool almost provided the perfect response as the ball deflected kindly into Luis Suarez's path on the edge of the box. However, Hugo Lloris denied him with a smart save low to his right. The Reds were second best in all departments but they were gifted a glorious opportunity to restore parity. As Enrique burst on to Suarez's through ball, Lloris raced out of his area and was left helpless as Kyle Walker's interception went straight to Henderson. With the net empty, the midfielder only needed to hit the target from 18 yards but under pressure he blazed horribly wide. Within seconds Henderson's and Liverpool's night went from bad to worse as Tottenham doubled their account. Henderson brought down Dempsey 25 yards out and Bale's strike deflected off the wall and left Reina beaten. At 2-0 down and with only 16 minutes gone, the Reds were on the ropes with Bale and Lennon running riot. Rodgers left his seat and moved to the touchline, barking orders in a bid to rally his troops. Whatever was said did the trick as they battled back and were unfortunate not to reduce the deficit before the break. Suarez tested Lloris from a tight angle before Enrique turned and fired at the keeper after Glen Johnson had raced into the box. Once again Enrique was lively in his advanced left-sided role and Liverpool's threat continued to grow. Nine minutes before the break the Reds carved Spurs open with Gerrard latching on to Suarez's pass. The skipper was just about to pull the trigger when he was blatantly shoved over by Mousa Dembele. It was a nailed on spot-kick but Dowd gave nothing. In the ensuing scramble, Suarez sent the loose ball bobbling goalwards but to rub salt into the wounds, Kyle Walker got back to clear off the line. Fortunate continued to elude the Reds with Michael Dawson blasting a clearance against William Gallas, which looped just over his own bar. From a position of total dominance, Spurs found themselves restricted to hitting the visitors on the counter-attack. Skrtel curtailed one dangerous break with a cynical but vital trip on Dempsey which earned him a booking. Then on the stroke of half-time Reina kept out Bale's 25-yarder. Liverpool carried on where they left off in the second half. They hassled and harried Spurs into coughing up possession with a show of desire which was applauded by those in the away end. Suarez sent Dowd crashing to the turf after an accidental collision with the rotund official. The natives got increasingly restless as the Reds produced a spell of sustained pressure but too often the final ball let them down. When Gerrard's cross did pick out Enrique at the far post the Spaniard opted to nod back across goal and a promising opening disappeared. The Reds' only real concern was of their own making after Skrtel's slack touch had been pounced on by Defoe who found Dempsey. The USA international sliced his shot well wide. Rodgers introduced Shelvey for the ineffective Henderson just past the hour mark, while Spurs replaced Dempsey with Gylfi Sigurdsson. Another swerving free-kick from Bale dipped just wide but the Reds were soon back on the offensive. A slick one-two between Johnson and Suarez ended with Enrique's shot being forced behind by Walker. From the ensuing corner from Shelvey, they pulled one back in bizarre circumstances. Agger's header was nodded goalwards by Gerrard. Lennon was on the post but hammered his clearance into the face of Bale and it flew into the net.

Bale was booked soon after for doing his finest Tom Daley impression over Daniel Agger's outstretched leg. Oussama Assaidi came on for Downing and on 80 minutes the Reds should have been level. Agger's perseverance paid off as he did brilliantly to hook the ball back across goal but Suarez volleyed over from 10 yards. A late onslaught saw Dowd ignore more pleas for a penalty after Gallas impeded Suarez but somehow Spurs held on. **TOTTENHAM (4-2-3-1):** Lloris, Walker, Dawson, Gallas, Vertonghen, Sandro, Dembele (Huddlestone 87), Lennon, Dempsey (Sigurdsson 63), Bale, Defoe. Not used: Friedel, Naughton, Livermore, Townsend, Carroll. **LIVERPOOL (4-2-3-1):** Reina, Johnson, Agger, Skrtel, Downing (Assaidi 77), Allen, Gerrard, Henderson (Shelvey 63), Enrique, Suarez, Sterling. Not used: Jones, Sahin, Carragher, Suso, Wisdom. Referee: Phil Dowd. Attendance: 36, 162. Goals: Lennon 7, Bale 15, Bale og 72. Bookings: Skrtel, Bale, Enrique. Man of the match: Daniel Agger. Outstanding display from the Reds centre-back who didn't deserve to be on the losing side. Next game: Southampton, at home in the Premier League on Saturday (3pm).



Bale stars as Spurs beat Reds
 Gareth Bale scored a stunning free-kick and set up Aaron Lennon with a wonderful solo run to bring Liverpool's eight-match unbeaten run to an end with a 2-1 win at White Hart Lane. The Welshman scored what has to be one of the most unlucky own goals in Premier League history to tarnish his evening slightly but Tottenham still managed to come away with their second successive win despite an edgy second half in north London. The win, which moves Spurs above Arsenal and Everton into fifth, did not come easily - but it did remind the club's critics that in Bale they have a man capable of winning a match almost single-handedly. Tottenham's early pressure paid off as they took the lead in style. Bale collected the ball on the half way line and breezed past four players before squaring to Lennon, who tapped home from close range. A mix-up between Hugo Lloris and Kyle Walker then almost gifted the visitors an equaliser. The Frenchman rushed out of his goal to clear Luis Suarez's through-ball - but the defender took the ball away from his goalkeeper into the path of Jordan Henderson, who blazed wide of an open goal. The Spurs fans mocked Henderson for his miss and the midfielder's evening took another turn for the worse moments later when he was harshly adjudged to have fouled Clint Dempsey 30 yards out. Bale took a five-yard run up and despatched a powerful drive which dipped and swerved over the wall, completely bamboozling Jose Reina, who could only stand and watch the ball sail in to his right. Liverpool thought they should have had a penalty in the 36th minute when Steven Gerrard went down under pressure from Mousa Dembele, but Phil Dowd waved play on. The danger was not over for Spurs though, as Michael Dawson dribbled in to the path of Suarez, whose shot was cleared off the line by Walker. In the 70th minute Bale unwittingly put Liverpool back in the game. Lennon was well-placed on the line to clear Gerrard's header, but unfortunately for Spurs, the winger's clearance cracked Bale square in the face and flew in to the home net. Jonjo Shelvey chipped just wide and Suarez thought he should have had a penalty in a nervous final few minutes, but Tottenham held on until the final whistle, which manager Andre Villas-Boas greeted with a huge double fist-pump.

Date: 28 November 2012
 Opposition: Tottenham Hotspur
 Competition: League

Times	Telegraph	Echo
Guardian	Mirror	Evening Standard
Independent	Mail	BBC

28 November
2012



94:10 Full time The match has reached full-time.
 90:00+1:14 Gylfi Sigurdsson takes a shot. Save made by Jose Reina.
 90:00+0:33 Aaron Lennon takes the direct free kick.
 90:00+0:33 Booking Sanchez Jose Enrique is shown a yellow card for unsporting behaviour.
 90:00+0:17 Free kick awarded for a foul by Sanchez Jose Enrique on Aaron Lennon.
 88:37 Raheem Sterling concedes a free kick for a foul on Gareth Bale. Free kick taken by Hugo Lloris.
 88:00 Jermain Defoe challenges Martin Skrtel unfairly and gives away a free kick. Glen Johnson takes the free kick.
 87:05 Substitution Tom Huddlestone comes on in place of Mousa Dembele.
 86:28 Long distance effort from Sanchez Jose Enrique misses to the left of the goal.
 85:23 Outswinging corner taken right-footed by Jonjo Shelvey from the right by-line, Kyle Walker makes a clearance.
 84:50 Raheem Sterling crosses the ball, clearance by Raniere Sandro. Jonjo Shelvey takes a outswinging corner to the near post, clearance by Gareth Bale.
 84:15 Free kick awarded for a foul by Raheem Sterling on Jan Vertonghen. Jan Vertonghen takes the direct free kick.
 79:52 Shot from deep inside the area by Luis Suarez clears the bar.
 79:27 Outswinging corner taken from the right by-line by Jonjo Shelvey, Michael Dawson makes a clearance.
 79:11 The ball is delivered by Luis Suarez, clearance by Raniere Sandro.
 78:02 Jose Reina restarts play with the free kick.
 77:39 Substitution Liverpool makes a substitution, with Oussama Assaidi coming on for Stewart Downing.
 77:18 Booking Gareth Bale receives a yellow card for unsporting behaviour.
 76:09 The ball is crossed by Glen Johnson, clearance made by William Gallas.
 75:49 Luis Suarez takes a shot from long distance which goes wide right of the goal.
 73:57 Steven Gerrard challenges Jermain Defoe unfairly and gives away a free kick. Free kick taken by Jan Vertonghen.
 70:38 Sanchez Jose Enrique takes a shot. Blocked by Kyle Walker. Corner taken by Jonjo Shelvey from the right by-line.
 73:05 Corner taken by Jonjo Shelvey from the right by-line, clearance by Michael Dawson.
 71:14 The assist for the goal came from Steven Gerrard.
 71:14 Goal scored Goal - Gareth Bale - Tottenham 2 - 1 Liverpool Own goal by Gareth Bale. Tottenham 2-1 Liverpool.
 71:12 Steven Gerrard takes a shot.
 70:38 Sanchez Jose Enrique takes a shot. Kyle Walker gets a block in. Corner from right by-line taken by Steven Gerrard.
 69:52 Joe Allen takes a shot. Hugo Lloris makes a save.
 69:34 Daniel Agger takes a shot. Blocked by William Gallas.
 67:58 Jonjo Shelvey gives away a free kick for an unfair challenge on Aaron Lennon. Strike on goal comes in from Gareth Bale from the free kick.
 66:30 Gareth Bale fouled by Glen Johnson, the ref awards a free kick. Gareth Bale delivers the ball from the free kick left-footed from left wing, Steven Gerrard manages to make a clearance.
 66:04 Jonjo Shelvey challenges Gylfi Sigurdsson unfairly and gives away a free kick. Kyle Walker takes the free kick.
 64:05 Kyle Walker fouled by Sanchez Jose Enrique, the ref awards a free kick. Hugo Lloris takes the direct free kick.
 62:42 Substitution Clint Dempsey leaves the field to be replaced by Gylfi Sigurdsson.
 62:42 Substitution Jonjo Shelvey is brought on as a substitute for Jordan Henderson.
 62:00 Clint Dempsey gives away a free kick for an unfair challenge on Glen Johnson. Jose Reina restarts play with the free kick.
 60:51 Joe Allen gives away a free kick for an unfair challenge on Clint Dempsey. Clint Dempsey produces a strike on goal direct from the free kick.
 57:52 Jan Vertonghen fouled by Raheem Sterling, the ref awards a free kick. Direct free kick taken by Hugo Lloris.
 56:25 Unfair challenge on Joe Allen by Clint Dempsey results in a free kick. Free kick taken by Jose Reina.
 55:58 Handball decision goes against Jordan Henderson. Free kick taken by William Gallas.
 55:38 Clint Dempsey takes a shot. Save by Jose Reina.
 55:11 The official flags Luis Suarez offside. Indirect free kick taken by Hugo Lloris.
 53:37 Clint Dempsey has an effort from just inside the box that misses to the left of the target.
 52:10 Inswinging corner taken right-footed by Steven Gerrard, Hugo Lloris makes a save.
 51:11 The ball is swung over by Martin Skrtel, clearance by William Gallas.
 50:42 Corner taken by Steven Gerrard played to the near post, Gareth Bale makes a clearance.
 50:31 Glen Johnson sends in a cross, Michael Dawson makes a clearance.
 46:59 Raheem Sterling sends in a cross, clearance by Michael Dawson.
 45:01 The referee blows his whistle to start the second half.
 45:00+1:18 Half time The ref blows to signal half-time.
 45:00+0:04 Jordan Henderson gives away a free kick for an unfair challenge on Raniere Sandro. Direct free kick taken by Michael Dawson.
 44:33 Unfair challenge on Luis Suarez by William Gallas results in a free kick. Direct free kick taken by Joe Allen.
 44:16 Gareth Bale takes a shot. Save by Jose Reina.
 43:35 Shot from outside the area by Kyle Walker misses to the left of the target.
 42:14 Inswinging corner taken by Steven Gerrard from the left by-line, save by Hugo Lloris.

42:00 A cross is delivered by Stewart Downing, clearance by Michael Dawson.
 40:58 Shot from long distance by Jan Vertonghen goes wide of the left-hand upright.
 40:12 The ball is delivered by Aaron Lennon, clearance by Joe Allen.
 37:28 Direct free kick taken by Jan Vertonghen.
 37:28 Booking Martin Skrtel is shown a yellow card.
 37:27 Martin Skrtel gives away a free kick for an unfair challenge on Clint Dempsey.
 36:30 Inswinging corner taken by Steven Gerrard. Martin Skrtel takes a shot. Blocked by Michael Dawson.
 36:12 Luis Suarez takes a shot. Michael Dawson gets a block in.
 35:30 Luis Suarez takes a shot. Clearance made by Kyle Walker.
 34:54 Stewart Downing produces a cross, William Gallas makes a clearance.
 34:32 Glen Johnson delivers the ball, clearance by Michael Dawson.
 33:08 The referee blows for offside against Raheem Sterling. Free kick taken by Hugo Lloris.
 32:33 Sanchez Jose Enrique takes a shot. Save made by Hugo Lloris.
 26:27 Luis Suarez takes a shot. Save made by Hugo Lloris.
 26:02 The ball is delivered by Stewart Downing, clearance made by William Gallas.
 24:26 The ball is delivered by Jan Vertonghen, clearance by Martin Skrtel.
 20:58 Mousa Dembele has an effort at goal from just outside the box which goes wide of the left-hand post.
 20:20 Shot from just outside the box by Jermain Defoe misses to the left of the goal.
 17:29 Outswinging corner taken right-footed by Steven Gerrard from the right by-line to the near post, Gareth Bale manages to make a clearance.
 16:45 Raniere Sandro is penalised for handball and concedes a free kick. Stewart Downing restarts play with the free kick.
 15:12 Assist on the goal came from Clint Dempsey.
 15:12 Goal scored Goal - Gareth Bale - Tottenham 2 - 0 Liverpool Gareth Bale hits the back of the net with a goal direct from the free kick from outside the area low into the middle of the goal. Tottenham 2-0 Liverpool.
 14:11 Jordan Henderson concedes a free kick for a foul on Clint Dempsey.
 13:29 Jordan Henderson has an effort at goal from just inside the box that misses to the right of the goal.
 9:49 Corner from the left by-line taken by Steven Gerrard, clearance made by William Gallas. The assistant referee flags for offside against Martin Skrtel. Direct free kick taken by Hugo Lloris.
 9:12 Stewart Downing produces a cross, clearance by Kyle Walker. Corner taken by Steven Gerrard, Raniere Sandro makes a clearance.
 8:27 Luis Suarez takes a shot. Save made by Hugo Lloris.
 6:37 Assist by Gareth Bale.
 6:37 Goal scored Goal - Aaron Lennon - Tottenham 1 - 0 Liverpool Aaron Lennon finds the net with a goal from inside the six-yard box to the bottom right corner of the goal. Tottenham 1-0 Liverpool.
 5:11 Gareth Bale produces a left-footed shot from deep inside the penalty box which goes wide of the right-hand upright.
 4:36 Gareth Bale takes the outswinging corner, Stewart Downing makes a clearance.
 3:50 Foul by Joe Allen on Gareth Bale, free kick awarded. Strike on goal comes in from Gareth Bale from the free kick, save by Jose Reina.
 0:00 The referee gets the match started.