

Date: 12 May 2013
 Opposition: Fulham
 Competition: League

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12 May 2013

THE TIMES

Sturridge takes chance to shine with hat-trick in absence of fellow striker

Fulham 1
 Berbatov 33
 Liverpool 3
 Sturridge 33, 63, 86

Referee M Halsey Attendance 25,460

Liverpool's season may effectively be over, but Daniel Sturridge's hat-trick -- his first in the Barclays Premier League -- ensured that Brendan Rodgers's side continue to demonstrate positive signs during the closing weeks of the campaign in the absence of Luis Suarez.

Sturridge's performance was the highlight against a Fulham side who will be grateful to draw a line under an alarming recent collapse next weekend.

The forward produced three nerveless finishes to take his tally to five goals in three games since Suarez started the ten-game suspension imposed for biting Branislav Ivanovic , the Chelsea defender, although Rodgers preferred to highlight the fact that Sturridge has scored 11 goals since arriving from Chelsea in January, confirming his impact.

"People have asked if he is stepping in well for Luis but I didn't bring him to be a sub, I brought him because I believe he is a goalscorer, there is no question about that," Rodgers said. "Daniel was outstanding. He scored three goals, he could maybe have had six. That's his eleventh goal in maybe 15 games since he joined Liverpool. He's made a great start . "He's not perfect. He should have squared one but he was on two goals and he is a goalscorer. But you can't complain. There are areas of his game he needs to improve and work on but across the board he was excellent."

There was little to satisfy Martin Jol, the Fulham manager. His side have lost their past five games and while Aston Villa's defeat by Chelsea on Saturday means that they are all but safe, their decline after reaching the 40-point mark has generated cause for concern. "Sometimes you should count your blessing because we knew the last seven or eight games could be a heavy schedule and it has been," Jol said. Dimitar Berbatov headed Fulham in front after 33 minutes but Sturridge quickly equalised, adding the second midway through the second half. Then, with four minutes remaining, the third came via a pass from Philippe Coutinho.

RATINGS

Fulham (4-4-2): M Schwarzer 6 -- S Riether 7, B Hangeland 5, A Hughes 5, K Richardson 6 (sub: U Emanuelson, 15min 6) -- D Duff 6, G Karagounis 5 (sub: J A Riise 83), E Enoh 7, A Kacaniklic 6 (sub: M Petric, 72) -- B Ruiz 6, D Berbatov 6. Substitutes not used: N Etheridge, P Senderos, E Frimpong, H Rodallega.
 Liverpool (3-5-2): J M Reina 7-- A Wisdom 6 (sub: J Enrique, 46 6), S Coates 6, J Carragher 6 -- G Johnson 7, J Henderson 6, Lucas Leiva 7, J Shelvey 7 (sub: F Borini, 77), S Downing 6 -- P Coutinho 8 (sub: C Coady, 89), D Sturridge 9. Substitutes not used: B Jones, O Assaidi, J Suso, L Jones. Booked: Johnson.

the guardian

Sturridge hat-trick floors Fulham

Luis Suarez may be suspended but here was proof that Liverpool can still call on a striker with the ability to excite and frustrate in equal measure. Daniel Sturridge sealed his first hat-trick for them on his first return to west London since joining from Chelsea but still managed to provoke gasps of exasperation with his poor finishing and decision-making.

Sturridge is unlikely to focus on the negatives as he reflects on having secured 10 Premier League goals for Liverpool quicker than any of their previous strikers.

Neither are the fans who packed the away end and turned the air red with a firework display that reflected a surprisingly entertaining match between two sides with little to play for. Fulham were all but safe while Liverpool only retained a slim chance of finishing above Everton and that had disappeared by the end.

The stage was clear, then, for Sturridge to shine. He scored his first with a thrashed finish past Mark Schwarzer three minutes after Dimitar Berbatov had given Fulham the lead with a close-range header and his second came on 62 minutes with a low strike at the far post. The third was a lofted finish over Schwarzer following Philippe Coutinho's through pass and, in between, the 23-year-old also found time to goad the Fulham fans and annoy his own with some glaring misses and a failure to play in Coutinho. "He's not perfect," said Brendan Rodgers, the Liverpool manager, "but overall he was outstanding and if he keeps improving he'll have an outstanding couple of years for us."

Fulham must have felt a first win in seven games was in their grasp after they took the lead against an under-strength Liverpool, but they were ultimately undone by visitors, and one striker in particular, full of attacking zeal.

"We were happy to get to 40 points but we couldn't get a result to get to 46 or 47," Martin Jol said. The Fulham manager was unhappy with the referee for not giving a penalty when, with the game finely poised at 1-1, Bryan Ruiz's cross struck Lucas Leiva's arm inside the area.

Man of the match Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool)

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The Mail

STURRIDGE SILENCES BOO-BOYS WITH HIS FIRST TREBLE

FULHAM 1

LIVERPOOL 3

DANIEL STURRIDGE scored his first senior hat-trick to silence the crowd on his return to west London. As the songs about the former Chelsea striker got louder, Sturridge just got better, producing three beautiful finishes to cancel out Dimitar Berbatov's 33rd-minute header. It is now seven points and nine goals in three games for Liverpool since Luis Suarez began his 10-match ban. Sturridge thrived in his absence, reaching double figures in a Liverpool shirt faster than any other player. There was a right-foot shot after turning Aaron Hughes inside-out; a left-foot finish; and then the best, a lob after a pass from the excellent Philippe Coutinho. Reds boss Brendan Rodgers said: 'He was outstanding. That's his 11th goal in 15 games since joining Liverpool. Daniel's made a great start to his career, he keeps improving and keeps training well.

He'll have an outstanding couple of years. 'He's not perfect, but he's a goalscorer. To be greedy, you've got to be good, and he's an outstanding player.' Fulham should have had a penalty for a Lucas Leiva handball at 1-1, but this was another listless show. Fulham boss Martin Jol said: 'The effort we put in against Chelsea and Arsenal and today shows there is nothing wrong with our approach and mentality.'

FULHAM (4-2-3-1): Schwarzer 5; Riether 6, Hughes 4, Hangeland 5, Richardson 6 (Emanuelson 15, 6); Enoh 5, Karagounis 6 (Riise 83); Kacaniklic 6 (Petric 71), Ruiz 5, Duff 6; Berbatov 5. Subs not used: Etheridge, Senderos, Frimpong, Rodallega. Scorer: Berbatov 33.

LIVERPOOL (3-5-1-1): Reina 7; Wisdom 6 (Enrique 46, 6), Coates 6, Carragher 6; Johnson 6, Shelvey 6 (Borini 77), Lucas 6, Henderson 6, Downing 5; Coutinho 7 (Coady 86); Sturridge 8. Subs not used: B Jones, Assaidi, Suso, L Jones. Scorer: Sturridge 36, 62, 85. Booked: Johnson.

Man of the match: Daniel Sturridge.

Referee: Mark Halsey 5.

The Daily Telegraph

Sturridge shows why he is more than a support act

Fulham 1

Berbatov 33

Liverpool 3

Sturridge 36, 62, 85

Att: 25,640

Luis Suarez has a tendency to overshadow most things at Liverpool but with the Uruguayan suspended, it is Daniel Sturridge's turn to become the focus of attention. An impressive hat-trick took his tally to 11 goals in 15 appearances since his January move from Chelsea. Little wonder Brendan Rodgers was quick to point out the forward is much more than a support act for his controversial team-mate. The England striker (pictured), who was complemented by the excellent Philippe Coutinho, produced three outstanding finishes to cancel out Dimitar Berbatov's goal and extend his side's unbeaten run to seven games while inflicting a fifth successive defeat on a Fulham side who are simply grateful to have reached the 40-point mark some time ago.

Rodgers's side have lost just one of their past 12 games and while they cannot now catch Everton in sixth place, the manager can draw satisfaction from his team's form, and in particular that of Sturridge, who spurned at least two good opportunities to add to his haul.

"Daniel was outstanding," said Rodgers. "He scored three goals, he could maybe have had six. He's made a great start to his career. He's not perfect. He should have squared one but he was on two goals and he is a goalscorer. But you can't complain. If you've got three goals in a Premier League game, there can't be too much at fault.

"His first goal was brilliant, his second he put it in the corner after a great ball from Coutinho and the third one you can't credit it all to Sturridge because the weight of pass from Coutinho was incredible. But Dan still had a lot to do and his finish was sublime.

"People have asked if he is stepping in well for Luis but I didn't bring him in to be a sub, I brought him to play at Liverpool because I believe he can get goals and he is a goalscorer. I think what we are seeing without Luis is there are still goals in the team.

"I've seen him develop since he was a young boy. I just felt that as a young player he needed an opportunity and that was going to be difficult for him at Chelsea when there was Didier Drogba and other world-class players. He needed a run of games and he has got that with us. Eleven goals in 15 games since January is an outstanding record."

There were few positives for Fulham manager Martin Jol, who watched his side slump to a fourth successive home reverse after Berbatov had given them a 33rd-minute lead. A summer of rebuilding lies ahead and on this evidence, it cannot start soon enough.

"Sometimes you should count your blessings because we knew the last seven or eight games could be a heavy schedule and it has been," said Jol. "So we are happy to be on 40 points but the only disappointing thing is we haven't managed to get a couple more results.

"If you look at the effort we put in against Chelsea and Arsenal, I don't think there has been anything wrong with the mentality. I thought we made a big step last year and we played well after Christmas."

He added: "On the one hand it's disappointing, on the other hand we are happy to be on 40 points."

A pedestrian opening reflected the status of the game with Coutinho's 10th-minute shot, a powerful drive from outside the area that forced a hurried save from Fulham keeper Mark Schwarzer, the only significant effort on goal during a period dominated by the visitors.

It was Fulham, however, who forced the lead in the 31st minute when Berbatov took advantage of woeful visiting defending.

Damien Duff and Sascha Riether were given time and space to work the opening for a right-wing cross while Berbatov lingered unmarked on the six-yard line before heading home with ease.

Liverpool's response was impressive, with Sturridge collecting a long clearance from Andre Wisdom three minutes later and turning Aaron Hughes inside out before finishing right-footed.

Fulham were convinced they should have had a penalty in the 61st minute when Bryan Ruiz's cross was blocked by Lucas Leiva's hand, but referee Mark Halsey judged the contact was accidental.

The decision appeared harsh on Fulham, particularly when Sturridge claimed his second goal just two minutes later. Coutinho was the provider, collecting Jonjo Shelvey's nod down before finding Sturridge on the right-hand side of the area and the striker's finish was again exemplary. The third came four minutes from time, again from a Coutinho pass, with Sturridge chipping the ball over Schwarzer.

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Sturridge flies the Liverpool flag for jolly Rodgers

Brendan Rodgers' Liverpool have a swagger, increasingly brought to life under the Northern Irishman and put on show yesterday by Daniel Sturridge. The latter's hat-trick will have fans convinced they can break into the top four of the Premier League next year.

But be warned. As with in the latter stages of Kenny Dalglish's first half-season, Liverpool are showing glimpses of class when the wheels are in motion. An eye-opening 5-2 win at Craven Cottage in May 2011 promised much from Dalglish, but the following year brought little.

Rodgers' collective are finishing this season in similarly blistering fashion, but he will want consistency from August. "I think that we can have an exciting season next year, we are all building towards that, but we need some depth in the summer," said Rodgers. "We've got goals in the team, our creativity also alongside the goalscorers was very good. We are trying to build a team of winners that are technically brilliant."

They failed to break Fulham early on despite their possession, falling behind in the 33rd minute after Sascha Riether crossed for an unmarked Dimitar Berbatov to head home. Riether looked offside, but Rodgers should reserve any complaints for his defence.

Three minutes later Sturridge gained a yard on Aaron Hughes before lashing past Mark Schwarzer for 1-1. Berbatov went close from another Riether cross, with Jamie Carragher at first struggling to deal with the Bulgarian in his last away game as a Liverpool player. Rodgers switched to 4-4-2 after the break, employing Jose Enrique and Glen Johnson to quash Fulham's wide threat.

After the home side appealed for a Lucas Leiva handball inside the area, Liverpool took the lead. Philippe Coutinho's wayward effort fell to Sturridge, who slotted into the corner from 10 yards. He was twice denied a hat-trick by Schwarzer, whose opposite number, Pepe Reina, then superbly kept out Hughes' header.

But Sturridge finally claimed his hat-trick five minutes from time, lofting the ball over Schwarzer after a glorious pass by Coutinho.

Fulham hit 40 points early and seemed to relax. A dreadful April turned them away from the top half, leaving a sour taste to what seemed a palatable campaign. "I don't think there's something wrong with the application or the mentality, the only thing is, if we have to chase the game, we look vulnerable," said manager Martin Jol. "I think if you lose seven or eight players of course you need to bring in more quality to strengthen the squad."

Booked: Liverpool Johnson.

Man of the match Sturridge. Match rating 7/10. Possession: Fulham 39% Liverpool 61%.

Attempts on target: Fulham 8 Liverpool 14. Referee M Halsey (Lancashire). Att 25,640.



STURR CRAZY

DANIEL STURRIDGE and Philippe Coutinho proved Liverpool are not a two-man team as the young guns blew Fulham away.

Captain Steven Gerrard missed his first Premier League game of the season after undergoing shoulder surgery, while Luis Suarez is still suspended.

But former Chelsea striker Sturridge responded with his first hat-trick in senior football on his return to West London. And the 23-year-old was ably assisted by a brilliant performance from Philippe Coutinho, 20, playing behind the England forward. The third goal, when Sturridge latched on to the Brazilian's curling pass, was pure class.

Brendan Rodgers' fluent side could have scored more as they ran riot in the second half, but still reached 38 away goals this season - the highest in the Premier League.

"Daniel was outstanding. He scored three goals and he could have had six," said the Ulsterman, who coached Sturridge during their time together at Stamford Bridge.

"That's his 11th goal in 15 games since joining Liverpool. I always felt with him, since he was a youth player, that he needs an opportunity.

"It was difficult at Chelsea, they had Drogba, who was one of the top strikers in Europe. He needed a run of games, and he's got that with us." Sturridge, a PS12million January signing, has scored five in three games since Suarez was banned. "I didn't bring him to be a sub, I brought him to play because I believe he can get goals," Rogers said.

"What we're seeing without Luis is that there are still goals in the team. Luis is more a floating No.9 while Daniel is up there and wants to go in behind, so it gives me a great combination.

"But wherever they play they are goalscorers and we can have an exciting time next season.

"We need more depth, if we get that we can make a serious challenge for the top four."

After a stagnant opening half hour, Fulham took the lead when Dimitar Berbatov headed home Sascha Riether's right-wing cross for his 14th of the season.

But Liverpool were level within three minutes when Sturridge ran onto Andre Wisdom's long ball to skin Aaron Hughes before lashing home. His celebration in front of the Fulham fans ensured he was booed for the rest of the afternoon.

"Daniel's a good boy," Rodgers insisted.

Level at the break, the Liverpool boss switched from a three-man defence to a flat back four. The match turned after 61 minutes when referee Mark Halsey, in his penultimate match before he retires, turned down a Fulham penalty appeal when Bryan Ruiz's cross hit Lucas' hand.

Liverpool broke up the other end and Coutinho's shot was deflected into Sturridge's path for a simple finish.

Pepe Reina made a great save from a Hughes header but at the other end, the Fulham defence went AWOL. Sub Fabio Borini hit the post within two minutes of coming on, and Stewart Downing also saw his deflected shot hit the woodwork. Sturridge went through twice more on Schwarzer, only to see his shots saved by the Aussie. His sublime 85th-minute finish made amends.

Martin Jol admitted his woeful Fulham team were lucky to be still in the Premier League after their fifth successive defeat.

They reached the 40-point mark with a draw at Villa Park on April 13 and have not picked up a point since. But other results mean it is impossible for Fulham to go down. Jol admitted: "Sometimes you have to count your blessings.

"We were fairly happy to get to 40 points, but we couldn't get the results to get to 46 or 47."

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DANIEL STURRIDGE walked away from Craven Cottage with the matchball signed by his team-mates in one hand and a book in the other.

The title 'Clarity' was fitting with Liverpool's hat-trick hero having produced a performance which left no-one in any doubt about his exceptional talent. Certainly, not the overworked Fulham backline who were tormented by the pace, power and clinical finishing of the Reds' £12million striker. Nor the home supporters who found to their cost that berating and goading Sturridge only spurs him on to greater heights. As the travelling Kop chanted his name repeatedly, this was the kind of afternoon the 23-year-old had dreamed of when he left the capital behind and headed for Merseyside in January.

Stuck on the fringes for so long after being overlooked by a succession of managers at Chelsea, Sturridge craved the opportunity to play for someone who truly believed in his ability to lead the line. Since being handed that chance by Brendan Rodgers he has flourished. Eleven goals in 12 starts with a further three substitute appearances is a remarkable start to an Anfield career.

It hasn't all been plain sailing. After initially flying out the blocks following his arrival, he hit a two-month barren spell when his standards slipped and at one stage he was consigned to bench duty. Some questioned the wisdom of investing so much in potential rather than proven quality.

Questions were asked about whether Sturridge truly had the appetite and desire to make the most of his undoubted ability. Yet since he transformed the contest after coming off the bench against his former club at Anfield last month, the answers have been emphatic. The extra pressure heaped on his shoulders by the absence of top scorer Luis Suarez has only served to increase his contribution.

This striking masterclass was some endorsement of Sturridge's reading material. Written by 'state of mind specialist' Jamie Smart, the cover of 'Clarity' promises a 'clear mind, better performance, bigger results' with reduced stress levels, greater self-belief and increased productivity thrown in.

It appears to have done the trick already with Sturridge, who took his place alongside Maxi Rodriguez and Billy Liddell on the exclusive list of Liverpool players to have netted a league hat-trick against Fulham, providing the inspiration for a deserved triumph. A year ago the Reds were limping to the finish line. This time around they are ending the campaign with a swagger which provides genuine hope for next season. Sturridge's treble, which came after Dimitar Berbatov had nodded Fulham in front, helped Rodgers' side set a new club record for away goals in the Premier League era.

Their tally of 38 on their travels is the Reds' best in a season since the 40 they plundered in the title-winning year of 1989/90. A dominant second-half performance, when the outclassed Cottagers were repeatedly carved open, could and should have secured a more emphatic margin of victory.

But Rodgers will take comfort from the manner in which his side performed without skipper Steven Gerrard and Daniel Agger as well as Suarez.

Jamie Carragher took the armband and the travelling Kop used the final away trip of the season to pay homage to the retiring centre-back's 16 years of loyal service. The banner in the away end was concise – 'Carragher 23 Legend'.

Now the stage is set for an emotional goodbye when relegated QPR visit Anfield on Sunday. For 45 minutes Carragher found himself positioned on the left of an unfamiliar three-man defence alongside Sebastian Coates and Andre Wisdom after Martin Skrtel was ruled out due to illness. It was only Coates' second league start of the season and his first taste of any action since the FA Cup defeat to Oldham in January, while Wisdom hadn't started in the league for four months.

Stewart Downing operated as a left wing-back with Glen Johnson providing width on the right. However, Rodgers' experiment didn't last beyond half-time when the introduction of Jose Enrique for Wisdom and reverting to a flat back four saw Liverpool take control. Smoke bombs from the away end before kick-off left Pepe Reina lost amidst a red cloud but it mattered little as during a lifeless opening half hour he was mainly a spectator. Sturridge's cross-shot was clawed away by Mark Schwarzer who then parried a piledriver from Philippe Coutinho.

Fulham had barely threatened but they broke the deadlock courtesy of some shoddy marking in the 33rd minute. Sascha Riether had all the time he wanted to deliver a cross from the right and the full-back picked out Berbatov, who stole in between Carragher and Johnson to nod home from close range.

The Reds' response was swift as within three minutes they were level. Jonjo Shelvey's error had initially left them exposed, but Wisdom made a key block and swiftly turned defence into attack. The young defender's long punt forward was pounced on by Sturridge. His control was instant and he turned away from Aaron Hughes before rifling an unstoppable finish past Schwarzer. It was the ideal response to the home fans who jeered his every touch due to his Chelsea connections.

With Lucas Leiva pulling the strings in midfield and Johnson a menacing threat down the right, Liverpool turned the screw after the interval. There were moments of concern with Coates, unsurprisingly given his lack of game time, looking sluggish. Former Reds youngster Alex Kacaniklic went close before Bryan Ruiz skipped past Coates and saw his cross hit Lucas on the arm from point-blank range. Pleas for a penalty were waved away by Mark Halsey, who further incensed the hosts by ignoring Kacaniklic's claims for a free-kick after colliding with Coates as he burst through the centre.

Seconds later Liverpool counter-attacked to devastating effect. Coutinho's strike from the edge of the box deflected into the path of Sturridge who coolly slotted home. The Reds threatened to run riot. Twice, Sturridge was thwarted by Schwarzer before Shelvey wasted a glorious chance at the back post.

Reina then demonstrated why Barcelona intend to try to prise him away from Anfield this summer as the keeper produced a wonderful save to somehow keep out Hughes' header from Ruiz's corner.

Fabio Borini replaced Shelvey and the substitute produced an eye-catching late cameo, cutting in off the left to curl against the inside of the post. The points were finally wrapped up five minutes from time as Sturridge capitalised on the breathtaking vision and skill of Coutinho. The Brazilian's through ball was in-ch-perfect and as Schwarzer rushed out, the striker dispatched an exquisite lob into the empty net.

Clarity? It was crystal clear. Liverpool need Sturridge to keep reading.



DANIEL STURRIDGE struck a stunning hat-trick as Liverpool FC cruised to a 3-1 win over Fulham at Craven Cottage.

The £12million man produces three exquisite finishes to ensure Brendan Rodgers' side got the victory their overall dominance deserved in the capital.

The Reds had fallen behind in the first half to Dimitar Berbatov's header but hit back in style as Sturridge took his tally to 11 goals in 15 appearances since his January move from Chelsea.

Rodgers made three changes following the goalless draw with Everton as Andre Wisdom, Sebastian Coates and Jonjo Shelvey replaced Daniel Agger, Jose Enrique and Steven Gerrard.

Agger and Gerrard missed out due to injury, while Enrique dropped to the bench as the manager opted to play Wisdom as one of three centre-backs.

Coates got the nod to start his first game since January after Martin Skrtel was ruled out due to illness.

Sturridge's cross-shot was clawed away by Mark Schwarzer early on. The rebound dropped kindly to Stewart Downing but his sweetly struck volley was blocked by Damien Duff.

Philippe Coutinho then tested the keeper after turning away from both Eyon Enoh and Giorgos Karagounis in midfield.

Liverpool were in the ascendancy but they were rocked when Fulham broke the deadlock in the 33rd minute.

Duff was allowed to tee up Sascha Riether on the right and the full-back, who looked suspiciously offside, had all the time he wanted to pick out the unmarked Berbatov, who stole in between Jamie Carragher and Glen Johnson to nod home from close range.

Liverpool's response was swift as within three minutes they were level. Shelvey's error had initially left the Reds exposed but Wisdom made a key block and swiftly turned defence into attack.

The young defender's lofted pass was pounced upon by Sturridge who timed his run to perfection.

Sturridge's control was instant and he turned away from Aaron Hughes before rifling an emphatic finish past Schwarzer and into the roof of the net.

Rodgers made a change at the break as Enrique replaced Wisdom and Liverpool switched to a flat back four.

Fulham had their moments with Alexander Kacaniklic dragging a left footer narrowly wide from the edge of the box before Bryan Ruiz saw his effort deflected just past the post.

On the hour mark the hosts were left fuming when appeals for a penalty were waved away when Ruiz's cross appeared to strike Lucas Leiva on the arm inside the box.

Kacaniklic then went down when bursting through the centre after colliding with Coates but again referee Mark Halsey gave nothing.

Liverpool made the most of the let-off as they counter attacked to make it 2-1 in the 62nd minute.

Coutinho's strike from the edge of the box deflected into the path of Sturridge who coolly slotted past the keeper.

Sturridge was running riot and was twice denied by the brilliance of Schwarzer, while at the other end the Reds were indebted to a fine save from Pepe Reina who turned away Aaron Hughes' header.

Fabio Borini replaced Shelvey and the substitute made a swift impact as he cut inside off the left and his curler came back off the inside of the post.

Downing was also denied by the woodwork before Sturridge completed his hat-trick five minutes from time.

Coutinho was the creator with a classy pass and it got the finish it deserved. As Schwarzer raced out to meet him, Sturridge produced a perfect lob into the empty net to wrap up the points.

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Sturridge treble sinks Fulham

Daniel Sturridge wreaked havoc on his return to west London, firing Liverpool to an easy 3-1 win at Fulham with a superb hat-trick at Craven Cottage. Sturridge had not scored against the Cottagers during his time at the club's local rivals Chelsea or while he was at Manchester City, but he took Martin Jol's team apart with three well-taken strikes. Three minutes after Dimitar Berbatov had nodded Fulham ahead, the England striker turned Aaron Hughes inside-out before smashing the ball into the roof of the net. The 23-year-old latched on to Philippe Coutinho's deflected pass before beating Fulham goalkeeper Mark Schwarzer to make it 2-1 and he rounded off the win at the death with a clever chip over the Australian stopper, who was playing possibly his last match for the club.



Liverpool striker Daniel Sturridge scored his first ever hat-trick as the Reds consigned Fulham to a fifth league defeat in a row. Dimitar Berbatov headed Fulham into the lead from Sascha Riether's cross, only for Sturridge to lash in an equaliser. The home side were denied a penalty for a Lucas Leiva handball before Sturridge slotted in his side's second. Liverpool were creating chances at will and Sturridge grabbed his third when he chipped over keeper Mark Schwarzer. Fulham boss Martin Jol had a suitably concerned expression on his face at the final whistle after his side's capitulation left them with just one point from their last seven games. It is a run of results that means the Cottagers are still not mathematically safe from relegation, although it would take an unlikely set of scores for them to go down. They were easily undone here by a Liverpool side without two of their pivotal players, with midfielder Steven Gerrard injured and striker Luis Suarez suspended. The visitors began in enterprising fashion but Fulham gradually worked their way back into the match before taking the lead. Damien Duff fed Riether and the German full-back crossed for the previously anonymous Berbatov to head in at the far post. Liverpool's response was almost immediate, as they took just three minutes to equalise. A long Andre Wisdom ball was gathered by Sturridge, who twisted and turned Aaron Hughes before bursting past the defender to lash a shot past keeper Schwarzer. The visitors made no further progress before half-time, however, and after the break the home side were furious that referee Mark Halsey failed to award them a penalty when a Bryan Ruiz cross struck the outstretched arm of Lucas Leiva. The decision rocked Fulham and Liverpool capitalised by immediately going up the other end and scoring. Philippe Coutinho slipped as he attempted a shot but his effort fell to Sturridge, who controlled and slotted past Schwarzer. Sturridge's hat-trick bid was initially thwarted by two superb Schwarzer saves, while Reds keeper Pepe Reina pulled off equally impressive saves to keep out a Berbatov shot and Aaron Hughes header. But Liverpool were in rampant form, regularly opening up Fulham's defence, with Reds substitute Fabio Borini cutting inside and rattling the post with a well-struck shot. Schwarzer was doing his best to limit the damage but Sturridge's third finally arrived when he latched on to an incisive Coutinho pass before chipping the ball over the on-rushing keeper. Fulham boss Martin Jol: "It should have been a penalty [for the Lucas Leiva handball]. "[The game] was frustrating. Normally if we score we win games. We never seem to win games after being down." Liverpool manager Brendan Rodgers: "Daniel was outstanding. He scored three goals and he could have had maybe six. "If he keeps improving, keeps training well, then I think he will have an outstanding couple of years for us. "He's not perfect. He should have squared one when he was through. But he was looking for his hat-trick, he's a goalscorer, and to be greedy you've got to be good. He's an outstanding player."

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90:00+3:10 Full time The final whistle is blown by the referee.
 90:00+1:08 Unfair challenge on Jamie Carragher by Dimitar Berbatov results in a free kick. Jamie Carragher restarts play with the free kick.
 87:58 The assistant referee signals for offside against Fabio Borini. Aaron Hughes takes the free kick.
 87:58 Substitution Substitution Conor Coady on for Philippe Coutinho.
 84:52 Assist on the goal came from Philippe Coutinho.
 84:52 Goal scored Goal - Daniel Sturridge - Fulham 1 - 3 Liverpool A goal is scored by Daniel Sturridge from deep inside the penalty box to the top right corner of the goal. Fulham 1-3 Liverpool.
 82:40 Dimitar Berbatov fouled by Jordan Henderson, the ref awards a free kick. Direct strike on goal from the free kick comes in from John Arne Riise, fantastic save by Jose Reina.
 81:55 Substitution Substitution John Arne Riise is brought on as a substitute for Giorgos Karagounis.
 80:56 A cross is delivered by Phillippe Coutinho, Aaron Hughes manages to make a clearance. Stewart Downing takes the inswinging corner, Shot by Sanchez Jose Enrique from deep inside the penalty area misses to the right of the goal.
 79:43 Stewart Downing takes a shot. Blocked by Mark Schwarzer. Short corner taken by Stewart Downing from the right by-line. The referee blows for offside. Giorgos Karagounis restarts play with the free kick.
 79:01 Fabio Borini takes a shot. Save by Mark Schwarzer.
 78:23 Fabio Borini produces a right-footed shot from just inside the box and hits the post.
 77:27 Stewart Downing sends in a cross, Jordan Henderson conjures a left-footed shot from inside the six-yard box that clears the bar.
 76:34 Sanchez Jose Enrique crosses the ball, Aaron Hughes manages to make a clearance. Phillippe Coutinho takes a shot. Aaron Hughes gets a block in. Corner taken by Stewart Downing from the left by-line, Dimitar Berbatov manages to make a clearance.
 76:01 Substitution Substitution Fabio Borini joins the action as a substitute, replacing Jonjo Shelvey.
 75:56 Eyong Enoh produces a right-footed shot from just outside the penalty area that goes harmlessly over the target.
 74:46 Dimitar Berbatov takes a shot. Save made by Jose Reina. Corner taken left-footed by Bryan Ruiz from the right by-line, Aaron Hughes takes a shot. Jose Reina makes a save. Giorgos Karagounis takes the inswinging corner, clearance made by Jamie Carragher.
 73:21 Sebastian Coates concedes a free kick for a foul on Milen Petrov. Direct free kick taken by Bryan Ruiz.
 71:24 Jonjo Shelvey takes a shot. Save by Mark Schwarzer. Outswinging corner taken by Phillippe Coutinho from the left by-line played to the near post, clearance made by Sascha Riether.
 70:47 Substitution Substitution Milen Petrov is brought on as a substitute for Alex Kacaniklic.
 70:27 The ball is swung over by Jordan Henderson.
 68:13 Daniel Sturridge takes a shot. Save by Mark Schwarzer. Inswinging corner taken right-footed by Jonjo Shelvey played to the near post, Aaron Hughes manages to make a clearance.
 66:29 Sanchez Jose Enrique produces a cross, Brede Hangeland manages to make a clearance.
 64:47 Leiva Lucas gives away a free kick for an unfair challenge on Giorgos Karagounis. Giorgos Karagounis takes the direct free kick.
 63:16 Daniel Sturridge takes a shot. Mark Schwarzer makes a comfortable save.
 62:00 Phillippe Coutinho takes a shot. Giorgos Karagounis gets a block in.
 61:57 Phillippe Coutinho provided the assist for the goal.
 61:57 Goal scored Goal - Daniel Sturridge - Fulham 1 - 2 Liverpool Daniel Sturridge finds the back of the net with a goal from inside the penalty area to the bottom left corner of the goal. Fulham 1-2 Liverpool.
 59:19 Bryan Ruiz takes a shot. Jordan Henderson gets a block in. Corner from right by-line taken by Bryan Ruiz.
 56:31 The ball is delivered by Glen Johnson, clearance made by Aaron Hughes.
 53:13 Alex Kacaniklic has shot on goal from just outside the penalty box which goes wide of the right-hand upright.
 51:46 Giorgos Karagounis takes the free kick.
 51:46 Booking Glen Johnson receives a caution for unsporting behaviour.
 51:28 Glen Johnson gives away a free kick for an unfair challenge on Eyong Enoh.
 47:29 Stewart Downing takes an inswinging corner from the right by-line to the near post, Brede Hangeland makes a clearance.
 45:43 The ball is crossed by Sanchez Jose Enrique, Header from deep inside the penalty area by Daniel Sturridge goes harmlessly over the crossbar.
 45:01 The second half begins.
 45:01 Substitution Substitution Sanchez Jose Enrique replaces Andre Wisdom.
 45:00+2:10 Half time It is the end of the first-half.
 45:00+1:19 Unfair challenge on Damien Duff by Phillippe Coutinho results in a free kick. Direct free kick taken by Giorgos Karagounis.
 42:26 The ball is crossed by Sascha Riether, Jamie Carragher makes a clearance.
 40:16 Dimitar Berbatov takes a shot. Sebastian Coates gets a block in. Inswinging corner taken from the right by-line by Bryan Ruiz.
 40:02 Giorgos Karagounis takes a shot. Blocked by Sebastian Coates.
 37:24 Free kick awarded for a foul by Jordan Henderson on Giorgos Karagounis. The free kick is swung in left-footed by Bryan Ruiz.
 35:45 Assist by Andre Wisdom.
 35:45 Goal scored Goal - Daniel Sturridge - Fulham 1 - 1 Liverpool A goal is scored by Daniel Sturridge from close in to the top right corner of the goal. Fulham 1-1 Liverpool.

32:30 Sascha Riether crosses the ball,
 32:21 Assist by Sascha Riether.
 32:21 Goal scored Goal - Dimitar Berbatov - Fulham 1 - 0 Liverpool Dimitar Berbatov gets on the score sheet with a goal from inside the six-yard box to the bottom left corner of the goal. Fulham 1-0 Liverpool.
 28:57 Sascha Riether challenges Daniel Sturridge unfairly and gives away a free kick. Phillippe Coutinho takes the direct free kick.
 31:23 Stewart Downing produces a cross, clearance by Brede Hangeland.
 29:44 Stewart Downing challenges Damien Duff unfairly and gives away a free kick. Bryan Ruiz delivers the ball from the free kick left-footed from right channel, Leiva Lucas manages to make a clearance. Eyong Enoh has an effort at goal from 25 yards. Save by Jose Reina.
 28:57 Unfair challenge on Daniel Sturridge by Sascha Riether results in a free kick. Direct free kick taken by Daniel Sturridge.
 27:44 Effort on goal by Jordan Henderson from long range goes harmlessly over the bar.
 27:12 The referee blows for offside. Jose Reina restarts play with the free kick.
 26:18 The ball is sent over by Giorgos Karagounis, Glen Johnson manages to make a clearance.
 25:41 Unfair challenge on Bryan Ruiz by Leiva Lucas results in a free kick. Bryan Ruiz restarts play with the free kick.
 25:20 Daniel Sturridge takes a shot.
 24:11 The ball is delivered by Alex Kacaniklic.
 20:58 Centre by Glen Johnson, comfortable save by Mark Schwarzer.
 18:43 The ball is swung over by Alex Kacaniklic, Sebastian Coates gets a block in. Corner taken by Giorgos Karagounis from the left by-line, clearance made by Andre Wisdom.
 16:53 Centre by Sascha Riether.
 14:31 Inswinging corner taken left-footed by Stewart Downing from the right by-line.
 14:31 Substitution Substitution Urby Emanuelson comes on in place of Kieran Richardson.
 13:36 Phillippe Coutinho takes a shot. Save by Mark Schwarzer.
 12:16 Daniel Sturridge delivers the ball, Stewart Downing takes a shot. Damien Duff gets a block in.
 10:09 Jordan Henderson challenges Kieran Richardson unfairly and gives away a free kick. The free kick is swung in right-footed by Giorgos Karagounis.
 9:01 Outswinging corner taken by Jonjo Shelvey.
 7:41 Dimitar Berbatov is caught offside. Indirect free kick taken by Jamie Carragher.
 5:35 Jonjo Shelvey takes a shot. Blocked by Brede Hangeland.
 2:55 Jordan Henderson produces a cross, Daniel Sturridge takes a shot. Save by Jose Reina. Damien Duff delivers the ball, save made by Jose Reina.
 2:12 Inswinging corner taken from the right by-line by Damien Duff, comfortable save by Jose Reina.
 0:52 Corner taken left-footed by Damien Duff to the near post, Jonjo Shelvey makes a clearance.
 0:09 Unfair challenge on Alex Kacaniklic by Jordan Henderson results in a free kick. Direct free kick taken by Kieran Richardson.
 0:00 The game begins.