

Date: 26 October 2013	Post	Sun Independent	Sun Telegraph	Mail		26 October 2013
Opposition: West Bromwich Albion		Guardian	Telegraph	Birmingham Echo		
Competition: League	BBC	Independent	Mirror	Echo		

THETIMES

the**guardian**

Rodgers hushes title talk but Suarez gives Liverpool look of contenders

Knocking Liverpool off their perch was not enough, it transpired. Sir Alex Ferguson aimed a final barb at old enemies in his autobiography by suggesting they were nowhere near returning to their former pre-eminence. Yet while Brendan Rodgers has spent much of the past few days rebuffing his former rival's various claims, there is one that he has been happier to overlook. Ferguson said Liverpool were eight players away from being a title-winning team and, apart from a quip that if that is the case then Manchester United, six points beneath them, must be ten players short, Rodgers has not responded.

It is part of a concerted policy: do not mention the title. After eviscerating West Bromwich Albion, Rodgers resorted to cliché. "We are taking each game [as it comes]," he said.

After defeating United, he chuckled when asked if Liverpool were potential champions. His preference is to change the subject or to use his favourite phrase about being "in the conversation" for a top-four finish. Yet at their current rate of progress, Liverpool are on course to end with 84 points and if the 10-game mark represents a barometer of a team's prospects, they are 90 minutes away from losing their billing as an early-season anomaly in the standings.

"After 10 games you have a little look but we will assess it as we go along," Rodgers said. That the 10th game is against Arsenal on Saturday means it will provide a truer test of Liverpool's credentials.

A friendly fixture list helps explain why they have passed under the radar so far. That Rodgers lacks game-changing substitutes perhaps explains Ferguson's take. Yet as Liverpool may play only 41 games this season, their first XI could have the opportunity to stay fit and fresh. As it is, Daniel Agger, Philippe Coutinho and Luis Suarez have started only four of the first nine games, Glen Johnson five and Lucas Leiva seven. They have prevailed without pivotal players and prospered with them.

The attacking axis of Suarez and Daniel Sturridge has delivered ten goals in the four league games they have started together, with the Uruguayan's hat-trick on Saturday giving him the majority share in a windfall. "The front two are as good as it gets," Rodgers said and while the United pair of Wayne Rooney and Robin van Persie and Manchester City's Sergio Aguero and Alvaro Negredo have competing claims, the Liverpool duo have proved the most potent so far. They have industry and invention, movement and menace.

After winning at Old Trafford and deservedly drawing with Arsenal, Albion arrived at Anfield with a reputation as the scourge of the elite. They departed demolished by Suarez and Sturridge.

"Some days you need to hold your hands up and say the best team won," the West Bromwich manager, Steve Clarke, said.

"Especially when their strikers play like that. Three of the goals were sublime." Sturridge scored a delectable chip that Rodgers felt was reminiscent of Kenny Dalglish. Suarez's treble included a typically cheeky opener - the unfortunate Jonas Olsson was nutmegged en route to goal - and an 18-yard header that was still more audacious. "Luis is incredible at making something out of nothing," Rodgers added.

Clarke, who coached Suarez in his days as Dalglish's assistant, agreed: "When you look at the strikers around the world then he's certainly in the top five." It was an opinion that cut to the heart of the issue of Suarez's future: he may be one of the top five forwards on the planet, yet Liverpool have not finished in the country's top five since 2009. That suggests a mismatch.

"He, like ourselves, wants to be at the very highest level he can be and, by his performances, he deserves to be looking at that level," said Rodgers. When Suarez abandoned his attempts to leave Anfield in August, many assumed it would prove a temporary truce. The thought was Suarez would be in next season's Champions League, even if Liverpool would not be.

Yet with every win, the greater the chance they will venture into Europe together and with every goal, the more it appears relations have been repaired. "He has the support and love of everyone at the club," said Rodgers. "And because this is a worldwide institution, I still maintain that even if we were in mid-table that this was the place for him to be."

It is not a view Suarez seemed to share in the summer, when he tired of delivering magnificence amid mediocrity. Yet it was easier for Rodgers to say that as he savoured the view from near the top. At this stage of the past four seasons, Liverpool were eighth, 18th, fifth and 12th respectively. Now they might be in the title race. Just do not expect them to admit it.

Man of the match Luis Suarez (Liverpool)



Date: 26 October 2013 Opposition: West Bromwich Albion Competition: League	Post	Sun Independent	Sun Telegraph	Mail		26 October 2013
		Guardian	Telegraph	Birmingham Echo		
	BBC	Independent	Mirror	Echo		



Suarez makes Liverpool real contenders

On Saturday evening, Luis Suarez will come face to face with the club he could have joined. It was never quite clear why he wanted to go to Arsenal. If he craved Champions League football, there were other clubs who had a better record in the competition. If he was sick of the English press and their intrusion into his family life, it made no sense to move to the city where their newspapers are produced.

Arsenal's failure to force through the transfer benefited both clubs. Arsne Wenger spent the [pounds sterling]40m-odd earmarked for Suarez on Mesut -zil, a signing as revolutionary as Dennis Bergkamp or Thierry Henry. The Uruguayan, against every expectation, found himself still on Merseyside, although this season he has been happy to parade his family for the cameras.

His hat-trick in a 4-1 win over West Bromwich Albion in a performance as compelling anything Liverpool have produced this season made the rehabilitation complete. The standing ovation was expected but also heartfelt.

Suarez is precious to Anfield. Even during the years of slow decline, Liverpool always possessed a footballer that any club in Europe would covet, be it Michael Owen, Fernando Torres or Suarez. He is still theirs.

One of the last banners to be removed from the Kop was a jibe at the club's chief executive, Ian Ayre, reminding him that they are "supporters not customers". However, Ayre and his manager, Brendan Rodgers, have handled Suarez well. Like David Moyes with Wayne Rooney, Liverpool have the advantage of dealing with a street footballer, someone who is happiest centre stage with a ball at his feet.

"It was a very difficult summer for him and everyone at Liverpool," said Rodgers.

"But once he was told we were not going to sell he has worked as hard as anyone.

"I knew once the decision was made it would be hard for him initially but he would get his head down. That is in his nature. He is not one to fake or feign injury and sit in the treatment room. Once he gets out there, his love of football takes over. As a club we had to make a stand and it is paying off for us and for him."

The question now is whether Liverpool are genuine contenders. Boaz Myhill in the West Bromwich goal thought so, saying that Daniel Sturridge and Suarez were as good as any strike pairing in the league. "If they score an early goal at Anfield, they will be a match for anyone."

Suarez scores big goals in big games. In his last six matches against the five leading teams from London, Manchester and Merseyside, he has found the net in four.

When describing the best save of the match, the one in which he pushed Suarez's overhead kick onto the crossbar, Myhill suggested why. "He is so sharp, I never even saw him hit it," he said.

Wrapped in her Liverpool scarf, having flown in from Istanbul to watch the game, Caroline Wozniacki, the former world No 1 tennis player, appreciated the artistry as perhaps only another elite athlete can. She had once warmed up for the Qatar Open in a signed Steven Gerrard shirt. Perhaps it is time for a change of name.

This may be Liverpool's best start to a season since 2008 but if you flick through one of Sir Alex Ferguson's books - not his autobiography but the account of the Treble-winning season - you will see Aston Villa streaking ahead through the early pages, setting a pace they were never able to sustain. Neither Arsenal nor Liverpool have much depth.

And their fate may be decided away from Anfield in a sequence that sees them go to Arsenal, Everton, Manchester City and Chelsea with a journey the length of the M62 to Hull squeezed in between.

Rodgers did not beat any of the current Champions League sides in his first season at Liverpool. If they are in the top four when the final whistle goes at Stamford Bridge on 29 December, then 2014 may be the year that, with Ferguson gone,Liverpool clamber back onto the perch that he swept them from.



TREBLE FOLLO OWS HIM EVERYWHERE E; Hat-trick heroics sparkfresh fears about whether genius Suarez will stay at Anfield for much longer

LIVERPOOL 4 WEST BROM 1 Suarez 12, 17, 55, Sturridge 77 Morrison 66 pen

GIVEN he was variously described as a magician and magical for this sublime performance, is it fair to wonder if Luis Suarez will soon make himself disappear from Anfield? Not so, according to his manager Brendan Rodgers, who needed only one of the above words to describe the otherworldly qualities of his striker in this victory over West Brom.

It was a privilege to witness the Liverpool maverick's display of genius, yet every occasion that confirms his world-class status it simply raises the inevitable spectre of his departure.

Yet while accepting there will be inevitable speculation over a player who so emphatically stated his desire to leave, Rodgers argues such form illustrates just how at home Suarez feels.

Asked if this was the striker's last season with the Reds come what may, he responded: "No I wouldn't say that - when a player is happy and working well you get a performance like you did today.

"He, like ourselves, wants to be at the very highest level he can be, and you can see by his performances that he deserves to be looking at that level. It shows the level of him.

"But it also shows he has been excellent in his attitude, you see his work-rate - that is the key."

Rodgers has a point. Suarez may still harbour dreams of the Bernabeu, but if he does, then he doesn't show it. There has been no sulking, no downing of tools, and if anything, there has been a development in his game.

That, in part, can be put down to the platform Rodgers and his Liverpool team have offered to the South American, to get the best from him.

o get Sometimes, players would do well to stop and think why they are playing so well.

Suarez's hat-trick was magnificent, and had his overhead kick not been brilliantly saved by Baggies keeper Boaz Myhill, we would have been talking about one of the greatest all-time performances. d not d b Yet as a team, Liverpool showed they are now very much in the hunt for the top four, if not the title, given the consistency of their form over the past 12 months...and that is a point not lost on Rodgers.

"For me, this is the place for Luis. I still maintain that even if we were in mid-table this was the place for him to be because this is a massive club - a global institution," added Rodgers.

place thi ga a ca "L f "But as a football club and as a team we are growing - and he can grow with us.

"Luis has the support of everyone at the club and the love of everyone and because this is a worldwide institution, there is no better place for him to grow."

You wonder just how far Suarez can go. With Daniel Sturridge alongside creating space with his intelligent running, Steven viding such telling Jordan Henderson ort, the team is built lents, where as even of Arsenal that may nthe case.

Gerrard prov service, and J tireless suppo around his tal at the likes o not have been His goals sh space for a div for the first, an when gifted s movement thereafter.

howed as much, the vine run and nutmeg nd two fine headers space by intelligent t and delivery Not to me fourth from emphasises LIVERPOOL's at They may frailties, as i shaky perio following Ja penalty, but th be recognised After all, th played 27 ention a brilliant m Sturridge that s the depth of tacking talent. still have defensive illustrated by the od immediately ames Morrison's hey surely now must d as the real deal. his year they have Premier League matches and have the third-best record over that period.

In fact, they would be just a couple of points off the top if that were a table - a position they hold in the real table, which suggests it isn't a fluke.

And as they prepare to visit leaders Arsenal next weekend, Rodgers admits he is relishing the prospect...especially given Suarez's form.

"I am really looking forward to Arsenal. We played well there last season, surrendered a two-goal lead, but we are a better team going there this year," he said.

"We have got wins without playing as fluently as we can, but this was probably as good as it has been over the course of a game. We will get even better."

<b>Date: 26 October 2013</b> <b>Opposition: West Bromwich Albion</b> <b>Competition: League</b>	Post	Sun Independent	Sun Telegraph	Mail	<div>26 October 2013</div>
		Guardian	Telegraph	Birmingham Echo	
	BBC	Independent	Mirror	Echo	



**Magical Suarez and ruthless Sturridge on top form**

When the No 7 flashed up on the board a minute from time, Anfield stood to acclaim a display of breathtaking individual brilliance.

A beaming Luis Suarez departed to a deafening ovation before returning to wrestle the matchball from referee Jon Moss. This was a hat-trick which will live long in the memory. Three very different goals but all dispatched with the awe-inspiring quality of a master marksman operating at the peak of his powers.

“Luis. Magician,” was the verdict of Liverpool’s principal owner John W Henry. West Brom’s overworked backline had no answer to the Uruguayan’s scintillating bag of tricks. It was a performance which underlined why Henry simply refused to do business when the striker tried to engineer a move to Arsenal back in the summer. Trying to find a suitable replacement would have been futile because Suarez is such a rare breed. Few possess his heady mix of hunger, desire and sublime talent. Selling to a domestic rival was never seriously considered because of the damage it would have done not only to Liverpool’s prestige but also their hopes of Champions League qualification.

However, when Suarez lights up a game like this it merely reinforces the fact that the Gunners’ ‘improved’ bid of £40million plus £1 hopelessly undervalued him. There isn’t a team on the planet who wouldn’t be improved by having Suarez leading the line and how some of Europe’s big-hitters must be kicking themselves at their failure to test the Reds’ resolve. Many questioned the wisdom of keeping a player against his will. After all retaining the services of someone who had hurt and angered Kopites with his disrespectful behaviour seemed alien to the long-standing mantra of no-one being bigger than the club.

Yet the strong leadership shown by Brendan Rodgers and the owners has been rewarded. They refused to back down safe in the knowledge that once the transfer window shut they would get total commitment from Suarez. Half-hearted simply isn’t in his make-up. The hope is that the penny has finally dropped with Suarez and he realises he has a debt to repay to Liverpool for dragging their name through the mud with the controversies which have dogged his Anfield career. Certainly, there are promising signs that he has cleaned up his act. In the five matches since he returned from his 10-game ban he has only made headlines for the right reasons. What’s clear is that a love affair has been rekindled. Twelve weeks ago he was jogging around Melwood on his own, banished from the squad as punishment for his poor attitude in training and his accusation that Rodgers had broken a promise to let him leave. A public apology for his conduct was never forthcoming but Suarez has clearly decided that actions speak louder than words. The frontman applauded all four sides of Anfield as he accepted the fans’ appreciation for his heroics on Saturday. He would need a heart of stone not to be touched by the unwavering support he has received.

Special players get special dispensation. The events of the summer have been forgiven, if not forgotten. Whether Liverpool can keep hold of Suarez in the long-term only time will tell, but if it’s Champions League football he craves then the belief is growing that he won’t need to move on in order to fulfil that ambition. This time last year Suarez carried the goalscoring burden almost single-handedly. Not any more. Now he’s part of the Premier League’s most devastating double act which strikes fear into defenders.

Daniel Sturridge played the supporting role on Saturday but he did it with aplomb. He worked tirelessly for the cause and had the final word with a sublime 20-yard chip over Boaz Myhill. The fact he even attempted it let alone pulled it off was the mark of a man bubbling with confidence.

Remarkably, in nine league games this term, only Southampton have stopped him from finding the net. With 21 goals, no top-flight marksman has been more prolific in 2013. With every passing week that £12million transfer fee looks like small change. After years of frustration, Sturridge has finally found somewhere to call home. Suarez and Sturridge are inspiring each other to greater heights and with such a potent strikeforce there’s a buzz around Anfield which has been absent in recent years.

The real litmus test for this side awaits at the Emirates on Saturday evening. The timing is perfect with Liverpool heading for the capital on the back of their most convincing triumph of the campaign.

Make no mistake, West Brom are no mugs. Having won at Old Trafford and taken a point off Arsenal, they arrived on the back of a five-game unbeaten run and had conceded just two goals on their travels this term.

The Baggies had beaten the Reds in the three previous league meetings but their bogey team status was blown away as Rodgers’ side excelled in all departments. The hosts played at a tempo and intensity Steve Clarke’s side couldn’t live with. The balance in midfield was much improved as the decision to recall Lucas Leiva at the expense of Victor Moses paid off handsomely. The outstanding Lucas provided the platform for Steven Gerrard and Jordan Henderson to shine further forward. The contribution of the captain and his young protege made a mockery of the bitter criticism aimed at them from a former manager down the M62.

With Philippe Coutinho on the brink of a comeback, Rodgers has a welcome selection dilemma.

Liverpool led inside 12 minutes as Suarez, who hadn’t scored in his five previous games against the Baggies, darted past Claudio Yacob, nutmegged Jonas Olsson

and clinically drilled a low drive into the bottom corner.

Somehow he bettered that five minutes later, meeting Aly Cissokho’s cross on the edge of the box and arrowing a thumping header into the top corner. The power and accuracy was stunning. Suarez’s fourth hat-trick for the Reds but his first on home soil was completed before the hour mark when Gerrard’s enticing free-kick got the finish it deserved as he nodded beyond Myhill.

Strangely, it was also the first league goal scored in front of The Kop by anyone since Suarez’s last-gasp equaliser in the infamous clash with Chelsea back in April. West Brom got the sympathy vote soon after with a soft penalty, tucked away by substitute James Morrison, which briefly changed the mood, but the Reds responded in style. Having already rattled the woodwork, Sturridge wrapped up the points with an exquisite lob. The Reds were rampant and it took a fine save from Myhill to tip Suarez’s overhead kick on to the bar.

As the clocks went back, Liverpool took a sizeable step forward.



**Brilliant Suarez blows West Brom away**

Luis Suarez scored the fourth hat-trick of his Liverpool career as West Brom were blown away by the brilliant South American as the Reds eased to a 4-1 victory at Anfield. Having had to play catch-up with strike partner Daniel Sturridge in the goalscoring stakes as a result of his 10-match suspension carried over from last season, the Uruguayan is definitely back to full speed. Shortly after the 26-year-old scored a superb first as early as the 12th minute Reds owner John Henry, watching from his home in America, tweeted “Luis. Magician.” It was difficult to argue with that assessment after seeing Suarez ghost past two West Brom players to slot home. By the end of the game there were plenty of more superlatives to use - and that was not even taking into account a superb overhead kick with 10 minutes to go which crashed against the bar. All this against a side with the third-best defensive away record in the league having conceded just two.

Suarez’s second and third goals both came from headers, one almost from the edge of the penalty area, to make it 36 goals in his last 46 matches and 57 in 101 Liverpool appearances overall. That is exactly why Henry was so unequivocal in his hard-line stance over the summer when he refused to countenance a sale even after a £40,000,001 bid from Arsenal and complaints from the player about the club reneging on a deal to allow him to join a Champions League club.

Even when substitute James Morrison converted from the spot to reduce the deficit Sturridge ensured the afternoon ended on a high note with a delightful 20-yard chip. Initially it appeared the day may have been one of controversy for Suarez as his ninth-minute fall in the area after tussling with Billy Jones resulted in West Brom captain Jonas Olsson remonstrating with the Uruguayan. It is unlikely that provided any additional motivation for Suarez but within minutes the Baggies’ Swedish centre-back found himself a mere bystander as he was left trailing in the wake of the striker’s brilliance.

Suarez picked up the ball in the inside-right channel and skipped past Claudio Yacob before nutmegging Olsson so perfectly the defender was still turning round as the forward Suarez beat Boaz Myhill with an angled shot.

If that goal was a product of the South American’s nifty footwork his second was more instinctive. Having laid off the ball to Aly Cissokho he continued his run to meet the on-loan Valencia defender’s first-time cross with a bullet header from at least 16 yards out. As he raced away to celebrate even Suarez, not renowned for his aerial prowess, looked slightly surprised that he had scored with his head from that distance. Liverpool should have had the result wrapped up from a well-worked Suarez free-kick to Gerrard in the inside-right channel but when the captain cut the ball back from the byline Martin Skrtel completely fluffed his shot from close range.

Yacob, not having the best of games in midfield, then fouled Sturridge - for once being completely overshadowed by his strike partner but Suarez’s free-kick went just wide. Jordan Henderson, whose movement and powerful running in behind strikers made a mockery of Sir Alex Ferguson’s bizarre criticism of his gait, almost made it three when he curled a shot over after Lucas Leiva, Suarez and Gerrard had combined on the edge of a congested penalty area.

West Brom’s first real chance came in added time before the interval when Youssef Mulumu’s ball over the top picked out former Liverpool striker Nicolas Anelka who knocked past the advancing Simon Mignolet only for Skrtel to hack into the Kop before the ball crossed the line.

That would have given the visitors hope and what they needed to do was come out all guns blazing for the second half.

They failed on that count and soon found themselves out of the game. Sturridge bent a free-kick just off target and Suarez had a shot deflected behind before the Uruguayan completed his hat-trick.

Gerrard swung in a free-kick from the left and the striker jumped to flick a head and divert the ball into the far corner.

Sturridge, who must have already resigned himself to playing second-fiddle, crashed a shot against the bar but the damage had already been done.

Even a spot-kick with 25 minutes to go, converted by Morrison after Cissokho had been adjudged by the assistant referee to have fouled Jones, could not alter the outcome as Sturridge’s inch-perfect chip restored the three-goal cushion.

Compiled by Graeme Riley

Date: 26 October 2013 Opposition: West Bromwich Albion Competition: League	Post	Sun Independent	Sun Telegraph	Mail		26 October 2013
		Guardian	Telegraph	Birmingham Echo		
	BBC	Independent	Mirror	Echo		



Suarez the 'magician' makes lingering Liverpool doubts disappear

Of all the figures who have been showered in vitriol in Sir Alex Ferguson's abysmally timed autobiography, Luis Suarez largely escaped the Liverpool bits as they focused on the way Jordan Henderson ran or the old curmudgeon's assertion that Steven Gerrard was not a "top, top player".

Suarez is unquestionably top. As John W Henry, the man who pays his wages, tweeted during the game, he is "a magician". The striker is someone, like Gerrard, Wayne Rooney or Mesut-zil who creates a frisson of electricity whenever he comes near the ball.

Like Zlatan Ibrahimovic, there is a realisation that he can be a bit of an arse. Ibrahimovic confessed to such in his autobiography. Suarez acknowledged it in a television advert for a Uruguayan company that saw him fall outrageously to the ground, claim credit for everything and put his fellow workers off their game. Both, however, reward their backers with the kind of magic that makes football worthwhile. Few who were in Brussels in midweek could forget Ibrahimovic's four goals for Paris Saint-Germain and the same can be said of Suarez's hat-trick at Anfield yesterday.

He, too, might have scored four. There was an outrageous overhead kick on to Boaz Myhill's crossbar and the last kick before he was brought off to a standing ovation saw the West Bromwich Albion keeper save at full stretch.

It would be wrong to say the Uruguayan was the difference between Liverpool and West Bromwich Albion - Martin Skrtel cleared off the line, while Daniel Sturridge also struck a thoroughly bruised crossbar and scored the best goal of the afternoon, a beautiful chip into the net in front of the Kop.

Suarez had just hurled himself with wonderful theatrically into the penalty area, a result of the slightest of tugs from Gareth McAuley, when he showed his other side, the kind that merits his ranking alongside Kenny Dalglish and Kevin Keegan as one of Liverpool's great No 7s.

There were four West Bromwich defenders around him as he advanced toward the Anfield Road End. None got close. He skipped past Jonas Olsson and surgically drove his shot into the corner of the net.

And yet the two other goals were in their way even better because, whatever Suarez is, he is not renowned as a scorer of great headers. The leap to meet Aly Cissokho's cross was reminiscent of Keegan in his pomp, but what was remarkable was that the header came from the edge of the area and flew past Myhill as if had been delivered by his boot. It struck the same corner of the net but six feet further up.

Ten minutes after the interval, Gerrard delivered a free-kick from the left. Suarez twisted his body as he leapt to meet it and the hat-trick, his fourth for Liverpool and his first at Anfield, was complete.

"It was our best 90 minutes of the season," said his manager Brendan Rodgers. "I thought we looked a very good team today. The front two are as good as it gets and we have players like Philippe Coutinho to come back.

"Once I got the commitment from Luis in the summer I knew what he would do. He is not just a great player, he is a tireless worker and I knew, if he stayed, he would work as he has always done."

West Bromwich Albion were not ordinary opposition. They had beaten Liverpool in Rodgers's first match as manager; they had won here in February and beaten Manchester United at Old Trafford last month. Perhaps, most significantly, they had conceded just twice away from the Hawthorns this season.

They kept attacking even when three goals down and, when Billy Jones was brought down, earned a penalty which James Morrison converted. They had not come to Merseyside on a damage-limitation exercise, although they would return to the Black Country in pain.

Liverpool had used the match programme to celebrate the 50th anniversary of their battle hymn. You'll Never Walk Alone was released by Gerry and the Pacemakers right after a 1-0 win over West Bromwich that sent Bill Shankly's side fifth in the table, two points behind Manchester United.

They finished that 1963-64 season as champions. That may be beyond them this time round, but it is worth recalling another line from Ferguson's autobiography, that even in the depths of Liverpool's decline he could "feel their breath on my neck from 25 miles". For the moment, his successor can see only Liverpool's back.

Liverpool (4-4-2): Mignolet; Johnson (Kelly, 62), Skrtel, Tour[c], Sakho, Gerrard (Allen, 86), Lucas Leiva, Henderson, Cissokho; Suarez (Luis Alberto, 89), Sturridge.

West Bromwich Albion (4-2-3-1): Myhill; Jones, McAuley, Olsson, Ridgeway; Yacob (Brunt, 69); Amalfitano (Morrison, 45), Sessegnon, Anichebe; Anelka (Long, 69).

Referee: Jon Moss.

Man of the match: Suarez (Liverpool)

Match rating: 8/10

# The Sunday Telegraph

Suarez weaves magic spell

Liverpool 4 Suarez 12 17 55, Sturridge 77

West Bromwich 1 Morrison 66 (pen)

Att: 44,747

Sir Alex Ferguson is a manager whose fierce words can stir a team even in retirement. Perhaps only standings at the season's end will mark whether old scores have truly been settled. Yet Liverpool took this opportunity to stress a few points.

Steven Gerrard not top, top class. Jordan Henderson has an odd posture. Liverpool eight players away from challenging for the Premier League title. All were the opinion of Ferguson.

What followed was Liverpool's most convincing victory of the season. If Arsenal are beaten in their next match, Liverpool will be top of the league.

When Luis Suarez plays like this, Liverpool look like a team capable of winning trophies. Suarez performed with unquestionable excellence, his first Anfield hat-trick executed magnificently -- a first for Liverpool against West Brom since Roger Hunt contributed to the same scoreline in 1968. There are not enough superlatives to describe this player.

When he was substituted with a few minutes left, a roar seemed to come from the guts of this famous stadium. Suarez could not stop smiling. He saluted the Kop. He saluted the Centenary Stand. He saluted the Main Stand and, finally the Anfield Road. Each spectator stood. This is a player who, just a few months ago, wanted to leave.

Brendan Rodgers beamed afterwards. He commended Suarez, whose opening goal was so brilliant it prompted John Henry, Liverpool's owner, to take to Twitter. "Luis," he wrote, "Magician". Rodgers concurred. "There is only one word," he said. "Luis is magical."

Rodgers was keen, though, to speak about the contributions of others, especially Gerrard and Henderson. While Suarez's presence was most important in terms of the scoreline and Henderson ran, ran and ran -- his motion not appearing to be inhibiting him just yet - Gerrard, positioned in an advanced midfield position, was a significant, yet subtle presence.

This is how the greatest react when time comes to defend their status. Ferguson is right. History will not recall Gerrard as a top, top player. He is above that. As Rodgers half-joked: "He is a top, top, top, top top player." Gerrard's influence has no ceiling.

This was always likely to happen. Throughout his Liverpool career, whenever there have been doubters -- about the team or himself -- Gerrard has reliably done something that makes the general observer gasp with awe and the supporter release Bovril into the air. His contributions are tangible; the reaction of the crowd, audible. They are louder than any of Ferguson's words. On this occasion, he supplied Suarez's hat-trick goal with a gorgeous free-kick, which meant the striker only needed to touch it.

"Collectively, it was our best 90 minutes of the season," Rodgers insisted. "I thought we looked a very good team today."

West Brom were a convenient opponent to set a few things straight. They had beaten Liverpool in their previous three league matches. Steve Clarke's side defeated Manchester United at Old Trafford last month.

Liverpool's problems against West Brom in recent years have been attritional. They have not been able to break a defence containing Gareth McAuley and Jonas Olsson -- a duo as thoughtful and yielding as a pair of medieval jailors. They tackle, they head, they kick -- and not much else. But they rarely surrender an opportunity to escape. Previously, Suarez had been imprisoned -- no goals in five appearances against the West Midlands. Not on this occasion.


He was unlucky not to have been awarded a penalty after a drag inside the box by McAuley by the time he had scored Liverpool's opener. Receiving possession 30 yards away from goal and surrounded by three opponents, it seemed implausible that, moments later, Liverpool would have the lead. After a nutmeg on Olsson and a right-foot drive into the bottom corner, that was exactly what they had.

It would have been interesting to hear what Henry made of Suarez's second goal, scored shortly after. Again, the odds were against the striker as he met Aly Cissokho's deflected cross on the edge of the 18-yard box.

Again, the levels of improbability did not matter. His header was more of a head-butt, arrowing the ball past Boaz Myhill. Suarez sealed his hat-trick.

He and Daniel Sturridge also hit the bar. But the visitors were given hope when Billy Jones fell inside the box under what appeared to be a fair challenge from Lucas and James Morrison cracked home the penalty.

For the style of all Suarez's goals, he could not match Sturridge's fourth. From 25 yards out, he spotted Boaz Myhill a touch off his line. There was no fortunate divot on the pitch; he meant the chip that followed. It was his 14th goal in 14 games.

Date: 26 October 2013 Opposition: West Bromwich Albion Competition: League	Post	Sun Independent	Sun Telegraph	Mail		26 October 2013
		Guardian	Telegraph	Birmingham Echo		
	BBC	Independent	Mirror	Echo		
<div> <b>THE SUNDAY TIMES</b></div>			<div><b>TheObserver</b></div>			



Date: 26 October 2013 Opposition: West Bromwich Albion Competition: League	Post	Sun Independent	Sun Telegraph	Mail		26 October 2013
		Guardian	Telegraph	Birmingham Echo		
	BBC	Independent	Mirror	Echo		
<div>BIRMINGHAM MAIL</div> <div>At around 5.15pm on Saturday a fire alarm starting ringing at Anfield. The stadium was evacuated for some 15 minutes or so while directors, media and worse-for-wear corporate guests mingled, somewhat awkwardly, in the car park. Steve Clarke and his Albion side really could have done with that alarm going off two hours earlier. It's not that the Baggies were necessarily poor on Saturday. True, they were far from their best - but Liverpool were at their best. And Luis Suarez produced the kind of performance that should be drawing a few 10 out of 10s in the national media today. He scored a hat-trick. He could have had five - only the agility of Boaz Myhill prevented further damage. From Albion's point of view, their display was somewhat flat. And the insipid nature of their opening 15 minutes set the tone. Clarke made a bold decision with his side before the game. And it didn't really work. That certainly wasn't the reason for the defeat - Albion could have fielded 13 players and still lost, such was the fluidity and endurance of Liverpool's overall performance. But the Baggies boss' selection didn't necessarily help matters. The omission of Saido Berahino was somewhat understandable. The forward lacked spark against Stoke and against Liverpool a different approach was needed. When the team sheets were handed in at 2pm the natural assumption was that Nicolas Anelka would play behind the lone striker Victor Anichebe, with Stephane Sessegnon moving across to the left. That wasn't the case. Anelka played at the top, with Sessegnon behind and Anichebe on the left (he later moved to the right). The decision didn't pay off. Although Anichebe occasionally occupied this role for Everton during his career at Goodison Park - according to Clarke and Merseyside media - he is clearly more adept as a central striker. It showed on Saturday, with the big forward showing plenty of will but little else. As for Anelka, his form continues to suffer. There was no sparkle, a shortage of invention and seemingly little motivation. The striker we remember from Chelsea, Arsenal and Liverpool has long gone. In his place is a footballer who struggled for understanding with his team-mates. His performance on Saturday, at times, was like that of an over-age Masters player who has been drafted in for one last go in professional football. Every movement was just that little bit too late, whether it was his reaction, anticipation or movement. A player of his calibre clearly doesn't become a bad footballer just because he has gained a couple of years in age, but you question whether the hunger, sharpness and overall qualities which made him such an immense talent are no longer prevalent. It's becoming an issue for Clarke. Supporters are questioning his inclusion and, while Albion are winning, it isn't an issue. But if results turn for the worse, the scratching of heads will not only be consigned to the terraces but also the inside of the dressing room. In any case, Anelka's form, Anichebe's left-wing shuffling and Albion's overall lethargy didn't prevent Liverpool from hitting top gear at just the wrong time for the visitors. Suarez's first was immaculate. His collected the ball, rolled past Claudio Yacob, threaded the ball between Jonas Olsson's legs and tucked in a low shot way out of Boaz Myhill's reach. His second was a glorious finish. Aly Cissokho thumped in a lovely cross from the left which Suarez managed to get his head to. Should Albion have been marking a little tighter? Perhaps. It was good movement by the Liverpool striker to get away from his marker. And an even better finish. The third was as a result of Albion's own doing in many respects - way too often on Saturday a free-kick was conceded in a poor area. Suarez and Daniel Sturridge, by that point, had already gone close. This time Suarez ghosted past a number of Albion shirts, notably Anichebe, to glance Gerrard's free-kick past Myhill. Albion pulled one back. Billy Jones was deemed to have been fouled by Lucas - Jon Moss failed to spot it, but his nearest linesman did. How Albion could have done with such vision from an assistant official at Stoke the week before. It was a soft decision, but James Morrison wasn't about to quibble. He sent his effort into the goal. Daniel Sturridge ended Albion's hopes with a beautifully finishing chipped shot which had Myhill running backwards to no avail. Albion had the goalkeeper to thank for three excellent saves before the 90 minutes was up - with Suarez twice going close, with his striker partner Sturridge also going close. Albion's defence was vulnerable and brittle - though Billy Jones, often, looked Albion's most likely attacking - with the Baggies' midfield lacking bite and energy against Gerrard and co. Yousouf Mulumbu and Yacob did not get much joy against their counterparts. Mulumbu's second-half was particularly poor - often venturing off to leave the midfield and, subsequently, defence exposed. Sessegnon gave Albion occasional hope, but Saturday was one of those games where one could only sit back and admire the brilliance of others. He might have the teeth of a horse and the balance of a drunken deer but Suarez's performance was also a privilege to witness. Saturday shouldn't be an inquest into Albion's frailties. It should be more a reflection of the individual brilliance of one man wearing a red No.7 shirt.</div>					<div>BBC</div> <div>Luis Suarez scored a scintillating hat-trick as Liverpool kept the pressure on Arsenal at the top of the Premier League table with a convincing victory over West Brom at Anfield. This was a majestic individual display by the Uruguayan striker, who left the field to a rapturous ovation and went down the tunnel with the match-ball under his arm. But it was also a day when the partnership between Suarez and Daniel Sturridge simply proved too much for the visitors. Suarez fired Liverpool in front on 11 minutes, after a delightful, jinking run that tore the West Brom defence to shreds. The 26-year-old added a second six minutes later, heading powerfully beyond goalkeeper Boaz Myhill, and completed his hat-trick with a glancing header from a Steven Gerrard free-kick. James Morrison pulled a goal back for West Brom with a controversially awarded penalty but Sturridge extinguished any hopes of a comeback 15 minutes from time with a wonderful 20-yard chip. Both home strikers also hit the bar. Suarez and Sturridge have now scored 14 goals between them in the league this season, and the Uruguayan has 36 goals in his past 46 matches for Liverpool. The only disappointment for Brendan Rodgers' side was the failure to keep a clean sheet, something they have now failed to do since 1 September. Their concession here was down to a strange piece of officiating midway through the second half, when the assistant referee awarded West Brom a penalty for Aly Cissokho's foul on Billy Jones, despite referee Jon Moss having apparently already decided against awarding a spot-kick. But the day belonged to Suarez, who came into this game having failed to score against West Brom in five previous appearances but clearly in no mood to be denied again. His close control was, at times, hypnotic. He produced his full repertoire of feints and swerves, sudden stops and demoralising spurts to leave the visiting defenders dumbfounded time and again. Frustrated to be denied a penalty after 10 minutes when he went down too easily following a coming together with Gareth McAuley, he soon put things to rights with an opening goal that was the pick of the bunch. Gathering the ball 25 yards from goal, Suarez drifted away from Claudio Yacob, nutmegged Jonas Olsson and fired a low shot unerringly beyond Myhill and into the far corner of the net. Next he combined with Cissokho down the Liverpool left before directing the Frenchman's cross beyond Myhill with a powerful header that hit the top corner from the edge of the penalty area. It felt only a matter of time before Suarez completed his hat-trick as he saw a curling free-kick drift narrowly wide and a goal-bound shot blocked brilliantly by Olsson. In fact, he had to wait until 10 minutes into the second half for his third, but he made no mistake when Gerrard's free-kick came his way, glancing a header beyond Myhill as Anfield reverberated to the sound of Suarez's name. Even Liverpool owner John W Henry felt moved to tweet his thoughts from Boston. "Luis. Magician" was all he wrote. On this evidence, it was hard to disagree. If Suarez had set the record straight on a personal level, this result also brought a measure of revenge for Liverpool, who had lost the past three league matches between the sides. West Brom had come into the contest unbeaten in five games, their best run of form under Steve Clarke. Memories of their stunning victory at Old Trafford were fresh in the mind and, given the Baggies' solid defensive record, Liverpool might have expected a more taxing afternoon. But with the calming presence of Lucas Leiva, restored to the side after the birth of his second child, alongside Gerrard and the irrepressible Jordan Henderson in midfield, Liverpool rarely looked troubled. And while Sturridge may not get the headlines, his contribution was at times just as dazzling as Suarez's. His deft chip for Liverpool's fourth would, on another day, have been the moment of the match. But by then Suarez had already produced more than enough magic to see West Brom off. West Brom boss Steve Clarke: "It was a difficult afternoon. We set ourselves up to be open, but maybe we were a little bit too open. The first goal is disappointing to lose and the second goal is an unbelievable header from the edge of the box. "We kept going - you can't fault the effort - but we gave ourselves too big a mountain to climb. We created a number of chances. It was an open game - probably great for the Liverpool fans to watch. At the moment their two boys up front are in form and we suffered for that."</div>	

<