Date: 21 December 2013
Opposition: Cardiff City
Competition: League

Echo	Sunday Times	Sun Telegraph	Telegraph
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THE TIMES

Supreme Suarez ensures Rodgers is lost for words

Liverpool 3
Suarez 25, 45, Sterling 42
Cardiff City 1
Mutch 58
Referee LProbert Attendance 44,621

For once, the usually loquacious Brendan Rodgers was lost for words. "Of the 19 goals that Luis Suarez has scored this season, which is your favourite?"
the Liverpool manager had been asked and there was no immediate response. Rodgers paused for thought, shuffled his feet, folded and unfolded his arms; almost 20 seconds had passed before the deliberation finally ended.
"Probably the goal against Norwich a couple of weeks ago from 40 yards," was the slightly unconvincing reply; the inescapable feeling being that Rodgers had so many wondrous strikes to choose from that he could just have easily have selected another. This hadn't been a pregnant pause to build up suspense before delivering the killer line -- it was a silent expression of wonderment at the deeds of a player that Malky Mackay described as "the best in the world" at present.
The likelihood is that neither of Suarez's goals against Cardiff City would feature in Suarez's own top five but that says more about the standards that he has set for himself than it does about the quality of the two strikes that helpedLiverpool to climb to the top of the Barclays Premier League. The first, an unerring volley from the edge of the penalty area showcased his knack of finding and utilising space and his ability to make the most of it. The second, a perfectly aimed curling shot from a similar position, highlighted his appreciation of angles and propensity to punish weakness.
In between, the 26-year-old displayed his growing maturity by squaring for Raheem Sterling to score his third goal in four matches.
Suarez now has 29 goals in 26 games in 2013. Ten of those have come in December, meaning he now holds the Premier League record for the most goals in a single calendar month. His running total of 19 league goals before Christmas has previously been matched only by Kevin Phillips and Andy Cole and this after the Uruguay striker missed the first five games of the season through suspension.
But most staggering of all is the fact that he is at present scoring at a faster rate than Dixie Dean when the legendary Everton forward struck a mind-boggling 60 league goals in a single season. "He looks like he can score a hat-trick in every game, doesn't he?" Rodgers said. "He can do, because he has got that quality.
"You can put him in that bracket of world class. I think one or two of his off-field antics have maybe detracted a wee bit from his performance level but you see a different man now. When you are scoring goals at the rate he is, in the most competitive league in the world, you have to put him up there."
As a team, Cardiff have scored six goals fewer that Suarez, a predicament shared by ten other teams, but on Saturday that seemed like a triviality.
There was much to admire about the character shown by Mackay's players after going 3-0 down and their resilience was rewarded with Jordon Mutch's consolation goal. But beyond those positives, the division, acrimony and uncertainty which continues to undermine the club was palpable.
Mackay's dignity shone like a beacon, a testament to his professionalism and integrity. The sense of powerlessness that surrounds him, though, betrayed the reality that the "Holy Trinity" of managers, players and directors that Bill Shankly once claimed mattered most at a football club are now at the mercy of owners like Vincent Tan whom Rodgers believes "knows nothing about football".
It was in this fixture in 1959 that Shankly took charge of Liverpool for the first time. He would have delighted in the free-flowing attacking football that his former club played and he would have revelled in seeing them make another statement of their intent. The plight of Mackay, however, would have exasperated him, particularly as Cardiff's players, supporters and manager appear to be as one. It is the kind of situation that might even have left him, like Rodgers, lost for words.
RATINGS Liverpool (4-2-3-1): S Mignolet 6 -- G Johnson 6, M Skrtel 6, M Sakho 7, J Flanagan 7 (sub: M Kelly, 55min 6) -- L Leiva 7, J Allen 7 -- R Sterling 8, J Henderson 8, P Coutinho 7 (sub: D Agger, 83) -- L Suarez 9. Substitutes not used: B Jones, K Toure, L Alberto, I Aspas, V Moses. Booked: Skrtel, Sterling.
Cardiff City (4-4-1-1): D Marshall 6 -- K Theophile-Catherine 6, S Caulker 5, B Turner 5, A Taylor 5 -- C Noone 6, A Gunnarsson 5 (sub: A Cornelius, 80), G Medel 5 (sub: F Campbell, 58 5), P Whittingham 6 -- J Mutch 6 -- P Odemwingie 5 (sub: Kim Bo Kyung, 55 6). Substitutes not used: J Lewis, M Hudson, D Cowie, D John.

theguardian

Fans in revolt, owner under fire - Cardiff remind Liverpool of life before Fenway

It was just like old times at Liverpool but painful or wonderful to reminisce, depending on the old time in question. The Kop rejoiced in being top of the league as a Liverpool team passed and moved its way to a victory orchestrated by a phenomenal No7. The sight of Cardiff City supporters in revolt, their manager undermined and their owner being driven away in a blacked-out van, however, evoked memories of more recent, darker days at Anfield. Sympathy for Malky Mackay was widespread, with the threat of termination at the time still very real. The Cardiff manager was never in peril for football reasons and the latest blows to his successful reign were applied by someone who defies reason. Luis Suarez became the first player in Liverpool's history to score at least twice in five consecutive league games at Anfield and he laid on another for Raheem Sterling as Brendan Rodgers' team made their push for the Christmas No1.
Suarez is making anything possible, as his four-month transformation from pariah to recipient of a new pounds 200,000-a-week contract demonstrates, but it is doubtful if even he could alert Vincent Tan to a good thing in football. Tan, the owner who tried to oust the manager who gave Cardiff Premier League football and its riches, before common sense broke out on Sunday, was barracked while Mackay was applauded on all sides. "The fans' backing of myself and the team in the way they did, and to hear the Liverpool fans doing the same, is something that will live with me forever," the Scot said.
With slicked-back hair, sunglasses in December and leather gloves, Tan could not have looked any more like the archetypal villain had he sat in the stands stroking a white cat and sent Mackay plummeting from his technical area into a pool full of sharks. Regardless of the chairman, Mehmet Dalman, calling for diplomacy, the owner has drained the enjoyment from Cardiff's supporters in a manner similar to the Liverpool reign of Tom Hicks and George Gillett.
"They are passionate people, the Welsh, they love their football, and I have enjoyed living in the area," said Mackay. "They have really embraced everything we have tried to achieve. I have been open and honest with them about what we have been doing, explaining sometimes difficult decisions that people maybe sometimes don't agree with.
"But in the main what I wanted to do was build something that was built on bricks, not sand, and I think we have taken small steps over two and a half years, while all the time climbing to get a group that I believe can stay in the Premier League."
Asked if he had refused to resign due to the repercussions for his pay-off, Mackay replied: "I have no reason to resign. I enjoy my job, my players enjoy the staff coming in to work with them every day and the fans enjoy the fact that this group of people represent them."
The contrast with the atmosphere and unity around Liverpool could not be more pronounced. Suarez was inevitably the instigator 24 hours after extending his contract at Anfield until 2018, volleying the first inside David Marshall's right-hand post, unselfishly squaring for Sterling to score the second and curling the superb third into the far corner from the edge of the Cardiff area in a 21-minute purple patch before half-time. An inch-perfect pass or touch from Jordan Henderson was involved in each one.
"It adds to that feelgood factor," said Rodgers on Suarez's new contract. "I think you felt on Friday afternoon on Merseyside - or certainly one half of it - there was a real uplifting piece of news. I think supporters now are coming here really looking forward to their football and to seeing their team perform. They know they are going to see a real, world-class operator and also a lot of young players who are developing to a really high level. The club as a whole is in a really good moment. We are on the right path and we have to make sure we keep on it."
Suarez's statistics are as remarkable as his finishing. His 19 goals in 12 games represents an average of 1.58 per game. Over the course of a 38-game season that would yield a return equal to "Dixie" Dean's record of 60 league goals in 1927-28 or 52 goals in 33 games for Suarez, given he missed the opening five league matches through suspension. Either way Alan Shearer and Andy Cole should enjoy their Premier League record of 34 goals in a single season while they can.
"He looks like he can score a hat-trick every game, doesn't he?" Rodgers added. "He can break it [the Premier League record] because he has got that quality. He will certainly push it close."
Man of the match Luis Suarez (Liverpool)

Compiled by Graeme Riley

Date: 21 December 2013
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21 December 2013

The Mail

Super Suarez strikes again with deadly double as Mackay's side suffer defeat in front of owner Tan

Mesmeric Luis Suarez added another two gems for his personal goal of the season competition as Liverpool hit the top of the Premier League for the first time at this stage of the season since 2008.

Having once heaped shame and misery on his club, the Uruguayan now provides unbounded joy and brilliance. He is captain in Steven Gerrard's absence, top earner with a new £45million contract in the bag and on current form could catapult Liverpool to their first League title since 1990.

Cardiff City, distracted by the ongoing soap opera between manager Malky Mackay and owner Vincent Tan, could not live with him.

Suarez scored a stunning volley to open the scoring, unselfishly set up Raheem Sterling for Liverpool's second and hammered in a right-footed curler to seal the points before half-time. That's 19 goals in 13 games for Suarez since he returned from suspension for biting Branislav Ivanovic last season.

He is getting into Cristiano Ronaldo-Lionel Messi territory for the right to be called best player in the world and England boss Roy Hodgson must hope the 26-year-old's form drops off before facing him at the World Cup.

Suarez said: 'I am so happy with the new contract but today I was focused on this game, and in the first half we played very well. There is only one captain of this team [Gerrard] and this victory is for him. But it is too early to say we can win the title.'

Yet Liverpool have scored 17 goals in winning four games since they surprisingly lost 3-1 at Hull City and manager Brendan Rodgers said: 'The superlative for Luis today is unselfish. It showed in setting up the second goal — you don't see too many strikers do that. It showed when Daniel Agger came on as substitute and Luis gave the armband to him. It shows the humility of the man and a genuine world-class player, pivotal for the team.'

It was a strange pre-match atmosphere at a cold, sunny Anfield. Liverpool's form without the injured Gerrard and Daniel Sturridge, coupled with the announcement of Suarez's long-term deal on Friday, was overshadowed by thousands of Cardiff fans chanting support of Mackay and anger at Tan.

The billionaire Malaysian, who has fallen out spectacularly with his manager, had to sit in the directors' box and listen to his fans chanting 'We want Vincent out', 'Malky is the special one' and 'Go back to Malaysia'.

They were greeted with applause from Liverpool fans, who have had their own tribulations with wayward overseas owners.

'It was humbling,' said an emotional Mackay, who reiterated that he will not resign, which would mean losing a substantial pay-off.

The sideshow could have been a distraction for Liverpool's players — and probably was for 25 minutes. Indeed, Cardiff had the first chance when boyhood Liverpool fan Craig Noone left Simon Mignolet scrambling.

Then, normal service was resumed. Jordan Henderson looped up a cross from the left and Suarez, standing on the edge of the penalty area, watched it drop all the way before catching the ball perfectly with his right boot. It flew past David Marshall in Cardiff's goal. It was the catalyst for waves of pressure.

Suarez fed Philippe Coutinho from a short corner who smacked a low shot against the base of a post. Overlapping full-back John Flanagan also saw a shot hooked off the line.

Match facts

Premier League badges

Liverpool: Mignolet 7, Johnson 7, Flanagan 8 (Kelly 55), Lucas 7, Skrtel 6, Sakho 6, Allen 7, Henderson 8, Suarez 9, Sterling 8, Coutinho 7 (Agger 83)

Subs not used: Jones, Kolo Toure, Luis Alberto, Iago Aspas, Moses

Goals: Suarez 25 45, Sterling 42

Booked: Skrtel, Sterling

Cardiff: Marshall 7, Theophile-Catherine 5, Taylor 5, Medel 4 (Campbell 55), Caulker 5, Turner 5, Noone 7, Mutch 7, Odemwingie 4 (Kim 55), Gunnarsson 6 (Cornelius 80), Whittingham 7

Subs not used: Hudson, Cowie, Lewis, John

Man of the Match: Luis Suarez

Attendance: 44,621

Referee: Lee Probert 7

The Daily Telegraph

Suarez can eclipse the Anfield greats

Liverpool 3

Suarez 24, 45 Sterling 42

Cardiff City 1

Mutch 58

Att: 44,621

First Luis Suarez earned the contract, now he is working on earning a statue near the Shankly Gates.

Even a club with as distinguished a history as Liverpool's have never experienced anything like this, the Uruguayan claiming his 19th league goal of the season in 12 appearances as Brendan Rodgers's side moved top with victory against Cardiff City.

Suarez is accumulating at a faster rate than Dixie Dean when he struck his seemingly unbeatable 60 goals for Everton. He is making the likes of Ian Rush, Roger Hunt and Robbie Fowler appear like they were occasional marksmen. You imagine it cannot last, as if Suarez is caught in some sort of freak storm where every Anfield appearance yields a couple of goals as routine.

Cynics say his contract was signed to make it easier for him to leave in the summer, not tougher. Time will tell, but there is no reason to dispute Suarez's claim that he intends to remain on Merseyside for a "very long time" even if that must be conditional on the club restoring their Champions League place and competing for titles. If that proves the case, only injury can stop him rewriting club records and prompting weekly 'who was the greatest?' debates.

Suarez became the first Liverpool player to score at least twice in five consecutive home games. We will need to recruit a modern-day Norris McWhirter to research the match reports soon. The first eminently gettable target is Alan Shearer's Premier League record of 34 league goals.

"He will certainly push it close," Rodgers said. "He looks like he can score a hat-trick in every game, doesn't he?"

Visitors to Anfield have become little more than walk-on guests in the Suarez extravaganza. You half expect the magician to start producing doves from his sleeve after each goal. It is not a question of whether he will score, or even how many, but what kind of goal it will be.

For the record, you can add a closerange volley and swerving right-footer from 20 yards to the collection here. They were Liverpool's first and third of a fixture which, like many others recently, was won after 45 minutes.

The woodwork and unselfishness prevented the hat-trick, Suarez choosing to pass to Raheem Sterling for Liverpool's second when he had only Cardiff goalkeeper David Marshall to beat.

It is the manner of those strikes that is so beguiling. When Rodgers was asked to name his favourite, he had to pause 17 seconds to think (he opted for the 40-yard effort against Norwich City three weeks ago). This is a coach who 18 months ago was given the task of ending what had become a goal drought, but now boasts a two-goals-per-game average which has not been matched since Liverpool's formation in 1892.

Rodgers tried to emphasise Liverpool's return to the top was based on a team performance rather than an individual, but you cannot look beyond Suarez as the catalyst. He is inspiring those around him. In the first minute Jordan Henderson did not flinch when sprinting into a 50-50 tackle. Two years ago Henderson looked like a startled bunny. He is unrecognisable from that player.

Joe Allen, rather like Philippe Coutinho, is ensuring that Liverpool play a more attractive, high-tempo passing game.

Liverpool's defence will face their toughest examination at Manchester City on Boxing Day, the second-half header by Jordon Mutch ensuring the hosts' search for a clean sheet on their own turf continues. Cardiff, for all the turmoil surrounding their manager, Malky Mackay, and owner Vincent Tan, acquitted themselves well. "We came up against one of the best players in the world who was unbelievable for 20 minutes," Mackay said.

You do not have to walk far around Anfield to find a club legend staring at you. There are murals all over the place of the icons, the majority of them from the 1960s, '70s and '80s. There is an occasional modern, overseas great, a Sami Hyypia and Xabi Alonso, for example, but they have supporting roles, in the background, while Ron Yeats, Emlyn Hughes, Phil Thompson and Graeme Souness rightly take centre stage.

In Steven Gerrard Liverpool found someone who could sit comfortably alongside the gods, and in Su=arez they have a player who has the capacity to achieve the previously unthinkable. Eclipse them all.

"Enjoy him while he is here" has been the guarded call, as if this season is a prolonged farewell before the inevitable summer exit.

"There is a real feel-good factor," Rodgers said. "They know they are going to see a real world-class operator and also see a lot of young players who are developing to a really high level. We are on the right path."

Wherever he plays, Suarez is heading for greatness. He is dragging Liverpool with him and it is thrilling to watch.

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21 December 2013

THE INDEPENDENT

DAILY Mirror

BEST PLAYER, BEST GOAL..BEST TEAM? The astonishing Luis Suarez has already won two of those titles, the only question left is whether Liverpool can follow his lead now

LIVERPOOL 3 Suarez 25, 45, Sterling 42 CARDIFF CITY 1 Mutch 58

IT is testament to the quality of Luis Suarez that it took his manager a full 17 seconds to decide which is his best goal of the season.

For the record, the answer as Brendan Rodgers pondered an imaginative question following another demonstration of the Uruguayan's audacious talent, was that stunning 40-yarder against Norwich a couple of weeks ago.

But it could easily have been both goals he produced here to destroy Cardiff or any one of a number that is fast looking like a one-man goal of the season competition. Maybe an even bigger testimony to Suarez's ability is the fact no one argued for a second he was not worth the huge pay rise he has been offered, that puts his salary on a par with the likes of Wayne Rooney in the Premier League.

There is little doubt Suarez is on a par not only with the United star, but also the elite of world football in Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi and it could be argued that right now, he has surpassed them all. Indeed, there is very probably a case to suggest the run of form the Uruguayan has enjoyed, since returning from his ban for biting at the end of September, is one of the greatest in the history of football. Hyperbole? Well, it is true we are running out of things to say about him, but surely never has a player not only looked more like scoring than Suarez right now, but no one has promised to do it in so many different, outstanding ways.

Watching Premier League defenders singularly fail in their one task of marking him is a little like watching that incredibly talented kid run rings round the others in playground matches. It is little wonder Rodgers joked afterwards of having to come up with a new buzz word for the striker every week (and for the record again, this week's was "unselfish", for the way he generously gave Raheem Sterling a goal). What Rodgers pointed out is that Suarez looks likely to score a hat-trick every time he sets foot on the pitch these days, which is why he believes the striker has every chance of breaking the Premier League record of 34 goals in a single season held jointly by Andy Cole and Alan Shearer.

"I really think he can push the record close for sure, because he has the quality to do it, he looks like he can score a hattrick in every game," said the Reds boss.

"But you know what? I don't care who scores. He was unselfish in passing to Raheem for our second, and I'd have given him a b******ing if he hadn't passed and we didn't score! "He did have other chances to score in this game, but he gives me everything, every day of his life - not just in games. So we have a good understanding." It may be that understanding which explains not only why Suarez has signed a new longterm Anfield contract, but also why he is playing with such unrestrained joy at the moment. He clearly trusts his teammates - which evidently was not always the case - and his manager and clearly believes he is in the right system to make the most of his talents. His goals again proved that. The first, a fine, instinctive steered volley from the increasingly brilliant Jordan Henderson's lobbed pass, was audacious, the second, a curling effort after some intricate interplay, perhaps his best yet. As his manager said, when suggesting no one else could do what Suarez delivers right now, it shows he is in the right place. "I just think his profile suits us. There are many players who are good players, but he is a top performer in this system," he added. "He is definitely in that bracket of world-class with Messi and Ronaldo. I think what you can look at this year is that maybe one or two of his off-field antics have detracted from his performance level.

"But you see a different man now. You see a maturity in a guy who is happy and is confident and is totally at peace with everything in his life, on and off the field.

"He is loving Merseyside and is loving being at Liverpool. When you are scoring goals at the rate he is in the most competitive league in the world then you have to put him up there." His movement for the goal sandwiched in between - all before half-time - was worldclass too and he deserved the hat-trick he surely would have enjoyed had he not chosen to pass to Sterling in front of an open goal. Perhaps it is fitting - in a perverse way - that he did it in front of Cardiff boss Malky Mackay (left), because if ever a manager has to go out, then he would prefer to do it with a world-class memory. And Suarez provided that.

As the shamefully-treated Scot stood on the turf at the end, it was clear then he was taking in one last, lingering moment with the fans who chanted his name throughout - and sang something far less charitable about Vincent Tan.

As Rodgers said afterwards, this is a man who brought Cardiff trophies and finals, and most importantly a PS90million bonanza after their first promotion to the top flight in 50 years. It is pointless asking how he can be treated in this way, because Tan is the only man who can answer that, and it is painfully clear the man's mind does not work in a way understandable to football fans.

It is also clear that all supporters have had enough of those owners who display such contempt towards the paying public - with Liverpool fans joining in when the Cardiff faithful showed their affectionate appreciation of their manager.

And that touched an emotional Mackay on what he admitted was a moving afternoon. "The fans' backing of myself and the team in the way they did was very humbling. They are incredible and I will not walk away from them," he said.

"And to hear the Liverpool fans doing the same - that's something that will live with me for ever."

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21 December 2013

LIVERPOOL ECHO

Luis Suarez's perfect Christmas gifts to Reds fans

Luis Suarez is the gift that keeps on giving.

Yet again Liverpool's smiling assassin walked away with his name reverberating around Anfield. This was another majestic masterclass from the Uruguayan who celebrated his lucrative new contract in style.

What do you get for £200,000 per week? The answer is bona fide class. On current form there isn't a better player on the planet.

Suarez fired Liverpool to the top of the Premier League and they will stay there for Christmas if Arsenal fail to beat Chelsea tonight.

The stand-in skipper scored twice and unselfishly created the other for Raheem Sterling as Cardiff City were blown away before half-time.

A season which began with genuine hopes of a Champions League spot is reaching the halfway point with Kopites daring to dream of more. Eyes are starting to wander towards a much greater prize. "I still believe the title is Manchester City's to lose," insisted Brendan Rodgers, keen to keep expectations in check.

"They have the strongest squad. The resources they have are incredible."

Of course the manager is right and after so many false dawns at Anfield over the past two decades Liverpool supporters know better than anyone the dangers of looking too far ahead. The leap from seventh to achieving the Holy Grail of a 19th title is huge. Not since Leeds United in 1992 has a team won the championship having finished outside the top three the previous season.

But then again nobody has been able to call upon a player blessed with such breathtaking natural ability. With Suarez in this kind of form anything is possible. The prolific frontman is making a habit of rewriting the record books.

His tally of 19 goals at this stage of a Premier League season is unprecedented – the fact he sat out the opening five matches due to suspension serves to magnify that achievement. His goalscoring ratio this term is 1.58 per game – when Dixie Dean plundered 60 league goals for Everton in 1927/28 his ratio was 1.53.

Since returning from his 10-game ban, he has graced Anfield on six occasions and has netted 14 goals. He's already in double figures for December.

Suarez is fiercely ambitious. He wants Champions League football and he wants to get his hands on silverware. By signing that new deal he has sent out a clear message that he believes he can achieve those hopes and dreams at Anfield.

Last summer he felt he had outgrown his surroundings. Now he's convinced that Rodgers' Anfield revolution is gathering pace.

As striking as the quality of his goals on Saturday was the sight of him rushing to hand Daniel Agger the armband when the vice-captain came off the bench late on. Suarez is Liverpool's outstanding individual but his commitment to the team ethos is total. There's an appreciation of his team-mates and rightly so because this is a world away from the first half of last season when he was carrying the burden almost single-handedly. Jordan Henderson proved on Saturday that his commanding performance in the thrashing of Tottenham was no one-off.

Once again the England midfielder was outstanding. His athleticism and energy have long since been lauded but now he's proving there is so much more in his armoury. Flourishing in an attacking central midfield role, he showcased his vision and range of passing. Confidence surged through his veins as Henderson drove the Reds forward. It was an afternoon which also confirmed the re-emergence of Sterling as a player of genuine Premier League quality.

After the initial impact the youngster made early last term, his fortunes nosedived and he has spent the best part of 2013 in the wilderness – struggling with form, fitness and off the pitch troubles. "Raheem needs to stabilise his life and understand the remarkable opportunity he has at one of the biggest clubs in the world," said Rodgers earlier this season. The message appears to have got through – a third goal in the past four games was reward for another display full of verve and positivity from the pacey 19-year-old winger.

Liverpool head into a potentially season-defining week with momentum on their side. The Boxing Day clash at Manchester City and the trip to Chelsea three days later will provide answers about what this crop are truly capable of achieving between now and May. On the back of four resounding wins they go into that double header with a sense of belief rather than trepidation.

The goals are flowing with Rodgers' brand of attacking football tormenting top flight defenders. After huffing and puffing for 25 minutes on Saturday everything clicked into gear. The rampant Reds scored three before the interval but could have had six or seven. The deadlock was broken when Joe Allen found Henderson, whose pinpoint cross was expertly volleyed into the bottom corner by Suarez.

Cardiff so resolute and well organised early on simply couldn't live with the sudden increase in tempo and intensity. Philippe Coutinho struck the post, Martin Skrtel nodded wastefully over and young Jon Flanagan's effort was cleared off the line. David Marshall denied Sterling but the keeper was helpless three minutes before the break. Henderson picked out Suarez's run with a classy pass with the outside of his boot. The Uruguayan only had Marshall to beat but opted to square for Sterling to tap home. On the brink of half-time Suarez brought a capacity crowd to their feet with another wonder strike for his growing collection.

Once again Henderson was the creator as his backheel was met 20 yards out with a curling right-footer which nestled in the far corner.

In the second half standards slipped and there was a wobble after Jordon Mutch punished some woeful marking from a set-piece to reduce the deficit.

Cardiff's gutsy display made a mockery of owner Vincent Tan's plans to drive Malky Mackay out of the club.

The vociferous visiting fans left the Malaysian businessman in no doubt about either their contempt for him or their backing for the manager. There was a show of solidarity from the home supporters who responded with applause.

Rodgers' side regained their composure and cruised to victory. Only the combination of Marshall's heroics and the woodwork denied Suarez a third hat-trick of the campaign.

The Kop celebrated Liverpool's place at the Premier League summit in song late on before lauding their special No 7.

'The Reds Are Coming Up The Hill Boys', declared the banner. With Suarez leading the charge the sky's the limit.

LIVERPOOL DAILY POST

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THE INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

Suarez leaves Mackay with nothing but pride

Surrounded by his entourage, Vincent Tan took his seat in the directors box like a Caesar in his Coliseum but there was no question in which direction his black-gloved thumb would be pointing. If Roman gladiators were praised for the way they met their deaths, then Malky Mackay's end was a good one.

Cardiff were playing in blue, the colour Tan had outlawed in favour of his lucky colour, red. At the final whistle, Mackay was embraced by Liverpool manager Brendan Rodgers, to whom he had been assistant at Watford, and when he walked over to his supporters the whole stadium applauded. However, by then the Saturday Caesar had departed.

Before the game, Rodgers had remarked that Tan "knew nothing of football", a comment that is also true of Liverpool's owner, John W Henry. However, Henry has long understood how to deal with sportsmen and the way he and Rodgers have handled Luis Suarez will go down as one of the decisive moments in the Liverpool story. Logically, 2013 should have been the year when Suarez was driven from Merseyside by a combination of his own reckless stupidity and Liverpool's constant failure to make the Champions' League. Instead, he has shown sport's remarkable capacity for redemption.

When he curled another impossible shot into the corner of the net it was his 19th goal of a season that had seen him suspended for the opening five matches. He was wearing the armband of the captain of Liverpool and had just signed a contract that would tie him to Anfield for the next four-and-a-half years. Liverpool will probably return to the Champions' League in 2014, a year that could possibly see them win the championship.

Having undermined himself with a series of overambitious predictions as to where Liverpool would finish last season, Rodgers has been rather more cautious this time, although he was now prepared to discuss the possibility of Liverpool's title. "People will think it is Manchester City's to lose," he reflected. "You would say that because of the squad they have but we have been on a fantastic run and we will go there on Boxing Day in a good moment. What I would say is that it is unprecedented in the Premier League for a club to go from seventh to first."

His opposite number, who had seen Liverpool strike the frame of the goal three times, was less convoluted. "They are absolute title contenders," said Mackay. "Their success is down to the fact that their owners had a plan and were determined to see it through. They wanted a structure in place that was not built on sand." The club that Mackay has taken to top-flight football for the first time since 1962 via a League Cup final against Liverpoolis slipping fast into the mud of Tiger Bay. However, there are few clubs, let alone ones in a state of civil war, who could have resisted Suarez in his present mood. Mackay thought him probably the best player in the world. Only his absence from the Champions' League justifies the 'probably'. Cardiff had kept him at bay for a little over a quarter of the game. He had shot into the side-netting, he had driven just wide and then, when Jordan Henderson's chip found his right foot, the shot left David Marshall in the Cardiff goal paralysed and beaten. Henderson, who had excelled in the 5-0 humiliation of Tottenham, had a hand in all of Liverpool's goals. There were some at the start of the season who were surprised the young Wearsider was still at the club. He had been bracketed with Stewart Downing and Andy Carroll as one of the English footballers brought to Anfield by Kenny Dalglish whose talent had not matched their price. Henderson is in the form of his life, a better than outside bet to be part of the England squad in Brazil and is someone for whom [pounds sterling]20m does not seem an outrageous sum of money.

Three minutes before an interval Mackay desperately needed to reach only a goal down, Henderson supplied two more goals. The first was a long ball that found Suarez a few yards in the opposition half with the Cardiff defence operating only in theory. As the most lethal finisher in the Premier League bore down on him, Marshall crouched and waited for the shot. Instead, he passed. In the BBC commentary box, Pat Nevin noted how, in an instant, Suarez's mind had calculated that he had a 90 per cent chance of scoring whereas Raheem Sterling was a 100 per cent certainty to find the net.

Rodgers also pointed out that when Daniel Agger, the club's vice-captain, came on, Suarez very calmly handed over the captain's armband. He is capable of surprising humility. The third goal, curling away from the tips of Marshall's gloves, demonstrated the other, more familiar, things he can do.

Cardiff, who came out for the second half a full two minutes before Liverpool, were rather better after the interval and scored when Jordon Mutch was given an entirely free header. Rodgers turned and cursed his defence. Mackay stood with his arms folded, his face expressionless. Tan politely moved his gloved hands together and gently clapped.

Liverpool (4-2-3-1): Mignolet; Johnson, Skrtel, Sakho, Flanagan (Kelly, 55); Lucas Leiva, Allen; Sterling, Henderson, Coutinho (Agger, 82); Suarez.

Cardiff City (4-2-3-1): Marshall: Theophile-Catherine, Caulker, Turner, Taylor; Gunnarsson (Cornelius, 79), Medel (Campbell, 55); Noone, Mutch, Whittingham; Odemiwingie (Kim, 55).

Referee: Lee Probert. Man of the match: Henderson (Liverpool)

Match rating: 8/10

The Sunday Telegraph

Scintillating Suarez adds to Mackay discomfort

Liverpool 3 Suarez 24, 45, Sterling 42 Cardiff City 1 Mutch 58 Att: 44,621

Maybe Luis Suarez deserves another pay rise. An outlay of [pounds sterling]40 million over four years suddenly looks like the steal of the century. The numbers may be extraordinary; but then so is Suarez's form at the moment. And his own stats. Everything about him is stratospheric. The Uruguayan signed a new contract on Friday and scored twice yesterday and has 14 goals in his last six Anfield appearances; 42 goals in his last 45 Premier League matches and 19 in the league this season. From just 12 games. He is on a higher plane.

It would have been 20 - the first player to achieve that feat before Christmas in the Premier League - had he not selflessly teed up Raheem Sterling for the second of Liverpool's three goals in a firsthalf when they also twice struck the woodwork. So much for being on a goals bonus in that new deal. Suarez has rightly struck gold at Anfield with his latest contract but then he has the Midas touch. The alchemist of the Premier League; he is also the architect of Liverpool's unlikely title push. The superlatives have been exhausted. "The one from today is unselfish," Liverpool manager Brendan Rodgers purred. "It was for the second goal. He also shows the great humility of the man as well when (vice-captain and substitute) Daniel Agger came on the field and he got the armband to him straight away." This victory took Liverpool back to that summit and also, probably, marked Malky Mackay's last match in charge of Cardiff City. He never stood a chance with an owner such as Vincent Tan, who sat in the Anfield directors' box like a Bond villain, and his team did not stand a chance yesterday.

Having appeared composed and obdurate at the start, with Craig Noone also stinging Simon Mignolet's palms with a powerful shot from a dangerous breakaway, things fell apart in the second half of the first period. Cardiff did not play badly, but that did not matter. They were not disorganised, but that was immaterial. Not with Suarez in this kind of swagger. At the end of that first half Tan probably felt vindicated, somehow, but Mackay showed his mettle with his half-time team-talk, his substitutions and the way his players responded admirably. "One of the best players in the world came into his own and had a 25-minute spell when he was blinding," Mackay said afterwards of Suarez as he also confirmed that he shared the collective fear that he and his team were heading for a hiding unless they rallied. But as overwhelmed as they were, Cardiff then rattled Liverpool after the break and could have run this contest closer. They fought. Just like their proud, resilient manager whose face was etched with emotion at the end as he walked towards the visiting support, who had let their anger towards Tan be known all game, and also acknowledged the applause from the Kop. "To get a round of applause from Liverpool fans doesn't surprise me," Mackay, who spoke at length to his friend Rodgers afterwards, said. "They are a class act and know their football." Unlike the Cardiff owner.

But everything about Cardiff is impossible to predict at present beyond the bizarre behaviour of Tan who flew in from Malaysia having already held talks over when he was going to sack his manager. Mackay has ignored the ridiculous, bullying call for him to resign after 21/2 hugely successful years in charge. Understandably the unsavoury story threatened to overshadow Liverpool's return to the top which again confirmed they have the desire and - in the absence of the injured Steven Gerrard and Daniel Sturridge - maybe the depth also to sustain a challenge this season. "Over this calendar year you will see from January that this is a team that has been on the up," Rodgers rightly said. As outstanding as Suarez was, he was again aided and abetted by Jordan Henderson. He and Joe Allen - both players transformed - played sublime parts in the striker's goals. Liverpool are brimming with confidence, pace, purpose and aggressive attacking football and it is a joy to watch. Both of Suarez's goals were breathtaking. For the first he started the move, shimmying to gain space and slip a pass to Allen who swept it wide to Henderson. The midfielder chipped a firsttime ball across the penalty area and there was Suarez, continuing his run undetected, to volley low and right-footed and into the net. Suarez's second came on halftime and again Allen and Henderson combined with the latter back-heeling into Suarez's path. The striker's first-time shot curled around Cardiff defenders from the area's edge, cleverly using them as a disguise, to beat goalkeeper David Marshall.

That could have been Suarez's hat-trick goal but he had already rolled the ball to Sterling - who scored Liverpool's second, tapping it past Marshall. Suarez had run clear on goal from Henderson's threaded pass but decided to pass rather than shoot. Philippe Coutinho struck the post, after tricking his way past Gary Medel, and Jon Flanagan also skimmed a post with a shot from Glen Johnson's cross that Marshall then improvised by kicking off the goal-line as Cardiff were overwhelmed. But they produced that fighting response in the second-half and reduced the arrears when Jordon Mutch was left unmarked to reach Peter Whittingham's free-kick to steer his header back across goal and into the net. Marshall also denied Sterling, twice, and Suarez who also had another shot deflected narrowly wide as Cardiff defenders threw themselves in the way.

The ball, at times, ping-ponged around the Liverpool area from a series of Cardiff set-pieces which they did not deal with convincingly even if Mamadou Sakho, at the heart of the defence, produced another powerful performance.

Liverpool deserved the victory and Suarez the headlines; Mackay certainly does not deserve the sack although he will undoubtedly and rightly leave with his head held high for this performance and his time at Cardiff.

Compiled by Graeme Riley

Date: 21 December 2013
Opposition: Cardiff City
Competition: League

Echo	Sunday Times	Sun Telegraph	Telegraph
BBC	Observer	Times	Mirror
Mail	Sun Independent	Guardian	Western Mail

21 December 2013

Liverpool (4-1-4-1) Mignolet 7; Johnson 5, Skrtel 6, Sakho 7, Flanagan 6 (Kelly 55, 6); Lucas 6; Sterling 7, Allen 6, Henderson 8, Coutinho 6 (Agger 83); Suarez 9. Subs Jones (gk), Toure, Agger, Alberto, Aspas, Moses.
Cardiff City (4-4-1-1) Marshall 7; Taylor 5, Turner 6, Caulker 5, Theophile 5; Whittingham 6, Medel 5 (Campbell 55, 6), Gunnarsson 6 (Cornelius 80), Noone 7; Mutch 7; Odemwingie 6 (Kim 55, 6). Subs Lewis (gk), Hudson, Cowie, John.
Referee: Lee Probert

Suarez in mood to conquer

CARDIFF 1 Mutch 58
LIVERPOOL 3 Suarez 25, 45 Sterling 42

AT WHAT point do the questions start: is he up there with Thierry Henry in terms of the greatest Premier League striker? Is he approaching Cristiano Ronaldo in terms of unplayable matchwinners the league has seen? At least -- and it's going to be harsh on Aaron Ramsey -- there should be no debate about whether he's player of the year this time. Luis Suarez, new contract in his pocket, captain's armband round his bicep, took his campaign to further heights at an Anfield that basked in his talent and in Liverpool's return -- for the first time at this stage of the season, since 2008 -- to the summit of the table.

Cardiff, giving everything for their endangered manager and embattled supporters, were organised, committed, plucky, focused. And destroyed.

A spell of 20 minutes from Suarez, accurately described by Malky Mackay as "blinding" in its quality, decided the match before half-time. It featured two instances of sublime and audacious finishing technique and a moment of selflessness, when Suarez provided a tap-in on a plate for Raheem Sterling.

Only in the second half, when Cardiff summoned up even greater resilience, was Suarez becalmed. In the closing stages he missed two difficult opportunities for his hat-trick and one easier one, when he struck the outside of the post from an awkward angle though he was at close range.

A whole 45 minutes without scoring constitutes almost a drought for the Uruguayan. The stats: 19 goals in 12 matches, the kind of average that would yield 60 goals over a 38-game league campaign. Of course Suarez was banned for the first six of 2013-14. Even so, the Premier League record of 34 goals in a Premier League season, held by Alan Shearer and Andy Cole when each team played 42 matches, is well within Suarez's sights. Having a player of Suarez's scope gives an entire community confidence. Anxiety has been one of Liverpool's enemies during their long years without a league title and the Liverpool of any other Premier League season might have started tensing up after an opening 25 minutes where their opponents sat deep, worked hard, and kept the game goalless.

In another year mutters would have begun. True, Anfield was quiet at 0-0, but it was a relaxed quiet -- that of diners who have placed their order and know the chef is about to serve a stunning meal. It's becoming a question, with Suarez, of when and not if he is going to make an impact and in the 25th minute the thrills began: Jordan Henderson, who was outstanding throughout, stood up a fine cross and Suarez, having wriggled into space, applied a clean, sweet connection to volley unerringly home, into the far corner of David Marshall's net.

Suarez's celebration was joyous -- and he made a point of picking out Henderson. His team-mindedness exhibited itself again when Henderson released him with a long pass and, clear on Marshall, he rolled a pass to his right for Sterling to sidefoot in, when he was well capable of scoring himself.

On the cusp of half-time, Suarez scored again. This one was the pick. With a clever back-heel, Henderson sent a loose ball Suarez's way and before anyone else in the stadium had conceived of him trying to score, Suarez bent a first-time shot round a thicket of players into the box and into an impossibly small space at Marshall's far post. All this from 20 yards out. He grinned and Anfield loved it.

"My word for Suarez today is 'unselfish'," Brendan Rodgers, his manager, beamed. "For the second goal, he's through on goal, I don't see too many strikers doing that. I thought he showed great humility as well, when Daniel Agger came on [in the second half] and he got the armband to him immediately because Agger is vicecaptain." Asked about being top, Rodgers was relaxed. "It feels all right," he said. "Last year it took us a while to get into the top ten. But over this calendar year it's not by accident. You see from January this is a team that's been on the up. The [5-0] win at Tottenham last week was a defining one.

"It's unprecedented for a club to go from seventh to [finish] first. It doesn't happen. But to be top at this stage of season is a sign of the great work we're aligned to." Pivotal fixtures beckon. Manchester City away on Boxing Day, Chelsea away next Sunday. Rodgers may wish he had the injured Steven Gerrard and Daniel Sturridge available for such tests but he has fostered a group of players with hunger, a belief in a style, and in competition for selection.

Cardiff proved far more cohesive and professional than Tottenham last week, or Fulham when they lost 4-0 here. A rejigging by Mackay, when Bo-Kyung Kim and Frazier Campbell replaced Gary Medel and Peter Odemwinge, let them play with greater pace and purpose on the break and in the 57th minute Peter Whittingham's free kick found Jordan Mutch unmarked and Mutch beat Simon Mignolet with a header. After that, Ben Turner and Steven Caulker had chances with headers to make it 3-2 and Lee Probert, the referee, smiled inanely at justifiable Cardiff claims for an infringement when Martin Skrtel seemed to be tugging in his own box. Cardiff's comeback was impressive but they should have been buried during that spell when Suarez ruled. Philippe Coutinho, though, struck a post, Skrtel missed with an easy header, Sterling fluffed a one-on-one, Marshall cleared John Flanagan's effort off the line and Glenn Johnson wasted a great position with an appalling touch.

Liverpool: Mignolet 6, Johnson 6, Skrtel 6, Sakho 7, Flanagan 7 (Kelly 55min, 6), Allen 6, Lucas 6, Henderson 8, Sterling 7, Coutinho 6 (Agger 83min), Suarez 9
Cardiff: Marshall 7, Theophile-Catherine 6, Caulker 6, Turner 6, Taylor 5, Mutch 7, Medel 5 (Campbell 55min, 6), Noone 7, Gunnarsson 6 (Cornelius 80min), Whittingham 6, Odemwingie 5 (Kim 55min, 6)

HOW LUIS LED LIVERPOOL TO THE TOP

It was on the stroke of half-time when Suarez was involved from start to finish in the game's best goal 1 Lucas finds Suarez on the left touchline. He flicks the ball on to Jon Flanagan 2 Flanagan heads for the byline and then passes back to Suarez 3 Suarez slips the ball to Henderson whose backheel pass finds the Uruguayan on the run. From the edge of the box Suarez curls the ball into the net to put his side 3-0 up

The Observer

Sizzling Suarez too hot for defiant Cardiff

There was defiance on and off the pitch in what may prove to be Malky Mackay's final act as Cardiff City manager but there is nothing that can deny Luis Suarez. Liverpool's stand-in captain and stand-out performer celebrated his new pounds 200,000-a-week contract with his 18th and 19th goals of the season to elevate Brendan Rodgers' team to the top of the Premier League. In Anfield's eyes he is worth every penny.

Liverpool could remain top for Christmas depending on tomorrow's result between Arsenal and Chelsea. The previous four teams in that position have still been there come May. Their manager played down his team's prospects of repeating that feat this season but, with the brilliant Uruguayan under contract and Jordan Henderson and others developing rapidly, belief is rising. "It is unprecedented for a team to go from seventh one season to first the next, it doesn't happen," said Rodgers, "but we have to keep this momentum going."

The new league leaders produced a contrasting display, excelling in the first half and faltering in the second as Cardiff showed impressive resolve in the wake of their owner Vincent Tan's attempt to oust their manager. The whole of Anfield applauded as the Cardiff fans sang "Malky Mackay, we want you to stay", followed by "Vincent Tan, we want you to go". Mackay had made a pointed entrance, stepping on to the pitch to applaud Cardiff's travelling support before turning round and nodding in the direction of Tan, sitting in the front row of the directors' box. It was not reciprocated by the Malaysian.

Mackay's problems were unlikely to ease against a Liverpool side with soaring confidence, improved understanding and the league's outstanding performer leading the line. So it proved as Suarez inspired another Anfield triumph.

Cardiff began strongly, were well-organised and Craig Noone was prominent down the right. The midfielder had the game's first opening when released into space by Jordon Mutch, cutting inside Mamadou Sakho and testing Simon Mignolet with a rising drive towards the top corner. The Liverpool goalkeeper tipped the ball over and Mutch headed the resulting corner, from Peter Whittingham, wide. But the pace, industry and invention of Liverpool were relentless and by the time Cardiff trooped off the pitch at the interval it was debatable whether Mackay would appear for the second half. The threat had been growing, although the final ball was lacking until Suarez instigated a lightning move on the corner of the Cardiff box. The Uruguay international found Joe Allen, who released Henderson, and the commanding midfielder lofted the ball back towards Suarez. The outcome was inevitable, a fine volley into the bottom corner. Cardiff had a legitimate penalty claim turned down when Martin Skrtel wrestled with Steven Caulker's shirt as the visiting captain tried to meet Whittingham's free-kick to the far post but they were getting little out of this trip. Philippe Coutinho hit a post after spinning away from Noone, Skrtel headed over, Caulker cleared off the line from Jon Flanagan and Raheem Sterling was denied by David Marshall in goal. The overdue second arrived when Henderson's creativity and accuracy with the pass again unlocked the Cardiff defence. The midfielder sent Suarez racing clear with the outside of his foot but the goalscorer supreme chose not to shoot, instead squaring for Sterling to convert into an unguarded net. By doing so he maintained Liverpool's average of two goals per game in the league under Rodgers - the best ratio of any Liverpool manager since John McKenna in 1896. Liverpool's third said everything about the class and belief coursing through Rodgers' players. Flanagan found Suarez, who played a one-two with Henderson and then, from the midfielder's exquisite back-heel, curled a shot beyond Marshall and into the far corner from the edge of the area.

Cardiff, to their credit, refused to roll over and the introduction of Fraizer Campbell and Kim Bo-kyung, plus aerial vulnerability in the Liverpool defence, changed the complexion of the second half, if not the outcome. Mutch reduced the arrears when left unmarked at a Whittingham free-kick to steer a header beyond Mignolet. Uncertainty spread throughout the Liverpool rearguard, with Mutch sending another good chance over and Caulker again being refused a penalty as he wrestled with Skrtel once more before heading wide.

Suarez was denied his hat-trick by a post and Marshall, his only frustration on another compelling afternoon.

LIVERPOOL Mignolet; Johnson, Skrtel■, Sakho, Flanagan (Kelly 55); Allen, Lucas, Henderson; Sterling■, Coutinho (Agger 83); Suarez Subs not used

Compiled by Graeme Riley

Date: 21 December 2013
Opposition: Cardiff City
Competition: League

Echo	Sunday Times	Sun Telegraph	Telegraph
BBC	Observer	Times	Mirror
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21 December 2013

Jones, Toure, Alberto, Aspas, Moses
CARDIFF Marshall; Theophile, Caulker, Turner, Taylor; Noone, Gunnarsson (Cornelius 80), Medel (Campbell 55), Whittingham; Mutch; Odemwingie (Kim 55)
Subs not used Lewis, Hudson, Cowie, John
Anfield 44,621

Western Mail

Luis Suarez puts Bluebirds to the sword as Malky Mackay awaits fate

Cardiff City suffered defeat at Anfield despite a brave second-half performance amid huge support for boss Malky Mackay.
The travelling Bluebirds support chanted for the under pressure manager and hit out at owner Vicnent Tan from the off - continuing their protests long after the final whistle had blown.
Tan was in the directors' box at Anfield, and he will now decide the fate of Mackay following a week of unprecedented turmoil at the Welsh club.
On the field, striker Luis Suarez continued his incredible run of form with two more goals to fire Liverpool to the top of the table.
The Uruguay international, who caught everyone by surprise by signing a new long-term contract yesterday, made it 19 for the season as Cardiff were despatched 3-1.
Raheem Sterling was also on the scoresheet in between Suarez's two brilliant strikes and although Jordon Mutch's reply just before the hour breathed new life into Cardiff, the home side's grip on the three points was not to be loosened.
In truth the result made little difference to Mackay's future, which appears to have already been pre-determined by Tan.
How much longer Mackay lasts may be assessed in terms of hours rather than days - having been told by Tan earlier in the week to resign or be sacked - but what is enduring are Liverpool's title challenge credentials.
Fuelled by Suarez's goals they have now overtaken long-time leaders Arsenal, who face fellow top-four side Chelsea on Monday, and with the season almost halfway through must now be classed as credible rivals to the favoured front-runners in the Gunners, Manchester City and Chelsea.
Brendan Rodgers' side must face both the latter in their next two matches but with Suarez in the form he is they can go into the games with confidence.
While the defeat was a disappointment for Cardiff, the actual match was somewhat of a sideshow to the off-field drama that continues to engulf the club.
Once again, though, it was Suarez who showed just what an important player he has become.
Having initially begun the move for the first goal, Suarez continued his run towards the penalty area where Jordan Henderson picked him out with an inviting cross which was expertly volleyed past goalkeeper David Marshall.
That maintained his record of scoring in every home match - six in total - he has been available for this season, having been suspended early on.
In doing so be became the first player since Fernando Torres (who scored in eight) in May 2008 to achieve that feat.
Cue the inevitable Liverpool onslaught which saw Martin Skrtel head over, Sterling have a shot blocked and Jon Flanagan and Philippe Coutinho both hit the post - the latter's effort only just kept out by the outstretched boot of Marshall.
It seemed despite Liverpool's dominance their lead would be a slender one at half-time but three minutes before the break they struck again, thanks to their two best players in recent weeks.
Henderson's through-ball was superb in itself but no surprise considering his improved quality this season.
What was a shock was the sight of Suarez, with only Marshall to beat, squaring the ball for Sterling to slot home.
Suarez's second of the game highlighted exactly what that sort of investment brings. Henderson's backheel was all the invitation the Uruguayan needed as he opened his body to curl a shot around a pack of bodies in the penalty area and inside Marshall's left-hand post.
The second half should have been a procession for the home side but that was interrupted by Mutch's unchallenged header from a free-kick in the 58th minute.
Cardiff subsequently enjoyed their best spell of the game but that was ended when Sterling forced Marshall to save in a one-on-one and Suarez followed up to blast a shot against the post.
The win means Liverpool could still be top for Christmas should Arsenal fail to win on Monday and that would be the first time that has happened since 2008.
The last four champions have all been top on Christmas Day. It may still be wishful thinking for Rodgers, who claims he will only consider their chances with 10 games to go, but with Suarez in current form he may have to reassess that sooner rather than later.

BBC

Luis Suarez helped Liverpool move top of the league with a win over Cardiff, as doubts remain over the future of Bluebirds manager Malky Mackay.
Mackay is in conflict with owner Vincent Tan and saw his side go behind through an 18-yard Luis Suarez volley.
Suarez, who signed a contract extension on Friday, set up Raheem Sterling for a tap-in and curled in a shot before Jordon Mutch headed in for Cardiff.
The Bluebirds boss stood on the Anfield pitch for some time after the final whistle and applauded his side's supporters, many of whom were holding up banners against Tan.
There had been doubts as to whether Mackay would be in the dug-out for the game after being told in the week to resign or face being sacked by Tan, who was at the match.
But despite the owner discussing his manager's future with chairman Mehmet Dalman at a meeting on Friday night, Mackay was in charge for a game which resulted in Cardiff's eighth defeat of the campaign.
The home side made sure they did not get distracted by the sideshow surrounding the game, and Suarez's performance came on the back of the 26-year-old signing a new four-and-half-year deal with the in-form Reds.
Liverpool have scored 17 goals in their last four league games and, depending on the result between Arsenal and Chelsea on Monday, they could head the top flight at Christmas for the first time since 2009, when they went on to finish second. The last time the Reds were top at Christmas and won the league was in 1987-88.
Cardiff started the game promisingly and went close early on when a swift counter attack resulted in Mutch playing a ball though to Craig Noone, whose 22-yard shot was palmed over by goalkeeper Simon Mignolet.
Liverpool responded with a Suarez shot being deflected wide and a well-struck Sterling effort being blocked before they eventually broke through the Bluebirds blockade.
Joe Allen laid the ball off to Jordan Henderson on the left side of the area and he crossed for Suarez, who had initiated the move, to volley past keeper David Marshall for his 18th league goal of the season.
The Reds almost doubled their lead only to be twice denied by the post. First, Philippe Coutinho gathered a short Suarez corner, burst into the area and saw his angled shot come back off the woodwork.
Right-back Glen Johnson's cross then found left-back Jon Flanagan and his first-time side-foot came off the face of the same post before Marshall cleared.
The chances began to flow for Liverpool and after Henderson released Suarez with a piercing outside-of-the-boot pass, the Uruguayan squared for Sterling to tap in.
Suarez added an impressive third just before the break, latching on to the tireless and improving Henderson's backheel to curl a low shot into the bottom corner.
Cardiff reacted by putting the Anfield side under pressure in the second half and were rewarded with a goal when Mutch was left unmarked to steer in a header from Peter Whittingham's free-kick.
The visitors might have had a penalty for Reds centre-back Martin Skrtel holding Steven Caulker but referee Lee Probert saw no foul.
Liverpool regrouped and regained their grip on the game and, after Sterling's shot was saved, Suarez struck the follow-up against the outside of the post as the home side claimed an 11th league win of the season.
Liverpool manager Brendan Rodgers:
"Luis Suarez was outstanding again in a very good team performance. The fluency of our football in the first half was excellent, and our pressing is now at a really high level.
"We started the second half brightly, but are disappointed with a slack goal.
"I do not think about the title. I still believe it is for Manchester City to lose. We stay calm."

Compiled by Graeme Riley

Date: 21 December 2013
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21 December 2013

BBC

90:00 Match ends, Liverpool 3, Cardiff City 1.
90:00+4:05Full time Second Half ends, Liverpool 3, Cardiff City 1.
90:00+3:28 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Ben Turner.
90:00+1:55 Attempt missed. Raheem Sterling (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box misses to the left. Assisted by Luis Suárez following a corner.
90:00+1:38 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Craig Noone.
90:00+0:54 Raheem Sterling (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
90:00+0:54 Foul by Kévin Théophile-Catherine (Cardiff City.
90:00+0:04 Foul by Raheem Sterling (Liverpool.
90:00+0:04 Kévin Théophile-Catherine (Cardiff City wins a free kick in the defensive half.
89:59 Attempt blocked. Raheem Sterling (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Jordan Henderson.
89:10 Attempt saved. Luis Suárez (Liverpool left footed shot from the left side of the box is saved in the bottom left corner. Assisted by Raheem Sterling with a through ball.
87:12 Glen Johnson (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing.
87:12 Foul by Kévin Théophile-Catherine (Cardiff City.
85:03 Attempt missed. Steven Caulker (Cardiff City header from the centre of the box misses to the left. Assisted by Craig Noone with a cross.
84:16 Corner, Cardiff City. Conceded by Daniel Agger.
82:34Substitution SubstitutionSubstitution, Liverpool. Daniel Agger replaces Philippe Coutinho.
81:52 Attempt missed. Luis Suárez (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is close, but misses to the right. Assisted by Jordan Henderson following a fast break.
80:51 Attempt missed. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box misses to the left. Assisted by Luis Suárez.
80:12 Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
80:12 Foul by Kévin Théophile-Catherine (Cardiff City.
79:47 Attempt missed. Craig Noone (Cardiff City left footed shot from outside the box misses to the right.
79:25Substitution SubstitutionSubstitution, Cardiff City. Andreas Cornelius replaces Aron Gunnarsson.
78:54 Offside, Liverpool. Joe Allen tries a through ball, but Jordan Henderson is caught offside.
77:33 Attempt missed. Joe Allen (Liverpool header from the centre of the box is too high. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho with a cross following a corner.
77:08 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Andrew Taylor.
76:46 Lucas Leiva (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
76:46 Foul by Fraizer Campbell (Cardiff City.
75:00 Luis Suárez (Liverpool hits the right post with a right footed shot from the right side of the six yard box.
73:04 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Kévin Théophile-Catherine.
71:19Booking Raheem Sterling (Liverpool is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.
70:55 Foul by Raheem Sterling (Liverpool.
70:55 Peter Whittingham (Cardiff City wins a free kick on the left wing.
70:40 Attempt missed. Steven Caulker (Cardiff City header from the centre of the box misses to the left. Assisted by Peter Whittingham with a cross following a corner.
70:18 Corner, Cardiff City. Conceded by Martin Kelly.
70:07 Attempt blocked. Fraizer Campbell (Cardiff City right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Peter Whittingham.
67:25 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Ben Turner.
67:23 Attempt blocked. Luis Suárez (Liverpool right footed shot from the left side of the box is blocked. Assisted by Glen Johnson.
66:08 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Andrew Taylor.
65:06 Attempt saved. Ben Turner (Cardiff City header from a difficult angle on the left is saved in the top centre of the goal. Assisted by Peter Whittingham with a cross.
64:34 Foul by Luis Suárez (Liverpool.
64:34 Kévin Théophile-Catherine (Cardiff City wins a free kick on the right wing.
63:51 Foul by Joe Allen (Liverpool.
63:51 Fraizer Campbell (Cardiff City wins a free kick on the left wing.
60:57 Attempt missed. Jordon Mutch (Cardiff City header from the centre of the box is high and wide to the right. Assisted by Peter Whittingham with a cross following a corner.
60:39 Corner, Cardiff City. Conceded by Lucas Leiva.
58:42 Joe Allen (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
58:42 Foul by Peter Whittingham (Cardiff City.
57:37Goal scored Goal!Goal! Liverpool 3, Cardiff City 1. Jordon Mutch (Cardiff City header from the centre of the box to the bottom right corner. Assisted by Peter Whittingham with a cross following a set piece situation.
57:08 Foul by Glen Johnson (Liverpool.
57:08 Fraizer Campbell (Cardiff City wins a free kick on the right wing.
56:37 Glen Johnson (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing.
56:37 Foul by Peter Whittingham (Cardiff City.
54:50Substitution SubstitutionSubstitution, Liverpool. Martin Kelly replaces Jon Flanagan.
54:27Substitution SubstitutionSubstitution, Cardiff City. Fraizer Campbell replaces Gary Medel.
54:16Substitution SubstitutionSubstitution, Cardiff City. Kim Bo-Kyung replaces Peter Odemwingie.
52:56 Foul by Glen Johnson (Liverpool.
52:56 Peter Whittingham (Cardiff City wins a free kick in the defensive half.
51:56 Attempt missed. Jordan Henderson (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box misses to the left.
50:30 Attempt missed. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box misses to the left. Assisted by Lucas Leiva.
49:52 Glen Johnson (Liverpool wins a free kick on the right wing.
49:52 Foul by Jordon Mutch (Cardiff City.
47:50 Offside, Liverpool. Jordan Henderson tries a through ball, but Philippe Coutinho is caught offside.
46:32 Attempt missed. Raheem Sterling (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box misses to the left following a corner.
46:10 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Ben Turner.
45:00 Second Half begins Liverpool 3, Cardiff City 0.
45:00+1:12Half time First Half ends, Liverpool 3, Cardiff City 0.
44:41Goal scored Goal!Goal! Liverpool 3, Cardiff City 0. Luis Suárez (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box to the bottom right corner. Assisted by Jordan Henderson.
42:52 Attempt missed. Luis Suárez (Liverpool right footed shot from the left side of the box misses to the left.
41:31Goal scored Goal!Goal! Liverpool 2, Cardiff City 0. Raheem Sterling (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box to the centre of the goal. Assisted by Luis Suárez following a fast break.
40:35Booking Martin Skrtel (Liverpool is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.
40:22 Foul by Martin Skrtel (Liverpool.
40:22 Jordon Mutch (Cardiff City wins a free kick on the left wing.
38:02 Attempt saved. Raheem Sterling (Liverpool right footed shot from a difficult angle on the right is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Luis Suárez with a through ball.
37:11 Attempt saved. Jon Flanagan (Liverpool left footed shot from a difficult angle on the left is saved in the bottom left corner. Assisted by Glen Johnson with a cross.
34:28 Attempt missed. Martin Skrtel (Liverpool header from the centre of the box is too high. Assisted by Jon Flanagan with a cross following a set piece situation.
33:56 Jon Flanagan (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing.
33:56 Foul by Kévin Théophile-Catherine (Cardiff City.
32:47 Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool hits the left post with a right footed shot from a difficult angle on the left. Assisted by Luis Suárez following a corner.
32:21 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Steven Caulker.
31:00 Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
31:00 Foul by Peter Odemwingie (Cardiff City.
30:06 Attempt missed. Lucas Leiva (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box misses to the left. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.
28:26 Foul by Jordan Henderson (Liverpool.
28:26 Craig Noone (Cardiff City wins a free kick on the right wing.
24:19Goal scored Goal!Goal! Liverpool 1, Cardiff City 0. Luis Suárez (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box to the bottom left corner. Assisted by Jordan Henderson.
24:02 Attempt blocked. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Lucas Leiva.
23:09 Joe Allen (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
23:09 Foul by Aron Gunnarsson (Cardiff City.
22:36 Martin Skrtel (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
22:36 Foul by Peter Odemwingie (Cardiff City.
21:13 Offside, Cardiff City. Aron Gunnarsson tries a through ball, but Peter Odemwingie is caught offside.
18:59 Foul by Martin Skrtel (Liverpool.
18:59 Peter Odemwingie (Cardiff City wins a free kick in the defensive half.
17:51 Attempt blocked. Raheem Sterling (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Mamadou Sakho with a headed pass.
17:13 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Andrew Taylor.
17:12 Attempt blocked. Luis Suárez (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.
15:00 Attempt missed. Jordon Mutch (Cardiff City header from the centre of the box misses to the right. Assisted by Peter Whittingham with a cross following a corner.
14:19 Corner, Cardiff City. Conceded by Simon Mignolet.
14:15 Attempt saved. Craig Noone (Cardiff City left footed shot from outside the box is saved in the top centre of the goal. Assisted by Jordon Mutch.
12:56 Attempt blocked. Joe Allen (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Luis Suárez.
11:48 Attempt missed. Jordon Mutch (Cardiff City right footed shot from a difficult angle and long range on the right misses to the left.
8:40 Foul by Raheem Sterling (Liverpool.
8:40 Peter Whittingham (Cardiff City wins a free kick in the defensive half.
7:51 Mamadou Sakho (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
7:51 Foul by Peter Odemwingie (Cardiff City.
7:22 Jon Flanagan (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
7:22 Foul by Jordon Mutch (Cardiff City.
6:51 Corner, Cardiff City. Conceded by Jon Flanagan.
5:39 Attempt missed. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool left footed shot from the left side of the box misses to the left. Assisted by Joe Allen.
5:36 Attempt missed. Luis Suárez (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is close, but misses to the right. Assisted by Raheem Sterling following a fast break.
1:39 Foul by Joe Allen (Liverpool.
1:39 Andrew Taylor (Cardiff City wins a free kick in the defensive half.
1:37 Attempt saved. Jordan Henderson (Liverpool left footed shot from the right side of the six yard box is saved in the bottom right corner. Assisted by Joe Allen.
0:00 First Half begins.
0:00 Lineups are announced and players are warming up.

Compiled by Graeme Riley