THE TIMES

Downing stakes late claim for a stay of execution

Liverpool Skrtel 8, Gerrard 36, Downing 51, Suarez 90+2 4 Fulham 0 Referee M Clattenburg Attendance 44,570 With his 83rd shot in 18 months, Stewart Downing finally scored a Premier League goal for Liverpooland also produced his first league assist since leaving Aston Villa. Downing is beginning to offer compelling evidence of why he should stay - even if the statistical evidence provides an equally strong case for this overdue showcasing of his talent being too little, too late.

Along with Steven Gerrard, the England winger was at the heart of Liverpool's most impressive performance and biggest victory of Brendan Rodgers's tenure. His individual display was of such a high standard that it caused his manager to admit that he could still change his mind about Downing's future and allow him to stay "if he continues to perform like that".

On the evidence of the past year and a half, that remains a big if and the question needing to be asked is whether Downing is really emerging from a lengthy stupor and ready to show the quality that promptedLiverpool to pay [pounds sterling]20 million for him, or if this is just a last hurrah from an individual of fragile confidence who is suddenly playing without pressure.

Even Downing himself readily admits that being told by Rodgers that he can leave next month has given him a different outlook. "It was a kick up the arse," he said. "I had nothing to lose.

"I was a bit surprised, yes. He was pleased with me at the start but then things changed very quickly and I was told I could go. All a footballer can do in that situation is try to change the manager's mind.

"If it was a gee-up for me to tell me I could go, maybe it has worked because the performances are coming now and hopefully it continues. I am pleased it has come together because I have worked hard to get to a club like this and I don't want to leave in a hurry."

Downing could not have asked for more compliant opponents than Fulham as he set about trying to salvage hisLiverpool career. They took supineness to a new level, allowing Liverpool to dominate them without fear of a reaction.

All four Liverpool goals were of the kind that drive managers to distraction. When Martin Skrtel opened the scoring with a rasping volley, the defender had been left unmarked from a Gerrard corner. Gerrard's goal shortly after came as the Liverpool captain coasted beyond Fulham's dawdling defence before producing a crisp finish that gave Downing his first assist.

Downing struck Liverpool's third in the second half, drifting inside John Arne Riise far too easily then beating Mark Schwarzer at his near post, and the scoring was completed by Luis Suarez, who struck from close range after Fulham had once again gone asleep at a corner.

"I want to forget this defeat as quickly as possible," Martin Jol, the Fulham manager, said. No wonder.

Not that Fulham's indolence should take anything away from a Liverpool side who responded to defeat by Aston Villa in their previous fixture in fine style.

Whether Downing is to remain a part of team who, on this evidence, appear ready to improve is still open to question. But his resurgence means that, if nothing else, he has given Rodgers ample reason to consider changing his mind.

Rodgers backs Gerrard with contract offer tony barrett Brendan Rodgers is ready to offer Steven Gerrard a new contract after rubbishing suggestions that the Liverpool captain is a diminishing force in English football.

Gerrard scored only his second Premier League goal of the season in Liverpool's 4-0 routing of Fulham on Saturday, producing a performance that prompted his manager to hail the midfielder's ongoing influence and round on his critics. More significant than the rhetoric, though, was Rodgers's commitment to ensure that the 32-year-old extends his Liverpool career with a vow to offer Gerrard an extension on his present deal, which has 18 months to run.

"This is a guy who has led his life right as a football player and that allows you to play well into your thirties," Rodgers said. "Absolutely I would want him to stay beyond his current contract and extend it - there is absolutely no question about that.

"He has been an inspirational captain for us, he has been a huge figure in the development of this team. We are improving, we are growing, and he has influenced that. He is vital to us, and I recognise that. I know what he has left on his contract, but I would want him to go beyond that.

"What I would say with Steven is he has a real hunger to succeed. He may be 32 years of age, but he's still got so much left. He applies himself right, he eats well, he recovers well, he works well, he does everything right."

Gerrard and Liverpool are preparing for the end of his playing days, when he will become an ambassador for the club who he has served with such distinction.

Rodgers, though, bristles at claims that Gerrard's influence is already on the wane and gave short shrift to suggestions that his return of only two goals so far this season is evidence of deterioration.

"I think in fairness to Steven, the run he made for the goal, he's been doing that an awful lot this season but the ball just was never arriving there for him," the Liverpool manager said. "He's been doing his job, and he's been busting his gut to make the runs as usual and his influence on the team has been as outstanding as ever.

"I thought you saw that against Fulham because the ball was arriving there for him. He was at the top of his game today. The mixture of his short passing and long passing was perfect, and he got his goal too. But his influence on the pressure we applied on Fulham was vital. I have no qualms about him whatsoever - you look at his condition in this game and it was outstanding."

Daniel Sturridge took a step closer to becoming a Liverpool player yesterday when he underwent a medical on Merseyside before a proposed [pounds sterling]12 million transfer from Chelsea. The forward is expected to complete the move when the transfer window opens on January 1.

ratings Liverpool (4-2-3-1): P Reina 7 - G Johnson 7, M Skrtel 8, D Agger 7, J Enrique 6 - Lucas 7 (sub: J Carragher, 83min), S Gerrard 8 - S Downing 9, J Shelvey 6 (sub: J Allen, 74), Suso 6 (sub: R Sterling, 71) - L Suarez 7. Substitutes not used: B Jones, N Sahin, J Henderson, A Wisdom. Booked: Johnson. Fulham (4-2-3-1): M Schwarzer 5 - S Riether 4, B Hangeland 5, A Hughes 4, J Riise 4 - C Baird 4, K Richardson 4 (sub: K Frei, 54 4) - A Dejagah 4, G Karagounis 5, A Kacaniklic 4 (sub: H Rodallega, 46 5) - D Berbatov 5. Substitutes not used: D Stockdale, P Senderos, P Kasami, M Briggs, M Tavares. Booked: Dejagah, Karagounis.

theguardian

Fear of Liverpool axe spurred me on, says Stewart Downing

Even a £20m England international with 34 caps needs a clear sense of direction in his game. Steven Gerrard's blindside run showed Stewart Downing where to deliver his first Premier League assist for Liverpool. The basic errors that still litter John Arne Riise's defending presented the way to his first league goal since leaving Aston Villa 17 months ago. And being informed his Liverpool career was in effect ending in January may, just may, have rescued it.

Downing was the stand-out player of an exemplary Liverpool performance against a sorry Fulham team – with the exception of Dimitar Berbatov – that are destined for a fraught struggle for survival. The calibre of the opposition should not detract from Downing's recovery at Anfield, however. He was Liverpool's best player in the preceding defeat by Villa, while out of position at left-back, and there has been improvement in each of his seven starts in the last eight games. The reason? As the 28-year-old admits with brutal honesty, he had to attract a new club.

As an expensive recruit under Kenny Dalglish, and one who concedes he has lacked consistency since the move from Villa, Downing's face and salary has not appeared to fit with Brendan Rodgers's designs for Anfield. The Liverpool manager told the midfielder to look elsewhere in January if he could not cement a place in a team short on options and experience. "If he keeps playing like that he is going nowhere," was Rodgers's position on Saturday.

Downing said: "After our conversation I just thought: 'I have to go for it.' I had nothing to lose. It looked as though I would be on my way in January so basically I had to play well to get a new club. It seems to be coming together now and I am pleased. It has been hard work at times but you have got to keep persevering, stay strong, and I got my reward against Fulham.

"Being told I could go was a kick up the arse. The moment that happens you are playing for a new club and looking for a move, while trying to play well at the same time. It seems to have gone well but I have never wanted to leave Liverpool. But it was out of my hands. The only thing I could do was play well and try and make the manager change his mind."

The England midfielder only heard of Rodgers's reappraisal as he was walking out of Anfield on Saturday night. "If he wants me to stay now that just shows how quickly things can change in football," said Downing, with an element of surprise that was surpassed when Rodgers initially announced he could leave.

Downing said: "The manager was pleased with me at the start but then things changed very quickly and I was told I could go. I don't know who makes that decision but one minute I was told I was doing well and the next I was told I could go, so it was a bit confusing.

"It was confusing that I was in the team and then I was told I could leave but all a footballer can do in that situation is try to change the manager's mind. If it was a gee-up for me to tell me I could go, if it was meant to be a kick up the arse, then maybe it has worked because the performances are coming now and hopefully it continues.

"I want to stay. I never wanted to leave but obviously I was out of the team, I was frustrated as a result of that, and in that situation you have to look at something if it crops up. The only thing I can do is play well and make him keep me here. I am pleased it has come together because I have worked hard to get to a club like this and I don't want to leave in a hurry."

Liverpool were in a rush to remedy mistakes against Villa too. A dominant start on this occasion produced an early goal as Martin Skrtel converted Gerrard's corner with a finish unusually composed for a central defender. The breakthrough was not the only contrast with the Villa defeat as Fulham's makeshift central midfield gave Gerrard licence to control the flow and their lack of conviction once behind, and lack of quality, was marked. Gerrard ended the contest with a low finish from Downing's exquisite pass before, with Anfield expectant, the winger was shown on to his stronger foot by Riise and beat Mark Schwarzer convincingly.

Fulham would have been flattered by 3-0. In stoppage time Luis Suárez converted José Enrique's cut-back from the byline to provide a more accurate reflection of Liverpool's superiority.

Man of the match Stewart Downing (Liverpool)

Compiled by Graeme Riley

Date: 22 December 2012
Opposition: Fulham
Competition: League

Mail	Mirror	Sunday Times	Sun Telegraph	Independent
	Echo	Observer	Times	Telegraph
	BBC	Sun Independent	Guardian	Evening Standard

22 DECEMBER 2012

The Mail

Downing scores at last but it may not be enough to keep him

Stewart Downing has not been the most rewarding player for Liverpool since his £20million move from Aston Villa in 2011, not in terms of goals at least.
He changed that on Saturday night, when he scored for the first time in a Liverpool shirt in the Premier League, set up a second goal and came close on several other occasions.
And yet for all that, for all that he had scored his first league goal since May 2011 — when he was on the score sheet for Aston Villa against Liverpool — his Anfield future is in doubt and he might still want to leave next month.
After a victory in which Martin Skrtel, Steven Gerrard and Luis Suarez also scored and, on a day when Daniel Agger produced one of the misses of the season, both Downing and his manager, Brendan Rodgers, acknowledged Downing might leave.
'A few weeks ago, we had an honest conversation about where he was at,' said Rodgers, adding that Downing, at 28 and an established England international, might reasonably want guarantees of first-team football.
'He's a quality player, he's a good guy,' said Rodgers. 'If he keeps performing like that, he won't need to go anywhere.' The 'if' was possibly the most crucial part of that sentence.
Downing himself said: 'It's out of my hands. That's up to the club in January.'
He added that with results like this one, however, there is a renewed hope within the squad that a top-four finish is still possible. 'The belief is there,' he said, 'if we can add a few players in January and kick on.'
One certain arrival is Daniel Sturridge in a £12m move from Chelsea. The 23-year-old striker is expected at Anfield today for a medical.
Liverpool are eighth in the Premier League table this morning, and if that is not quite winter wonderland, it will certainly help to bring a merry Christmas to the red part of Merseyside. On Saturday Liverpool dominated a match in which Fulham were as miserable as the weather, and it did not stop raining — except chances on the visitors' goal.
'We've performed as well as that at other times without the goals but today was outstanding,' Rodgers said. 'The quality of the football and goals was superb.'
His counterpart, Martin Jol, said: 'The problem was in midfield where we were missing key players... it wasn't good enough.'
Rodgers tweaked the starting XI which lost 3-1 to Aston Villa last weekend, with Jose Enrique and Suso replacing Joe Allen and Raheem Sterling, fresh from signing a new five-year contract. Liverpool were ahead inside eight minutes after Skrtel met Gerrard's corner with a volley of superb technique that powered into the right-hand side of the goal.
Downing, who came close to doubling the lead but blasted just wide, was increasingly troublesome from that right flank, cutting in to switch play onto his left foot.
Agger's howler of a miss came in the 25th minute. Set up by Gerrard, via Suarez, he contrived to smash the ball over the bar from inside three yards.
Downing and Gerrard combined for the second, Downing utterly bamboozling the Fulham defence with a glance one way then a beautifully weighted pass inside to Gerrard. The captain clipped the ball in.
Fulham looked precisely like a team who had won just once in nine matches, and just once in 10 away from home. Jol made one change at half-time, replacing Kacaniklic with Hugo Rodallega, but the momentum stayed with Liverpool.
Within six minutes, Gerrard and Downing combined again to increase Liverpool's lead. Gerrard passed out wide and Downing collected, turned inside and unleashed another screamer.
Still the home side kept coming, with Suarez drawing defenders towards him, in turn making space for Jonjo Shelvey to run, receive the ball and have an attempt on goal from 18 yards. The shot was deflected for a corner, which came to nothing.
Downing, yet again, then seized the initiative and the attention with another rocket shot, this one flying off his left boot just past the top left upright as he faced goal.
Suarez put the icing on the cake in injury time as Liverpool scored four times at Anfield for the first time this season.
Liverpool: Reina, Johnson, Skrtel, Agger, Jose Enrique, Gerrard, Lucas, Shelvey, Fernandez Saez, Suarez, Downing.
Subs: Jones, Sahin, Henderson, Carragher, Allen, Sterling, Wisdom.
Booked: Glen Johnson.
Goals: Skrtel 8, Gerrard 36, Downing 51, Suarez 90.
Fulham: Schwarzer, Riether, Hangeland, Hughes, Riise, Kacaniklic, Karagounis, Baird, Richardson, Dejagah, Berbatov.
Subs: Stockdale, Senderos, Kasami, Briggs, Rodallega, Frei, Tavares.
Booked: Karagounis, Dejagah.
Att: 44,570.
Ref: Mark Clattenburg (Tyne & Wear)

The Daily Telegraph

Rodgers wants Gerrard to sign extended deal

Liverpool 4
Skrtel 8, Gerrard 36, Downing 51, Suarez 90
Fulham 0
Att: 44,570
Liverpool intend to open contract talks with Steven Gerrard after Brendan Rodgers reiterated the enduring importance of his captain in reviving the club.
Gerrard has 16 months of his current deal left, and Rodgers is keen to remove any doubts that the England captain can play on for much longer at Anfield.
The 32 year-old has a guarantee of an ambassadorial role at the club when he ends his playing career, but there is an expectation that he will play on for several more years, something he seems well capable of judging by an exceptional performance in this victory on Saturday.
With Gerrard's deal ending after the World Cup in 2014, it is essential that Liverpool extend his contract. "He is vital to us, and I recognise that," Rodgers said. "I know he has 16 months left on his contract, but I would want him to go beyond that for this club and this team.
"This is a guy who has led his life right as a football player and that allows you to play well into your 30s. Absolutely I would want him to stay beyond his current contract and extend it - no question about that.
"He has been an inspirational captain for us, he has been a huge figure in the development of this team. We are improving, we are growing, and he has influenced that."
The Liverpool hierarchy is cautious about handing out deals to players in their 30s, with Gerrard's most recent contract, signed a year ago, amounting to just a one-year extension.
Jamie Carragher's contract ends at the end of the season, although the lack of negotiations on his future has been mutually agreed until the player makes a firm decision on his intentions and the club informs him what role, if any, they see for him.
Gerrard showed against Fulham that he can still be the dynamic presence he has always been. "You look at his stats this season and he is right up there as one of the most influential midfielders in the Premier League," Rodgers said.
Liverpool, meanwhile, are on the verge of confirming the signing of Daniel Sturridge from Chelsea for [pounds sterling]12million. Sturridge passed a medical on Merseyside yesterday after negotiations were resolved over the weekend. Liverpool hope to announce his arrival soon after the transfer window opens on Jan 1.
He could be one of several comings and goings, but Stewart Downing is hoping that he has done enough to save his Anfield career after learning from the "kick up the backside" he received from Rodgers.
Downing's ability has never been doubted - the list of managers who have raved about how good he is in training is long - but it is the ability to take this on to the pitch consistently that has raised questions about a fragile character. The Downing gags at Anfield are as predictable as those in festive crackers and there were mild chuckles as he claimed his first assist of the season with a defence-splitting pass to Gerrard and similar mirth when he slammed in his first league goal for the club early in the second half.
In his defence, these statistics would not be so damning if Liverpool had taken the chances Downing created last season and he had not developed an apparent infatuation with the woodwork. Nevertheless, a [pounds sterling]20million outlay 18 months ago ranks among the most excessive of a profligate era, so after launching a rocket of his own with his left-foot screamer, it was heartening to hear Downing in similarly robust form off the pitch minutes after the final whistle.
"The manager was pleased with me at the start but then things changed very quickly," Downing said. "I don't know who makes that decision but one minute I was told I was doing well and the next I was told I could go, so it was a bit confusing. If it was meant to be a kick up the backside, then maybe it has worked. I have worked hard to get to a club like this and I don't want to leave in a hurry."
Rodgers acknowledged the possibility of an about-turn, although he will also tell the player a standard has been set. Downing needs to produce this on a weekly rather than occasional basis.
The same applies to his team. After the most worrying spectacle of Rodgers's Liverpool reign a week ago when they lost at home to Aston Villa, this was the most reassuring. Gerrard was at his dynamic best, and Luis Suarez was relentless until he finally scored in the closing stages.
Fulham were abysmal, but worse teams have taken points here in the past 18 months. Liverpool are now eighth. They will be treating fans for vertigo soon.

Compiled by Graeme Riley

Date: 22 December 2012
Opposition: Fulham
Competition: League

Mail	Mirror	Sunday Times	Sun Telegraph	Independent
	Echo	Observer	Times	Telegraph
	BBC	Sun Independent	Guardian	Evening Standard

22 DECEMBER 2012

THE INDEPENDENT

Gerrard is the constant factor for Liverpool

Liverpool went into their 4-0 weekend mauling of a dreadful Fulham with two unwanted records hanging over them: the 22 points they had accumulated was as bad as they have been in the top flight at this stage of a season and their five wins were the fewest picked up since 1964.

It may have been a trying first half to the campaign for the Reds but one fact always remained constant - Steven Gerrard, the leader of men, stands tall and drives his team on. That is why his manager, Brendan Rodgers, says it is "vital" that the captain pens a new contract at the club before his current one runs out at the end of next season.

Would the club like him to sign again? "Oh, aye. There is no question about that," Rodgers replied. "Steven has a real hunger to succeed. He is 32 years of age, but still has so much left. He applies himself right, he eats well, rests well and recovers well. This is a guy who has led his life focused on being a football player. When you've done that you can play well into your thirties."

Gerrard has been present for every minute of this Premier League season - a credit to him, says the manager - but his performances have come in for questioning, mainly by those fixated on names on the score sheet. Before scoring in the defeat against Aston Villa last week, the midfielder had found the net only once. The second goal against Fulham, to kill the fixture as a contest, was crucial and wonderfully executed, and it is conceivable he could now hit a purple patch.

"I find that if he gets criticism up until now it is absolutely incredible. From seeing him every day working and seeing him playing games, he might not be getting the goals he got five or six years ago but that doesn't stop your influence on the game," Rodgers said. "His influence, for me, especially once he's starting to understand what I'm looking for, has been absolutely first-class.

"In fairness to Steven, the run he made for the goal - I think he has been doing that a lot this season. The ball has never been in there for him."

The player himself, whose commitment - but for a fleeting Roman Abramovich-fuelled moment - has never waned, has already stated that he wants to remain at Anfield. There is a belief that there are many stellar years still to come.

LIVERPOOL 4
FULHAM O

Goals: Liverpool Skrtel 8, Gerrard 36, Downing 51, Suarez 90.
Subs: Liverpool Sterling (Suso, 71), Allen (Shelvey, 74), Carragher (Lucas, 83). Fulham Rodallega 7 (Kacaniklic, h-t), Frei 6 (Richardson, 54).
Booked:Liverpool Johnson. Fulham Dejagah, Karagounis. Man of the match Downing. Match rating 7/10. Possession:Liverpool 57% Fulham 43%. Attempts on target: Liverpool 12 Fulham 6. Referee M Clattenburg (Co Durham). Att 44,570.

DAILY Mirror

FUL OF PROMISE

BY the end of this rain-soaked game Brendan Rodgers looked more drowned cat than the Cheshire variety.

Yet if the outside required windscreen wipers, on the inside there was undoubtedly a beaming smile from theLiverpool boss after witnessing the most comfortable win of his Anfield reign so far.

But it was not the margin of victory, more the manner of this ruthless dismissal of Fulham.

Rodgers is a realist about his Liverpool project. He knows there will be many false starts.

Yet this performance screamed promise, and for the Reds boss it was encouraging because it offered a fleeting glimpse of the brighter future he envisages.

"There were aspects of the game where I saw everything I want my team to be and that was the most encouraging aspect of what was an outstanding response to last week's defeat," he said.

"What you saw was both sides of our game coming together, both were brilliant. I've always said if we press well, we pass well, and our pressing was at a real high level, which allowed us to pass around Fulham."

Liverpool were helped by a performance from Fulham as wet as the weather and by an early goal that has been so elusive for much of the season. Martin Skrtel's volley on eight minutes from Steven Gerrard's corner calmed nerves and allowed the hosts to dictate the tempo.

The second goal nine minutes before the break sealed the win and also showed the progression of Stewart Downing from inevitable January departee to a player who may yet have an Anfield future.

His was a fine ball for Gerrard to glide irresistibly on to, for a sublime finish, and the winger's goal was equally brilliant when he cut inside an ice-skating John Arne Riise on 51 minutes to steer an excellent left-foot shot into the corner.

Yet perhaps the biggest reason for Rodger's optimism was the performance of Gerrard.

He believes Liverpool are growing with every game and he knows why, even if his skipper has suffered criticism at times this season.

"Steven has been an inspirational captain for us, a huge figure in the development of this team. We are growing and he's influenced that," Rodgers added.

"I find it incredible he has had any criticism at all - it is ridiculous.

"He may not get the goals he did five or six years ago, but that doesn't stop you influencing the game, and his influence for me - especially once he started to understand what I'm looking for - has been top class.

"The run he made for the goal, he's been doing that an awful lot this season, but the ball just was never arriving there for him.

"You look at his stats this season and he's right up there as one of the most influential midfielders in the Premier League - he's at the top in chances created, passing, possession, all the important things."

Luis Suarez made it 4-0 in stoppage time and Fulham manager Martin Jol admitted afterwards his side have a huge problem on the road.

But he refuses to hit the panic button - yet. "We are close to getting 25 points in the first half of the season. If we do the same in the second half, we will be fine. We have to be better than today, though."

Compiled by Graeme Riley

Date: 22 December 2012
Opposition: Fulham
Competition: League

Mail	Mirror	Sunday Times	Sun Telegraph	Independent
	Echo	Observer	Times	Telegraph
	BBC	Sun Independent	Guardian	Evening Standard

22 DECEMBER 2012

LIVERPOOL ECHO

CHRISTMAS came early at Anfield as Liverpool FC served up a veritable feast.

Brendan Rodgers' side delivered the perfect response to the chastening defeat at the hands of Aston Villa as Fulham were pummelled into submission.

Not since Birmingham City were thrashed 5-0 back in April 2011 have the Reds enjoyed such an emphatic league triumph.

It didn't flatter them.

In fact the margin of victory should have been even greater on a night when they were overwhelmingly dominant in all departments.

This was the ideal way to kick-off the festive schedule which could belatedly launch Liverpool's challenge for a Champions League spot.

Now up to eighth place and within five points of the top four, the opportunity is there if they can find some consistency.

Back-to-back away trips to Stoke City and Queens Park Rangers over the coming week will provide tests of character as much as ability.

With Daniel Sturridge on the brink of a £12million move to Anfield from Chelsea and Blackpool's Tom Ince expected to follow him, attacking reinforcements for 2013 are on the way.

Last season Liverpool's league campaign tailed off alarmingly in the second half of the season. This time around they should only get stronger.

What will have delighted Rodgers was the fact that the Reds produced the complete team performance. Luis Suarez had the final word as his 11th Premier League goal of the season matched his tally for the whole of last season, but this was no one-man show with four different scorers, a clean sheet and a wealth of positives.

It should be put into context as Fulham wavered between woeful and abject throughout. But the reality is the Cottagers were never allowed to get into their stride as Liverpool started at a pace they simply couldn't live with.

When the Reds were in possession the passing was slick and the movement intelligent. When the hosts didn't have the ball they worked tirelessly as they pressed to win it back.

This is the time of year when miracles happen and Stewart Downing certainly appears to have benefited from some divine intervention.

Just weeks ago the £20million man was destined for the Anfield scrapheap after being informed by Rodgers that he could leave in January.

Downing had gone three months without starting a league game, his hunger for the fight had been publicly questioned by the manager and he had found himself turned into a makeshift left-back. However, finally, some 17 months after his arrival, he served up a display worthy of that inflated price tag.

In his 45th Premier League appearance for the Reds there was not only a first assist but a first goal. His sweetly-struck piledriver past Mark Schwarzer in front of the Kop ended a top-flight drought stretching back to the winner he scored for Aston Villa against Liverpool in May 2011.

This wasn't a total bolt out of the blue. Downing was making his fifth league start in the past six matches and recently there had been signs of significant improvement.

Being told he could be shown the door in January has stirred him into life. A weight looks to have been lifted from his shoulders.

On Saturday night he played with a confidence and a freedom far removed from the insipid displays Anfield had grown wearily accustomed to. He was demanding the ball out on the right flank, taking players on and wreaking havoc.

Standards have been set and if he continues to meet them then selling him in the transfer window would make no sense. At 28, Downing should be at the peak of his powers.

To suggest he merely needed more time than most to adjust to the pressures of life at Liverpool is too generous as he was no rookie.

There are no excuses for his under-achievement but what's important now is that he doesn't waste this unlikely shot at redemption.

Downing's contribution was eye-catching but Steven Gerrard was also hugely influential in the rout. The skipper led by example – snapping into tackles, taking charge in the centre and kick-starting wave after wave of attacks.

Rodgers' decision to rest Joe Allen changed the balance of the midfield and it paid dividends.

Against limited opposition who sit back, you don't need the defensive strengths of both Allen and Lucas Leiva. With Gerrard alongside the Brazilian and Jonjo Shelvey further forward behind Suarez, Liverpool asked so many more questions and Fulham didn't have the answers.

The Cottagers did the double over the Reds last season as they won at Anfield for the first time in their history but a repeat never looked likely.

There was a real sense of purpose about the Reds from the start and they were rewarded with the breakthrough inside eight minutes. Martin Skrtel, who had endured a torrid time against Villa a week earlier, cashed in on some horrendous marking as he brought down Gerrard's corner and lashed an unstoppable right-footer past Schwarzer.

The tone had been set and the Reds' control of proceedings never wavered. Downing and Suarez threatened before Daniel Agger somehow contrived to lift Suarez's cross over the bar from close range.

Liverpool finally doubled their tally in the 36th minute.

Downing picked out Gerrard's burst into the box with an exquisite pass and the captain provided a classy first-time finish into the far corner.

Suso and Suarez wasted chances to pile on the misery prior to the interval and there was no let-up for the visitors in the second half.

With Jose Enrique, who had become a father for the first time 24 hours earlier, flying down the left and Glen Johnson and Downing combining well on the opposite flank, hapless Fulham were over-run.

Seven minutes after the break Downing produced his party piece. John Arne Riise bizarrely showed the winger the inside and Downing took full advantage as he finished with aplomb.

The introduction of Raheem Sterling, who received a rapturous reception after penning his new five-year contract, helped the Reds maintain momentum.

Schwarzer kept the score down until he was beaten again in stoppage time when Suarez slotted home after great work from Enrique.

Anfield lapped it up as Liverpool kicked off the season of goodwill with a flourish.

London Evening Standard

Reds thrash Fulham at home

Even Stewart Downing managed to score and muster an assist. Those facts – both were the winger's first for the club in the Premier League during 45 much-maligned games – neatly encapsulate how Brendan Rodgers' philosophical insistence might just be beginning to bear fruit towards the end of a torrid calendar year at Anfield.

If it is taking Downing a long time to prove his £20m worth, reinforcements are in the offing. Daniel Sturridge is expected at Anfield to discuss the formalities of a deal in the next two days.

This is only one result, and against notoriously poor travellers, but Liverpool linked the bossing of proceedings with a renewed cutting edge that their midfield excellence has demanded for many months.

It was, however, made all too easy for them in parts, helped by an obnoxiously awful Fulham. Even so, this performance would have daunted the best of them.

Fulham were more bothered with occupying Daniel Agger than his partner Martin Skrtel from an early corner, giving the Slovak the time to set himself and lay to rest the own goal ghost that had gifted Fulham victory here in May.

The defeat by Aston Villa last week was a distant memory. "I knew we would get a reaction today, because we have a group of very honest players who are working hard every day," Rodgers said. "The pressing was outstanding and the quality of the football was brilliant."

Liverpool have been waiting for goals to match superiority for what seems an eternity, and it all came together when Downing's wonderful reverse through ball found the onrushing Steven Gerrard (pictured below, with Luis Suarez) to slide past Mark Schwarzer.

If this can become consistent in the new year, Rodgers' belief in what is being built, will be more than mere rhetoric.

Worryingly for Fulham, Martin Jol seemed to have had it sussed on the road, but they have gone backwards this season, only winning once, and need to get over the inferiority complex imposed upon them when venturing beyond SW6.

In a role reversal of the second goal, Gerrard found Downing, driving into the box to crash an effort past Schwarzer. The goalkeeper will be upset to have been beaten at his near post, as was his manager, growling and gesticulating as he turned away from the action in disgust.

"We almost played against ourselves," Jol sighed, before turning his attentions to the table: "We've still got a good cushion and should be fine."

There was even the chance for Raheem Sterling to receive a rapturous ovation when he entered for a cameo as substitute, a day after penning a five-year deal. Everything, it seems, is starting to look slightly rosier, and Suarez's late opportunism added gloss.

Downing's slick display could see the club fend off January suitors, even though he had been made available for transfer a fortnight ago. "His reaction from that moment has been outstanding. If he keeps playing like that he'll be going nowhere," Rodgers said.

The Hillsborough charity single 'He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother' is likely to be crowned Christmas No 1 later today. If Liverpool had seen off opposition properly from August, they too might have stood a chance of being towards the top of the charts.

Liverpool (4-2-3-1): Reina; Johnson, Agger, Skrtel, Enrique; Lucas (Carragher, 83), Gerrard; Suso (Sterling, 71), Shelvey (Allen, 74), Downing; Suarez

Fulham (4-4-1-1): Schwarzer; Riether, Hughes, Hangeland, Riise; Dejagah, Karagounis, Baird, Kacaniklic (Rodallega, 46); Richardson (Frei, 54); Berbatov

Referee: Mark Clattenburg

Man of the match: Suarez (Liverpool)

Match rating: 7/10

Compiled by Graeme Riley

Date: 22 December 2012
Opposition: Fulham
Competition: League

Mail	Mirror	Sunday Times	Sun Telegraph	Independent
	Echo	Observer	Times	Telegraph
	BBC	Sun Independent	Guardian	Evening Standard

22 DECEMBER 2012

THE INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

Downing finally finds his feet as Liverpool run riot

Even Stewart Downing managed to score and muster an assist. Those facts - both were the winger's first for the club in the Premier League during 45 much-maligned games - neatly encapsulate how Brendan Rodgers' philosophical insistence might just be beginning to bear fruit towards the end of a torrid calendar year at Anfield.

If it is taking Downing a long time to prove his [pounds sterling]20m worth, reinforcements are in the offing. Daniel Sturridge is expected at Anfield to discuss the formalities of a deal in the next two days.

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but Liverpool linked the bossing of proceedings with a renewed cutting edge that their midfield excellence has demanded for many months.

It was, however, made all too easy for them in parts, helped by an obnoxiously awful Fulham. Even so, this performance would have daunted the best of them. Fulham were more bothered with occupying Daniel Agger than his partner Martin Skrtel from an early corner, giving the Slovak the time to set himself and lay to rest the own goal ghost that had gifted Fulham victory here in May.

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Referee: Mark Clattenburg

Man of the match: Suarez (Liverpool) Match rating: 7/10

The Sunday Telegraph

Downing impresses as Fulham crumble

Liverpool 4
Skrtel 8, Gerrard 36, Downing 51, Suarez 90
Fulham 0
Att: 44,570

This was one of those evenings when the stars aligned for Liverpool ... and Stewart Downing finally scored in the Premier League. Miracles do happen. Well it is Christmas.

It was certainly one of Liverpool's most dazzling performances of the season as Fulham were imperiously brushed aside. And it was no coincidence that it also came with probably the best display of Liverpool'sbiggest star, Steven Gerrard, for quite some time.

Here was the Gerrard of legend: pinging passes, snapping into tackles, eating up ground - and scoring with panache. That he was aided and abetted by Downing, such a previously callow figure since his [pounds sterling]20m move to Liverpool, was the greater surprise. His goal was the first he has struck in the league for Liverpool. Not Drowning, but waving.

Downing can go in January, manager Brendan Rodgers wants him out, but surely not if he plays like this even if, in fairness, Liverpool will not often face opponents as drained of confidence and belief as Fulham who beat them twice last season.

How Liverpool have craved an early goal. How emphatically they achieved it. After Jonjo Shelvey's flick was deflected for a corner, Gerrard took the kick which evaded Daniel Agger's leap and landed at the feet of his central defensive partner, Martin Skrtel. He controlled instantly and hammered the crispest of rightfoot volleys into the net.

So often Liverpool's early dominance of matches had not reaped such a reward and then, soon after, Downing, yes Downing, almost added a second with another well-struck drive which was tipped around the post by Mark Schwarzer - even though no corner was awarded.

Nerves were settled. Fulham, on a dire sequence of results, had come to contain and then strike by stealth with Dimitar Berbatov as a lone forward. He was booed - maybe a recognition of his threat but more likely his Manchester United association - and he almost then got on the end of a near-post cross as Sascha Riether too easily beat Suso.

Berbatov was Fulham's source of hope although maybe manager Martin Jol would have been better served by being bolder and using the pace of Hugo Rodallega, too. Fulham were, otherwise, frankly shambolic - summed up by a square pass by Giorgis Karagounis to Chris Baird that was allowed to drift to Downing who was then fouled. Familiar wastefulness, though, affected Liverpool for a while when Gerrard's scissor kick of a volley rebounded to Luis Suarez who crossed low for Agger to somehow sky over the crossbar.

The game opened up. Pepe Reina, with a touch of the unorthodox, kicked out Kieran Richardson's low shot while Riether, just, toe-poked Suarez's shrewd through ball to safety as Suso ran clear. An even cuter pass, this time from Downing, did lead to a second Liverpool goal. The winger picked out Gerrard's driving run from outside the box and the captain drove the ball back across goal to beat Schwarzer.

Incredibly, according to the stats, it was the first time Gerrard had scored and assisted in the league in the same game since May 2009 and he was a more dynamic presence than of late.

Fulham were in danger, if it hadn't already happened, of being overwhelmed and Suarez was left pulling his shirt up to his face in frustration as the ball broke to him - only for the striker to drag a low shot wide. Suarez got another sight of goal - this time though, after controlling Glen Johnson's threaded pass, he was pushed wide and his eventual shot was easily saved.

Home form has been tough for Liverpool this campaign and Rodgers decided to follow the announcement of Raheem Sterling's new contract by resting him, along with another of his young tyros, Joe Allen. Anfield has not been a fortress with league victories garnered previously against sides in the bottom four. Fulham are not in that predicament but on this display they should be looking over their shoulder. The dip is becoming a perilous lurch. The deficit should have been even greater soon into the second-half when Downing's cross was deflected to Suarez. Through on goal he, inexplicably, poked the ball wide. As Fulham's resistance continued to crumble, that third goal came - and Downing claimed it.

The brio with which Downing took his goal was all the more stunning as it was so unfamiliar. He collected possession on the right, ran at John Arne Riise and was allowed to come back inside on his left-foot and strike a shot that was too powerful for Schwarzer at the near post.

Fulham were beaten but Rodallega, a half-time replacement, went close when he rose to meet a cross only for the ball to deflect off his head.

Despite Liverpool's dominance it served as a warning, although at least now Fulham were showing some attacking intent and Berbatov had some support. Soon after, Reina had to push out a low shot from Ashkan Dejagah.

Liverpool steadied and normal service resumed with Shelvey and then Downing going close from distance before Schwarzer blocked Gerrard's close-range side-foot with his legs before Suarez bundled his way clear to also be denied, just about. Reina then parried two Berbatov efforts but the game was long gone.

Compiled by Graeme Riley

Date: 22 December 2012
Opposition: Fulham
Competition: League

Mail	Mirror	Sunday Times	Sun Telegraph	Independent
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22 DECEMBER 2012

THE SUNDAY TIMES

Liverpool crush woeful Fulham

LIVERPOOL 4
Skrtel 8, Gerrard 36, Downing 51, Suarez 90+2
FULHAM 0

SOMETIMES, even in a period of transition, everything goes right. Last night's victory over a wretched Fulham was so comfortable, Liverpool's three points could have been handed to them snuggled inside a duvet. Utterly dominant from first to last, they were shimmering in midfield, bristling with invention in attack and unemployed in defence.

Never one to duck a challenge, in the wake of last week's defeat against Aston Villa, Brendan Rodgers dropped the struggling Joe Allen, the totem of his new regime. Similarly, Raheem Sterling's reward for signing a five-year deal was a place on the bench alongside Allen.

Jose Enrique and Suso stepped up and Rodgers utilised Lucas as the back four's Praetorian guard to face a team once again enduring a wretched season on their travels.

With Steve Sidwell suspended, Damien Duff injured and Hugo Rodallega benched, Martin Jol offered Dimitar Berbatov the responsibility of the lone striker's role. Jeered mercilessly throughout (unlike his fellow former Manchester United player Kieran Richardson), the Bulgarian had barely touched the ball by the time Liverpoolsecured their early opener.

Steven Gerrard fired in one of his trademark low trajectory corners from the right. Distracted by Daniel Agger's leap, Brede Hangeland and Aaron Hughes clattered into each other, leaving Martin Skrtel unmarked. With an unimpeachable combination of composure and venom, the Slovak lashed his first goal since August past Mark Schwarzer. With Anfield settling into a contented festive hush, Liverpool set up camp in Fulham's half.

Gerrard was having one of those evenings where he had time and space to exult, Jonjo Shelvey was an eager hod-carrier and the super-keen Suso sensed that failing to make an impression at such a turkey shoot would be one of his less wise career moves. Schwarzer's goal was peppered like a medium steak. Luis Suarez and Stewart Downing went close with long-rangers and when lamentable defending let in Suarez, Agger somehow shot over the bar from almost under it. Even Suarez chuckled at the improbability of it all. Hopelessly lightweight, Fulham did have their occasional neat moments and when Richardson ambled forwards for an optimistic punt on goal, Pepe Reina saved with his legs. Such fleeting rays of hope, though, were mere distractions. After 36 minutes, Glen Johnson played in Downing - told by Rodgers he can leave, but still a first-team choice - whose magnificent reverse pass set Gerrard free. The Liverpool captain expertly lifted the ball over Schwarzer and a Fulham comeback seemed as likely as Christmas being moved to March. An almost comically one-sided first-half could have ended with Liverpool even further out of sight, but Suso screwed wide and Suarez went for the cheeky near-post solo effort rather than finding the onrushing Shelvey.

Plenty of his team warranted an early end to their evening but Jol made just one change at half-time with Rodallega arriving to finally give Berbatov support. But two minutes in, Suarez was left unmarked only to volley wide at the back post in the six-yard box and the third soon came when Downing picked up Gerrard's lovely pass, breezed past John Arne Riise's schoolboy challenge and thumped home his first Liverpool Premier League goal.

From there, how many was the only question. Shelvey Johnson, Downing, Suarez and Gerrard went close, and they gave some reflection of the gulf between the teams in stoppage time when Suarez tapped home Enrique's cross. Star man: Steven Gerrard (Liverpool) Yellow cards: Liverpool: Johnson Fulham: Dejagah, Karagounis Referee: M Clattenburg Attendance: 44,570

Liverpool: Reina 6, Johnson 7, Skrtel 6, Agger 6, Enrique 6, Lucas 8 (Carragher 83 min), Shelvey 7 (Allen 74min), Gerrard 8, Downing 8, Suarez 6, Suso 6 (Sterling 71min)

Fulham: Schwarzer 6, Riether 4, Hughes 4, Hangeland 4, Riise 3, Dejagah 4, Karagounis 3, Baird 5, Richardson 4 (Frei 52 min, 6), Kacaniklic 4 (Rodallega h-t, 6), Berbatov 5

The Observer

Liverpool's Stewart Downing scores pick of goals in 4-0 rout of Fulham

Brendan Rodgers's improving team overpowered feeble Fulham at Anfield to ascend to eighth place in the Premier League, their goals coming from Martin Skrtel, Steven Gerrard, Luis Suárez and, most handsomely, Stewart Downing, who was back to England form.

Liverpool were in charge from the first minute to the last against bedraggled opposition, who defended in abject fashion and have won only one of their past 10 Premier League matches.

Rodgers was delighted with his players' reaction after last week's 3-1 defeat at home to Aston Villa and singled out Downing for individual praise. He revealed having "an honest conversation" with the player "a little while ago", during which he had threatened to offload him in January.

The manager said: "I pointed out that he was an England player two years ago and if he couldn't get in our team this season it was time for him to move on. Since that conversation his response has been quite outstanding. I thought he was brilliant in every aspect of his game and if he keeps playing like that he'll be going nowhere."

Fulham were dreadful. Martin Jol said: "We need more conviction" and there will be a few Cottagers more than willing to convict after this. The poverty of their performance was such that the margin would have been doubled but for some notable second-half saves by Mark Schwarzer, especially to deny Suárez.

Fulham had lost the previous weekend against QPR, and switched from 4-4-2 to 4-2-3-1, discarding a striker, Hugo Rodallega, in the process. Jol was also without Steve Sidwell and Mahamadou Diarra in midfield, and sought security by deploying Kieran Richardson and Chris Baird as a two-man screen in front of his back four.

That security lasted eight minutes. Then Gerrard's corner from the right fell nicely for Skrtel, beyond the penalty spot, to thrash it, right-footed, into the roof of the net. Downing quickly threatened to improve Liverpool's lead with a pulverising 25-yarder that Schwarzer, flying to his left, clearly saved, only for Mark Clattenburg to award a goal-kick.

Fulham tried to play their customary passing game but in the absence of Sidwell and Diarra they struggled for possession and the only surprise about the second goal was that it was delayed until the 36th minute. Then a characteristic run by Gerrard was picked out by Downing's lovely reverse pass, the England captain finishing with accurate aplomb, from right to left.

Suso, supplied by Suaréz, ought to have made it 3-0 before half-time, but screwed his shot horribly wide.

Jol introduced Rodallega at the start of the second half and reverted to 4-4-2 but Liverpool resumed where they had left off and within two minutes they should have had their third, Suárez of all people failing to score at the far post from Downing's inviting cross. No matter, Downing promptly demonstrated how such things should be done, cutting in from the right on to his left foot and letting fly at a velocity that left Schwarzer powerless to intervene.

Trailing by three with 51 minutes played, Fulham were in danger of a real hiding. Glen Johnson was too close for Schwarzer's comfort and Downing inches over from 25 yards. The outcome long since settled, Rodgers sent on Raheem Sterling to receive the applause of a crowd delighted that the precociously gifted 18-year-old had signed a five-year contract. An even bigger cheer greeted the introduction of the old warhorse Jamie Carragher. By this stage Rodgers could easily afford to play Santa Claus.

Rodallega had Pepe Reina at full stretch in added time but Liverpool had the last word, Suárez getting in on the act with a crisp finish from six yards.

Compiled by Graeme Riley

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Opposition: Fulham
Competition: League

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22 DECEMBER 2012

BBC

Liverpool's Stewart Downing put in an impressive display as the Reds overwhelmed a tame Fulham to move up to eighth in the Premier League.
Martin Skrtel controlled a Steven Gerrard corner and powered in a shot to put the home side in front.
Downing's piercing ball then set up Gerrard to drive in Liverpool's second.
Winger Downing cut inside and rifled in a shot for his first Premier League goal for the Reds, before Luis Suarez side-footed in to seal an emphatic win.
Downing claims he has been told he can leave Liverpool, but his lively display against the Cottagers suggests he wants to stay and fight for his place.
The 28-year-old helped raise Liverpool's hopes of reasserting a challenge for a top-four place as the Anfield club moved five points off the Champions League places.
Fulham had problems in midfield with Steve Sidwell, Bryan Ruiz and Mahamadou Diarra missing, but manager Martin Jol will be concerned at the meek surrender of a side which has one win in 10 top-flight outings.
Liverpool boss Brendan Rodgers said his team were determined to put right the wrongs of last week's 3-1 home defeat by Aston Villa and the Reds quickly showed the pace, movement and intensity to echo their manager's words on the pitch.
Unmarked centre-back Daniel Agger headed a driven corner over the Fulham goal and Liverpool midfielder Jonjo Shelvey had a clever flicked effort from Downing's low cross deflected wide.
Fulham had not learnt from those scares and the home side took the lead when defender Skrtel was allowed the time and space to control Gerrard's corner before thundering in a shot.
The early goal only served to increase the appetite and the Reds should have added another goal only for a lunging Agger to sidefoot over from close range after a low Suarez cross.
Fulham midfielder Kieran Richardson's swerving shot almost caught Pepe Reina out before he saved the effort with his legs but the visitors fell further behind after 36 minutes.
The much-maligned Downing provided his first assist in 45 Premier League appearances for the Reds when he slid a precise ball through the heart of the Cottagers' defence to Gerrard, who angled a shot past keeper Mark Schwarzer.
A deflected Downing cross set up Suarez for a gilt-edged chance at the far post shortly after the interval but the Uruguayan sent his six-yard shot wide.
Downing was playing in a preferred right-wing berth as opposed to the left-back spot he has sometimes had to fill and took it upon himself to add Liverpool's third as he cut inside before drilling a left-footed shot past Schwarzer.
Fulham were hugely outplayed and it was one-way traffic as Liverpool constantly threatened more goals.
Suarez bustled his was through the Cottagers' defence only to be foiled by a smothering Schwarzer save and the striker also had a well-struck free-kick tipped around the post by the 'keeper.
Reina saved a Hugo Rodallega free-kick before Suarez rounded off his side's win by converting a Jose Enrique cut-back for his 11th league goal of the season.
Fulham manager Martin Jol: "Of course you will say that Liverpool were great today, but they weren't.
"I don't think that we played well. It is disappointing, the second half was a bit better, Karim Frei showed some spirit, but it was bad defending on the third goal as we backed off.
"On the fourth goal from the corner kick it was almost too easy.
"Our intentions were to play the ball to the front three and get Berbatov into the game and support from midfield - we didn't do it."

Compiled by Graeme Riley

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BBC

90:00+3:12Full time The referee brings the game to a close.
90:00+1:33 The assist for the goal came from Sanchez Jose Enrique.
90:00+1:33Goal scored Goal - Luis Suarez - Liverpool 4 - 0 FulhamGoal scored by Luis Suarez from close in to the bottom right corner of the goal. Liverpool 4-0 Fulham.
90:00+1:09 Short corner worked by Raheem Sterling.
90:00+0:13 Free kick awarded for an unfair challenge on Ashkan Dejagah by Sanchez Jose Enrique. Hugo Rodallega has a direct shot on goal from the free kick, Jose Reina makes a save.
89:49 Corner taken right-footed by Giorgos Karagounis to the near post, Sanchez Jose Enrique manages to make a clearance.
89:28 Ashkan Dejagah has an effort at goal from outside the box which goes wide right of the goal.
87:44 Kerim Frei sends in a cross, clearance made by Joe Allen.
86:32 Raheem Sterling takes a shot. Blocked by Brede Hangeland.
86:04 Corner taken right-footed by Steven Gerrard, Hugo Rodallega manages to make a clearance.
84:44 Direct strike on goal from the free kick comes in from Luis Suarez, save made by Mark Schwarzer.
84:44Booking Giorgos Karagounis is booked.
84:39 Giorgos Karagounis challenges Raheem Sterling unfairly and gives away a free kick.
84:00 Sascha Riether delivers the ball, clearance by Martin Skrtel.
83:38 Sascha Riether crosses the ball, Daniel Agger manages to make a clearance.
81:59 John Arne Riise restarts play with the free kick.
81:59Substitution SubstitutionJamie Carragher on for Leiva Lucas.
81:59 Foul by Luis Suarez on Brede Hangeland, free kick awarded.
81:50 The ball is delivered by Kerim Frei, Martin Skrtel manages to make a clearance.
81:01 The assistant referee signals for offside against Raheem Sterling. Sascha Riether takes the indirect free kick.
80:47 Dimitar Berbatov takes a shot. Save by Jose Reina.
79:38 Dimitar Berbatov takes a shot. Save by Jose Reina.
78:45 Luis Suarez takes a shot. Save by Mark Schwarzer.
77:12 Luis Suarez sends in a cross, Steven Gerrard takes a shot. Mark Schwarzer makes a save.
77:12Booking Ashkan Dejagah receives a caution for unsporting behaviour.
77:07 Unfair challenge on Sanchez Jose Enrique by Ashkan Dejagah results in a free kick.
75:11 Martin Skrtel gives away a free kick for an unfair challenge on Hugo Rodallega. Free kick crossed right-footed by Chris Baird from left wing, Martin Skrtel makes a clearance.
73:29Substitution SubstitutionJoe Allen on for Jonjo Shelvey.
72:48 Corner taken by Stewart Downing from the right by-line, Headed effort from inside the area by Martin Skrtel misses to the left of the target.
70:12Substitution SubstitutionRaheem Sterling replaces Jesus Fernandez Saez.
70:00 Sanchez Jose Enrique produces a cross, Chris Baird manages to make a clearance.
68:49 Stewart Downing has an effort at goal from outside the box which goes wide left of the target.
67:28 Glen Johnson has an effort at goal from outside the area missing to the wide right of the goal.
65:14 A cross is delivered by Sascha Riether, clearance made by Glen Johnson.
64:51 The ball is sent over by Jesus Fernandez Saez, clearance by John Arne Riise.
61:38 Sanchez Jose Enrique fouled by Ashkan Dejagah, the ref awards a free kick. Steven Gerrard crosses the ball in from the free kick.
60:14 Ashkan Dejagah crosses the ball, save by Jose Reina.
56:51 Inswinging corner taken by Chris Baird from the left by-line, Hugo Rodallega has a headed effort at goal from close in which goes wide right of the goal.
56:02 Foul by Jonjo Shelvey on Giorgos Karagounis, free kick awarded. Chris Baird takes the direct free kick.
54:41 Short corner taken by Stewart Downing from the right by-line.
54:22 Jonjo Shelvey takes a shot. Blocked by Brede Hangeland.
52:44 John Arne Riise restarts play with the free kick.
52:44Substitution SubstitutionKerim Frei is brought on as a substitute for Kieran Richardson.
52:44Booking for Glen Johnson.
52:38 Kieran Richardson fouled by Glen Johnson, the ref awards a free kick.
50:59 Assist by Steven Gerrard.
50:59Goal scored Goal - Stewart Downing - Liverpool 3 - 0 FulhamStewart Downing finds the back of the net with a goal from the edge of the penalty area to the bottom right corner of the goal. Liverpool 3-0 Fulham.
49:48 A cross is delivered by Glen Johnson, save by Mark Schwarzer.
48:52 Sanchez Jose Enrique produces a cross, Mark Schwarzer makes a save.
48:41 Steven Gerrard takes a short corner.
48:24 Sanchez Jose Enrique delivers the ball, clearance by Brede Hangeland.
48:09 A cross is delivered by Jonjo Shelvey, Aaron Hughes makes a clearance.
46:45 Aaron Hughes fouled by Jesus Fernandez Saez, the ref awards a free kick. Direct free kick taken by Sascha Riether.
46:13 Close range shot by Luis Suarez goes wide of the left-hand post.
45:01 The referee gets the second half started.
45:01Substitution SubstitutionHugo Rodallega on for Alex Kacaniklic.
45:00+1:03Half time The half-time whistle blows.
45:00+0:35 The ball is sent over by Glen Johnson, clearance made by Sascha Riether.
44:20 Unfair challenge on Chris Baird by Jesus Fernandez Saez results in a free kick. Free kick taken by Giorgos Karagounis.
42:35 Luis Suarez takes a shot. Save made by Mark Schwarzer.
39:25 Jesus Fernandez Saez has an effort at goal from just inside the box that misses to the right of the goal.
38:07 Steven Gerrard concedes a free kick for a foul on Giorgos Karagounis. Giorgos Karagounis restarts play with the free kick.
37:47 The ball is swung over by John Arne Riise, Daniel Agger makes a clearance.
37:22 Unfair challenge on Dimitar Berbatov by Steven Gerrard results in a free kick. Chris Baird restarts play with the free kick.
35:13 Assist on the goal came from Stewart Downing.
35:13Goal scored Goal - Steven Gerrard - Liverpool 2 - 0 FulhamSteven Gerrard grabs a goal from close range to the bottom left corner of the goal. Liverpool 2-0 Fulham.
31:40 Free kick awarded for a foul by Brede Hangeland on Glen Johnson. Steven Gerrard crosses the ball in from the free kick, save by Mark Schwarzer.
30:00 Giorgos Karagounis fouled by Jesus Fernandez Saez, the ref awards a free kick. Kieran Richardson crosses the ball from the free kick left-footed from right wing.
26:50 Kieran Richardson takes a shot. Save made by Jose Reina.
26:20 The referee blows for offside against Luis Suarez. Brede Hangeland takes the indirect free kick.
24:34 Steven Gerrard takes a shot. Blocked by Brede Hangeland. Shot by Daniel Agger from inside the six-yard box clear the bar.
24:34 Steven Gerrard takes a shot. Blocked by Brede Hangeland. Daniel Agger takes a shot from close range clearing the crossbar.
23:57 Free kick awarded for a foul by Kieran Richardson on Stewart Downing. Free kick taken by Steven Gerrard.
23:41 The ball is crossed by Luis Suarez, Mark Schwarzer makes a save.
22:20 Luis Suarez produces a right-footed shot from outside the penalty box and misses left.
20:42 Alex Kacaniklic takes a shot. Blocked by Sanchez Jose Enrique.
20:00 Martin Skrtel takes a shot. Save by Mark Schwarzer.
19:29 Corner taken by Steven Gerrard from the right by-line played to the near post, clearance by Dimitar Berbatov.
18:26 Foul by Sanchez Jose Enrique on Ashkan Dejagah, free kick awarded. Direct free kick taken by Giorgos Karagounis.
16:46 Free kick awarded for a foul by Luis Suarez on Chris Baird. Mark Schwarzer takes the direct free kick.
16:30 Stewart Downing sends in a cross, Brede Hangeland makes a clearance.
15:37 The ball is delivered by Sascha Riether, save by Jose Reina.
12:53 Stewart Downing has an effort at goal from outside the penalty area which goes wide right of the goal.
7:49 Assist on the goal came from Steven Gerrard. Unfair challenge on Martin Skrtel by Dimitar Berbatov results in a free kick. Direct free kick taken by Martin Skrtel.
7:49Goal scored Goal - Martin Skrtel - Liverpool 1 - 0 FulhamMartin Skrtel gets on the score sheet with a goal from inside the box to the top right corner of the goal. Liverpool 1-0 Fulham.
7:45 Corner taken by Steven Gerrard from the right by-line.
7:20 Effort from deep inside the area by Jonjo Shelvey misses to the right of the target.
7:08 Sanchez Jose Enrique produces a cross, clearance by Alex Kacaniklic. Stewart Downing delivers the ball, Aaron Hughes makes a clearance.
7:08 The ball is sent over by Sanchez Jose Enrique, clearance by Alex Kacaniklic. A cross is delivered by Stewart Downing, Aaron Hughes manages to make a clearance.
4:41 Corner from the left by-line taken by Stewart Downing, Header from deep inside the area by Daniel Agger goes harmlessly over the crossbar.
2:33 Free kick awarded for a foul by Jesus Fernandez Saez on Ashkan Dejagah. Mark Schwarzer takes the direct free kick.
0:00 The game gets underway.

Compiled by Graeme Riley