Date: 26 December 2013
Opposition: Manchester City
Competition: League

Times	Telegraph	Echo
Guardian	Mirror	MEN
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26 December 2013

THE TIMES

Flawless City glad to overcome test of their mettle
Manchester City 2 Kompany 31, Negredo 45
Liverpool 1 Coutinho 24
Referee L Mason Attendance 47,351

This was the perfect advertisement for Boxing Day football. It was thrilling, compelling, high-quality stuff, with a little controversy thrown in for good measure, but the most important detail was that Manchester City passed their sternest examination so far at the Etihad Stadium to move ominously into second place in the Barclays Premier League. Victory over Liverpool, thanks to first-half goals from Vincent Kompany and Alvaro Negredo, maintained City's flawless home record in the Premier League this season -- played eight, won eight -- and extended their impressive sequence to nine wins and one draw in their past ten matches in all competitions. Even if Arsenal reclaimed top spot yesterday, even ifLiverpool were the more impressive team for periods of this game, City are moving forward with menacing intent. This was not City at their irresistible, free-flowing best, but they responded well after falling behind to Philippe Coutinho's 24th-minute goal. As against Arsenal 12 days ago, Manuel Pellegrini's team were tested thoroughly by opponents full of verve, but they found the requisite combination of will and skill, through a difficult second half, to end Liverpool's recent run of four consecutive wins.

Kompany, the City captain, called it "the hardest game we have had at home so far". If Bayern Munich's masterclass in the Champions League in September is overlooked, that sounds about right. Liverpool were excellent at times, their slick attacking play typified by the move that brought Coutinho's goal. Brendan Rodgers, the manager, was entitled to lament an incorrect offside call that denied Raheem Sterling a clear run on goal at 0-0, but his post-match comments about the "horrendous" match officials are likely to overshadow a display that brought encouragement even in defeat.

Fortune played a part -- it almost always does -- but a team boasting players of the calibre of Yaya Toure, David Silva, Samir Nasri and Negredo will tend to get lucky more often than not, provided that their attitude is right. Liverpool's approach was good and their attacking play sparkling at times, as they passed in triangles around the home defence, but, as Arsenal discovered recently, you cannot hope to beat City at the Etihad Stadium unless you avoid making errors in defence. Negredo's goal in first-half stoppage time came with a helping hand from Simon Mignolet, the Liverpool goalkeeper, who flapped inexplicably at a ball that was floating over his head. Mignolet has had a solid start to his Liverpool career while Joe Hart has been out of form and, at times, favour at City, but yesterday their roles were reversed as Hart enjoyed his most satisfying game of the season.

The incident that infuriated Rodgers came in the nineteenth minute as Joe Allen broke forward and found Luis Suarez, who threaded a lovely pass between City's central defenders for Sterling to run on to. The forward's run was perfectly timed, with Aleksandar Kolarov playing him at least a yard onside, but Derek Eaton, the linesman, put up his flag. Rodgers scowled. Four minutes later Rodgers was punching the air with delight as Coutinho gave Liverpool the lead. Jordan Henderson carried the ball infield and found Suarez, whose instinctive layoff sent Sterling into the penalty area. Sterling took the ball wide of the sprawling Hart, allowing Coutinho to convert from a tight angle.

City had started well enough, looking extensively to Pablo Zabaleta and Jesus Navas on the right, but this, against such a confident team, was now a serious test of their mettle. Toure should have levelled within four minutes, missing the target after working himself into a shooting position, but City did not have long to wait. With Martin Skrtel looking more interested in wrestling than competing for the ball from Silva's corner kick, justice was done as Kompany's downward header somehow bounced beyond Allen on the line.

Chances came and went at both ends -- Navas and Negredo threatening from counter-attacks, Coutinho denied by Hart at the other end after another lovely one-touch move -- but City took the lead in first-half stoppage time. Not for the first time, they passed their way through the Liverpool midfield, a counter-attack proceeding through Silva, Toure, Nasri and Navas to Negredo, who opted for an unusual shot with the outside of his left foot. Perhaps that is why Mignolet made such a hash of it, palming the ball over the line to give City the advantage.

Soon after the restart Suarez twisted past Zabaleta before testing Hart from a tight angle. Sterling dropped a clever pass behind the defence, but Henderson could not quite get a touch. Hart was having a fine game. He might not thank Pellegrini for his recent spell on the sidelines, but, whether psychologically or even technically, it seems to have allowed him to refocus. It was not necessarily the heroic saves that all goalkeepers love to make, but it was assured, steady stuff, leaving his line at the right time to block Glen Johnson. Suarez then set up Sterling, but he shot over the bar. City's breaks were sporadic by now, but they seemed to stabilise with the introductions of James Milner and Javier Garcia. Kompany and Joleon Lescott found it difficult against Suarez, but even if they could not always contain him, they often succeeded in ushering him towards less dangerous areas. By now it felt like Suarez was leading a one-man crusade to take Liverpool back to the top, but a 30-yard free kick looked too ambitious even by his recent standards. The final whistle was greeted with relief by City's supporters, but for the players, thoughts quickly moved to their next assignment, at home to Crystal Palace tomorrow. Even if Pellegrini is right to express concerns about the fixture list, one club who should have the squad to cope are City.

RATINGS Manchester City (4-2-3-1): J Hart 8 - P Zabaleta 6, V Kompany 7, J Lescott 6, A Kolarov 6 - Fernandinho 7, Y Toure 7 - J Navas 7, D Silva 6 (sub: Javier Garcia, 87min), S Nasri 5 (sub: J Milner, 72) - A Negredo 7 (sub: E Dzeko, 77). Substitutes not used: C Pantilimon, D Boyata, M Nastasic, G Clichy. Booked: Zabaleta. Liverpool (4-1-4-1): S Mignolet 5 - G Johnson 7, M Skrtel 6, M Sakho 6, A Cissokho 6 - L Leiva 6 (sub: I Aspas, 82) - R Sterling 7, J Allen 7, J Henderson 7, P Coutinho 7 (sub: V Moses 4, 68) - L Suarez 8. Substitutes not used: B Jones, K Toure, D Agger, B Smith, Luis Alberto. Booked: Johnson, Suarez.

theguardian

Rodgers fury at 'horrendous' calls after Liverpool let it slip

Manchester City preserved their 100% home record at the expense of Liverpool's attempt to climb back to the top of the table, coming from a goal down to secure the points that took them past their north-west rivals to go second behind Arsenal. Two sides attempting to win produced an enthralling contest, even if all the goals came in the first half along with most of the controversy.

Brendan Rodgers was so annoyed at Liverpool having a valid goal disallowed he appeared to question Lee Mason's integrity in wondering why a Greater Manchester (Bolton) referee had been appointed to the match. Liverpool's manager can expect to be charged by the Football Association for his comments. "I was surprised to see that the referee came from Greater Manchester," he said. "If it was City v Liverpool at Anfield I don't think we would get a referee from the Wirral." He thought Mason was not alone in his ineptitude. "It was a horrendous performance from all the officials. Nothing went our way at all."

Gamely Rodgers withdrew Lucas Leiva towards the end to get another forward on, while City ended up sending on Javier Garcia as extra insurance. It was a close contest that could have gone either way, though City had the stand-out performer in Alvaro Negredo and made a much better job of shackling Luis Suarez and Raheem Sterling in the second half.

Ultimately the game was decided by what was either a sublime finish by Negredo or a basic goalkeeping error, depending on your point of view. Certainly Simon Mignolet did not appear to be expecting Negredo to attempt to score in the way he did. Joe Hart, on the other hand, made a first-half save at a crucial point and seems to be back in Manuel Pellegrini's good books. "It was good for Joe to have a rest," the City manager said. "He is back to his best now. The team showed personality in coming back from one-nil down. We could not afford to lose to Liverpool; it would have been like losing four points."

City were at Liverpool right from the start, with Jesus Navas heading against a post after five minutes and Vincent Kompany and Yaya Toure seeing goal attempts flash narrowly wide before Suarez reminded the home side of the danger of pressing too far forward with a slick pass that played Sterling into the empty space behind City's high defensive line.

It was a pass worthy of bringing about the opening goal and in fact should have done, since Sterling rounded Hart with ease to pass the ball into the net, only to be brought back for an offside flag that replays showed to be incorrect. "It wasn't even a difficult decision," Rodgers fumed. "It was a perfectly timed run and at this level you have to get those calls right."

While Suarez too showed visible indignation when news of the error was relayed to him on the pitch, his reaction was to remain calm and repeat the formula to create a goal that did count. Taking a pass from Jordan Henderson the Uruguayan again picked out Sterling's run with a first-time flick, and though Hart this time forced him wide of the goal Philippe Coutinho was in support and stepped in to sidefoot past the goalkeeper.

City needed to strike back quickly and did, Kompany cancelling Liverpool's advantage by beating Martin Skrtel to a David Silva corner on the half-hour, though it still needed a smart close-range save from Hart to prevent Coutinho restoring the visitors' lead before the interval. Again Suarez and Sterling had been involved in the build-up, yet the home side produced some invention of their own to finish the first half ahead.

Precise passing by Samir Nasri and Navas sliced open the Liverpool defence and Negredo shot early and not particularly powerfully with the outside of his right boot, yet his effort from the edge of the area surprised Mignolet, who got a weak hand to the ball that only helped it over the line. If Negredo had spotted that the goalkeeper was slightly off his line and attempted to chip him it was an audacious finish, though having managed to reach the ball Mignolet should not have been beaten by a shot with so little behind it.

City sensibly restrained their attacking ambitions, pulling Toure and Fernandinho further back and leaving just Silva and Navas to help Negredo forage up front. Hart still needed to make saves from Glen Johnson and Henderson to keep his side in front, though the threat from Suarez, in particular, was reduced in the second half.

On the one occasion the Liverpool captain did break free he found Sterling in front of goal with an inviting pass, only for the teenager to put the chance over the crossbar. Frustrated, Suarez ended the game with a ludicrously optimistic goal attempt from a 30-yard free-kick then an absurdly exaggerated dive in the penalty area when his shirt was being pulled. He will not stop trying, but evidently cannot perform miracles every week.

Manchester City 4-2-3-1 Hart; Zabaleta*, Kompany, Lescott, Kolarov; Toure (Garcia, 87), Fernandinho; Navas, Silva, Nasri (Milner, 72); Negredo (Dzeko, 77). Subs not used Pantilimon, Clichy, Boyata, Garcia, Nastasic.

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Liverpool 4-1-4-1 Mignolet; Johnson*, Skrtel, Sakho, Cissokho; Leiva (Aspas, 82): Sterling, Allen, Henderson, Coutinho (Moses*, 68); Suarez*. Subs not used Jones, Toure, Agger, Alberto, Smith. Referee L Mason.

The Mail

CITY'S LUCKY SCRAPE

THE groundstaff will be busy repairing the seat edges at the Etihad Stadium today. This was the Barclays Premier League at its breathless, unpredictable best. Manchester City will reflect on a victory as hard earned as anything they have taken at home for some time. Liverpool will ask themselves quite how it was they lost. For the neutrals wanting something to lift them at Christmas, though, this was just about as good as it gets and that, in the grand scheme of things, is what matters most. Talk of a winter break for English football will endure. Interestingly, City manager Manuel Pellegrini is among those who would like one. Who, though, would wish to be on a beach in Barbados when they could be watching football like this? Too often at Etihad Stadium this season, City have had things almost entirely their own way. Their brand of rapid, aggressive, in your face, attacking football has already proved far too much for Manchester United, Tottenham and Arsenal. Here, though, Pellegrini and his feted players found themselves facing worthy opponents, a team flush with confidence and talented enough to trade blows with a side fancied by many to regain the league title.

In the end City squeaked home, rallying from a goal down to lead before half-time. It was desperately tight, though, asLiverpool knocked on the door for most of the second period, betrayed ultimately by some errant finishing and a bounce of the ball that was not always kind. Pellegrini will be encouraged, and rightly so. This was a huge test of his team and they came through. Liverpool's Brendan Rodgers should also be heartened. This, in many ways, was as telling, in terms of tangible progress, as the 5-0 victory at Tottenham that came the last time they journeyed out of Merseyside. 'I was proud of the players, they were outstanding,' said Rodgers. Given how close this contest turned out to be, it was easy to forget how it started. For the first 15 minutes, City were irresistible and looked as though they may swamp Liverpool. Jesus Navas nudged an early header against the far post, Vincent Kompany headed a corner wide and Yaya Toure went in search of his tenth league goal of the season, driving a low shot wide from 25 yards. With the Brazilian Fernandinho immediately influential and Pellegrini's bold decision to field Navas, David Silva and Samir Nasri in the same team lending his side a nimble, inventive air, it looked for a while as though they simply must score. But, just as quickly as they established superiority in vital areas, they lost it again. By the time Liverpool took the lead in the 25th minute, they had been on the front foot for some time and had only been denied an opening goal by a startlingly incorrect offside decision as Raheem Sterling ran clear on to a Luis Suarez pass. When they did score, both these players were involved as Suarez played in Sterling, allowing Philippe Coutinho to steal in and finish things off from a tight angle. Behind at home for the first time in the league for almost three months, City had to respond quickly and it was entirely in keeping with the end to end nature of the contest that they did. Toure would have scored almost immediately had it not been for Martin Skrtel's toe-end challenge but in the 31st minute City were level as Liverpool's defender struggled to get to grips with Vincent Kompany -- literally and metaphorically -- and the home team's captain headed a corner down in to the net from eight yards. Skrtel had a mixed afternoon. Some of his tackling and covering play was exemplary but he must stop grabbing shirts at set-pieces. Not only will it lead to penalties, it also seems to impede his own ability to get airborne, as it did here. Anyway, we had a real game on now and two moments before the interval defined it and ultimately determined the outcome. City were devilishly difficult to contain on the counter attack and flooded forward with relish whenever they could.Liverpool, though, put the move of the match together in the 41st minute, only Joe Hart denying Coutinho after Suarez and Jordan Henderson had combined to create the opportunity. Had they led for the second time, Liverpool may have won. As it was, City struck the mortal blow, Alvaro Negredo running clear to beat Simon Mignolet with a peculiar lofted shot that the Liverpool goalkeeper really should have saved. Certainly the first half had wanted for nothing and the second period was equally compelling. The beauty of the current City side is that they are persistently and consistently dangerous. Yesterday, they always looked likely to score.

It was Liverpool who created the better chances, though. Suarez was denied by Hart at the near post, as was Glen Johnson, while Henderson couldn't apply a touch to Coutinho's deft chip and Sterling side-footed over in the 73rd minute when it seemed easier to score. At the end Rodgers aimed some peculiar criticism at referee Lee Mason and no doubt the FA will be in touch. That was rather a shame as we shouldn't remember the officials. The football gave us enough to think about all on its own.

The Daily Telegraph

Liverpool aggrieved as City win classic

Manchester City 2 Kompany 31, Negredo 45
Liverpool 1 Coutinho 24 Att: 47,351

This was a classic match in what is proving a classic Premier League title race. Manchester City were not at their barnstorming best, needing their resilient qualities in rising to second, a point behind Arsenal. Liverpool counter-attacked with real pace and verve but dropped to fourth, a point behind third-placed Chelsea. This was also a game touched by controversy. Liverpool were aggrieved by some of the decisions from Lee Mason and his assistants, notably an errant offside call against Raheem Sterling and then a failure to spot Joleon Lescott's clear shirt-pulling offence on Luis Suarez. Jordan Henderson marched across to Mason to make a few points at the end. Brendan Rodgers risked a Football Association charge for his ill-judged comments on the suitability of Mason, who hails from Bolton, to officiate a match involving a Manchester club. Bolton residents are hardly renowned for their affection towards City or United. Rodgers' conversation with Mike Riley, the referees' supremo, should be lively.

Whatever the punishment coming Rodgers' way should not distract from Liverpool's performance. Even though they lost, they are clearly on a long-term upward trajectory under the fearless approach of Rodgers. Suarez was his usual fleet-of-foot menace, Sterling's pace constantly worried City's defence while Philippe Coutinho took his goal well. Henderson has responded to Rodgers' coaching and faith. But Liverpool's defence needs sorting out, particularly when dealing with corners. Martin Skrtel's interest in shirtpulling rather than actually attacking the ball remains a liability. Yet Liverpool worried City, not quite scaring the living daylights out of them in front of the watching Timothy Dalton, but enough to ensure that full-time was greeted with relief by the home fans. This demonstrated that City have an important knack of collecting all the points without necessarily shining, beyond the excellence of Alvaro Negredo, David Silva and Joe Hart. City required much of their grit to ensure all three points. They were indebted to Hart, who made three important saves, particularly one from Coutinho in the first half, and he looks sharp after Manuel Pellegrini dropped him. Hart's strong character has served him well, impressing Pellegrini and City's coaching staff with his reaction. He has not sulked. He has worked hard and been rewarded. Hiding his frustration, Hart helped Costel Pantilimon prepare for games when the Romanian was chosen ahead of him, a professionalism and selflessness noted by Pellegrini. The whole episode has been a reminder of what a calm, sensible manmanager City have employed in their intelligent Chilean.

Pellegrini had talked on television of the loneliness of the long-distance manager, a family man apart from his wife and three sons back in Chile, and also wrote in the club programme of his disbelief that his current abode does not enjoy a winter break. City's schedule on Boxing Day and then against Crystal Palace on Saturday was a sequence that Pellegrini described as "incredible" and "a very bad thing". Yet both games are at the Etihad and he admitted that he was "fortunate" to have a "big squad".

Again missing Sergio Aguero, Pellegrini had Negredo in attack with a supportive trident of Jesus Navas, Silva and Samir Nasri. Navas almost opened the scoring in this wonderful match after four minutes when he beat Aly Cissokho to a cross from the left and headed back across and against the post. Cissokho was starting after Jon Flanagan succumbed to a hamstring injury.

Vincent Kompany headed wide and Yaya Toure shot wide as City dominated the opening exchanges. Liverpool were initially struggling to deal with Toure and Fernandinho in central midfield. Lucas was deep with Joe Allen and particularly Henderson pushing on. Steven Gerrard, who is back in training after his hamstring injury, travelled to the Etihad to show his support for his team-mates, who were captained by Suarez. The Uruguayan is trying to become the first Liverpool player to score 30 league goals in a calendar year since Roger Hunt in 1962. Suarez never had much sight of goal here but was constantly involved in Liverpool's creative work. He now has 90 minutes against Chelsea at the Bridge on Sunday to challenge Hunt's mark. Liverpool responded to City's strong start, looking to exploit the space behind the hosts' back-line. Turning Kompany, Suarez released Sterling, who was timing and angling his runs to cause City maximum pain. Only good covering from Aleksandar Kolarov, who slid in to dispossess Sterling, rescued City. A fine end-to-end game broke out. Suarez slipped the ball through the middle to Sterling, who was at least a yard onside but the speed of the attack confused the assistant referee, who wrongly lifted his flag. Liverpool soon had the goal their fast-flowing football deserved after 24 minutes. Henderson, again prominent in mid-field, linked with Suarez, who freed Sterling. The flier rounded Hart and was about to slide it in when Coutinho arrived, applying the finish.

City responded, equalising within seven minutes. Once again, Skrtel seemed more focused on grabbing Kompany's shirt than leaping up and intercepting the incoming corner from Silva. Kompany was concentrating on the ball, ignoring Skrtel's shirt-pulling, meeting the corner and heading past Allen on the line.

Liverpool stayed true to their passing principles, and attacked again. One move, a marvellous passage of play after 38 minutes, saw Suarez and Sterling carve out a chance for Coutinho in the box. Hart spread himself and made a superb stop to deny the Brazilian. City hunted the lead. Negredo was moving with increasing menace, his touch and muscularity a devastating combination. On the edge of halftime, City broke suddenly, Nasri playing Navas down the right. Navas passed inside to Negredo, whose flicked shot with the outside of his left boot seemed to present a comfortable catch for Simon Mignolet. Liverpool's keeper inexplicably failed to deal with it, a weak right wrist seeing the ball tumble back and over the line. As the tempo remained high, Liverpool continued to attack relentlessly after the break. Hart repelled a shot from Johnson at the near post and then pushed away a Henderson flick. Sterling fired over. Suarez was then fouled by Lescott but may not have helped his case by going down theatrically. Desperate for the equaliser, Suarez then raced through, raising his foot towards Hart, who took evasive action. Suarez was cautioned by Mason as City fans bayed for red.

Compiled by Graeme Riley

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26 December 2013

THE INDEPENDENT

City show their class but Rodgers' streetwise approach earns plaudits

An affirmation of who really holds the cards at the top of the Premier League. The team is Manchester City, who take a stride towards the top, rather than Liverpool, whose slip to fourth reveals that leading the race at Christmas does not carry quite the same comforts as usual in this incredibly fluid season.

But the scoreline made the night no less a statement of intent from the players Brendan Rodgers sent out. Some very strong squads have been taken apart at this stadium in the past four months but Liverpool's performance was materially better than any other seen here from a visiting side.

There have not been many occasions before this when we could say that City needed the resilience of Fernandinho and the goalkeeping of Joe Hart to preserve their 100 per cent Premier League home record. Manuel Pellegrini, their manager, punched the night air and his Etihad superiors will doubtless have nodded, knowingly. Rodgers is a manager who seriously impresses them.

At times in the first half, the football was as eviscerating as anything we had seen in City's dismantling of Arsenal two weeks ago, though written through with none of the same inequality. Rodgers sent out a team that looked and played like they actually believed they could stand toe-to-toe with the most powerful side in the Premier League. So although City quickly came at their weakened and vulnerable right flank like a battering ram, with Aly Cissokho up against Jesus Navas - a match made in Manchester heaven - Liverpool were not cast aside.

There were certainly some ominous moments for them in the early stages, with Navas racing ahead of Cissokho to head a cross against the top of Simon Mignolet's right-hand post: the third attack down that flank in the first 10 minutes. ButLiverpool looked the sharper team, brimful with incision and imagination in the 30 minutes before half time. Luis Suarez was at the axis of some wonderful creation in the final third, Philippe Coutinho and Raheem Sterling combining with him intricately, and you only had to cast your mind back to the Liverpool we saw last Boxing Day night - dismally defeated at Stoke - to know how far they have come in a year.

Sterling found himself dancing around Joe Hart to fire the ball in the net just before the 20-minute mark, after a finely timed and weighted through pass by Suarez. Though he had manifestly beaten City's offside trap, referee Lee Mason's linesman didn't see it that way, so there was a form of justice about the way he helped put Liverpool ahead after another move of liquid football five minutes later. Suarez's deft touch created it again - spinning Jordan Henderson's pass into the path of Sterling, who rounded Hart once more and allowed Coutinho, positioned beside him, to pick up the script to send the ball into the net from an acute angle.

The problem for Rodgers, though, was that his defence was not equipped to withstand the way that City came back atLiverpool. City counter- attack with a power which makes concession of the ball to them a danger anywhere on the field and the standard of defending which allowed City to equalise was dismal. It was a repeat of their well-known vulnerability to the set-piece which allowed their opponents back into the game. Vincent Kompany jockeyed in front of Martin Skrtel - for whom this was a generally good night - to deposit David Silva's corner past Mignolet, who might have done better, and Joe Allen, who failed to clear from the line.

Liverpool might have gone back ahead, as the football was played back and forth with incredible intensity. Another beautiful interlinking move concluded with Sterling levering a ball into the area for Suarez to lay off for Coutinho, whose shot Hart leaped sharply to his left to save. But then City counter-attacked in all of their finery - box to box, five players involved, with Nasri's clipped long ball the best component and Negredo the beneficiary. The Spaniard's early clipped shot seemed to surprise Mignolet, who put a weak glove on it but could not prevent it looping over him into the net. He should have done better.

It was measure of what Liverpool were offering that a City whose manager says they will always attack tightened up a little after the interval, with Fernandinho reducing the threat of being caught on the break.

Yet it was hardly a defensive outlook. The tally of 28 shots on goal after 75 minutes showed what kind of game this was. But Suarez was subjected to some unsophisticated handling from Lescott at times and though he launched a theatrical late dive under the defender's challenge to seek a penalty, his shirt was being pulled at the time. Suarez was unfortunate to be booked for hurtling into Hart as he chased a late ball at the end but his greater frustration was felt for the way the clearest goalscoring opportunity of the second half - carved out by him - was squandered.

His low, whipped cross - delivered behind Kompany and Lescott - reached Sterling with a pace which was too much for him. The 19-year-old put the ball over the bar from five yards and his gesture when he left the field soon later - his shirt lifted over his face - revealed a teenager who knew the significance of that miss.

Liverpool's challenging Christmas continues at Chelsea on Sunday but they will travel without fear.

MATCH IN NUMBERS

9 Alvaro Negredo has scored in each of his last nine games at the Etihad
53 City have equalled the PL record of 53 goals from the first 18 games
5 Liverpool lost for the first time in five Premier League matches

DAILY Mirror

City in a winter wonderland

IT is unlikely Manuel Pellegrini is still in favour of a winter break after his side came through this title-defining thriller.

City made it nine wins out of nine at the Etihad this season, adding Liverpool to a list of scalps that includes Manchester United, Newcastle, Everton, Tottenham and Arsenal.

Yet this was by far the sternest test of their title pedigree, and although boss Pellegrini was unhappy with City playing twice in 48 hours - they host Crystal Palace tomorrow - his men showed their mettle when it mattered most.

With Luis Suarez unplayable at times and Liverpool proving how far they have come under Brendan Rodgers, City were forced to dig deep and come from behind for the win that has taken them to second, a point behind leaders Arsenal.

Pellegrini had set his side a goal of being top of the Premier League by New Year's Day. And while they fall just short of that demand, with Arsenal at Newcastle on Sunday, City are right where they want to be - in the thick of the title mix. Given the enterprising way in which they played, Liverpool can consider themselves unlucky to have left the Etihad with nothing.

But Rodgers' side played with enough ambition and purpose to suggest they will be hard to dislodge from the top four this season.

City set the tone for a pulsating encounter in the fifth minute, when Jesus Navas looped a header against the frame of Liverpool's goal.

The hosts continued to put the Reds under relentless pressure early on, with skipper Vincent Kompany heading just wide on 10 minutes from a corner.

City forced Liverpool into a policy of containment, with Yaya Toure shooting wide soon after.

But Suarez served notice of his enduring threat by turning Kompany near the halfway line, before finding Raheem Sterling, whose charge towards the City goal was only halted by a superblytimed Aleksandar Kolarov tackle.

After absorbing City's early pressure, it was Liverpool's turn to impose themselves and they were denied a goal in the 19th minute through an appalling offside decision against Sterling.

Again, Suarez was the architect, slipping the ball behind the defence for Sterling to use his blistering pace, before rounding Joe Hart and finding the net.

Yet the injustice did not deflect Liverpool from their task and they maintained their onslaught with some impressive attacking play, characterised by explosive pace, quick movement and guile.

And their superiority at that stage of the game ultimately yielded the Reds the opening goal on 24 minutes, following a wonderfully swift move with some superb interplay, which left the City defence befuddled.

Jordan Henderson found Suarez, whose first-time flick released Sterling, his pace once again taking him beyond Hart. This time, Philippe Coutinho was on the overlap to take over from Sterling and end the move with an assured finish.

Liverpool deserved their lead, but were undone just after the half-hour from a set-piece - with City drawing level. David Silva slung in a corner and, amid shirt pulling and tussling between Martin Skrtel and Kompany, the City captain headed his second goal in as many games.

The goal galvanised City and they should have been ahead three minutes later through another counter-attack involving Samir Nasri and Silva, which ended with Navas sprinting on to the final ball, only to blaze over. City ended the first half in the ascendancy, Skrtel twice producing last-ditch tackles to deny Alvaro Negredo, while Hart - restored as the Etihad's No.1 - did well to keep out Coutinho.

But City scored the winning goal moments before half-time. With Liverpool having committed men forward, they broke at pace once again. Nasri made the goal happen with a perfectly-weighted first-time ball for Navas, who played an equally precise pass into the path of Negredo.

His effort should have been saved by Simon Mignolet, but Liverpool's keeper did not get a strong enough hand to it and allowed it to go beyond him, over the goal-line.

Suarez raced out of the blocks after the break, turning Pablo Zabaleta inside out, before trying an audacious shot inside Hart's near post, the City keeper alert to the danger.

Sterling submitted a candidate for miss of the season in the 72nd minute, scooping a Suarez cross over the bar from close-range.

Liverpool appealed for a penalty late on when Joleon Lescott had a handful of Suarez's shirt at a corner, but the striker's dive to the ground did him no favours as City held out for the win that cements them as title favourites.

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26 December 2013

LIVERPOOL ECHO

There was no shame in defeat.
Liverpool's stay at the Premier League summit maybe over but their fall was softened by the manner in which they were beaten at the Etihad Stadium. Rarely has a team proved so much with a performance which yielded so little. Brendan Rodgers' players walked away with their heads held high after a breathless and frenetic contest against Manchester City. This was a display packed full of character and quality as Liverpool went toe to toe with the big-spenders and more than matched them. Yet cruelly they ended up with nothing to show for their efforts and departed harbouring a burning sense of injustice.
The Liverpool boss was rightly furious with the ineptitude of the officials.
The decision to chalk off Raheem Sterling's effort midway through the first half was wretched with replays only proving what was clear to the naked eye – the winger was two yards onside. Referee Lee Mason then somehow failed to spot Joleon Lescott's blatant attempt to swap shirts with Luis Suarez inside the penalty box late on. Rodgers can expect a call from referees chief Mike Riley after questioning the appointment of Bolton-based Mason for a fixture involving City and branding the officials' overall performance as 'horrendous'.
But Rodgers' acute frustration was understandable. This wasn't a manager looking for a scapegoat, it was simply someone venting their fury after seeing his crestfallen side left cruelly short-changed. Forget the thrashing of Tottenham, this was the night when Liverpool truly proved they belong in the scrap at the top end of the table. The sense of relief about the Etihad at the final whistle was tangible. The hosts knew they had benefited from a large helping of seasonal goodwill. Manuel Pellegrini's men have swept all before them on home turf so far this season – winning their previous eight home league games by plundering 35 goals in the process. City had hit both Arsenal and Tottenham for six and but four past Manchester United but Liverpool refused to be sacrificial lambs.
Rodgers was true to his word as the Reds played with a swagger and fought fire with fire. Philippe Coutinho deservedly swept them in front but so much good work by the visitors was undone by the damaging mix of individual defensive errors and the lack of a killer touch in the final third.
Set-pieces have been Liverpool's Achilles heel under Rodgers throughout 2013 and once again that weakness was exposed as Vincent Kompany got above Martin Skrtel to restore parity.
Then on the stroke of half-time Simon Mignolet picked the worst possible setting to deliver the first real clanger of his Anfield career as he made an awful mess of Alvaro Negredo's strike. Liverpool's response to that setback was impressive as they wrestled control of the second half and pinned City back. However, a string of glorious chances went begging.
Luis Suarez's prolific scoring run may have come to an end but the Uruguayan was outstanding once again. Suarez tormented centre-backs Lescott and Kompany as he ran himself into the ground. This was a selfless shift from the stand-in skipper. It was his ability to hold up possession and bring his team-mates into play which enabled Liverpool to ease the pressure and establish a foothold in the game after a testing start. With full-back Jon Flanagan ruled out with a hamstring injury, Rodgers opted to hand a start to Aly Cissokho, who was making his first appearance for seven weeks. The on-loan French defender endured a difficult night with Jesus Navas for company. The Spaniard got away from Cissokho early on and nodded Aleksander Kolarov's cross against the post. Kompany then headed Nasri's corner narrowly wide before Liverpool settled and began to grow in confidence. Suarez expertly turned Kompany close to halfway and his pass sent Sterling scampering through. However, Kolarov got back to make a crucial tackle. Negredo scuffed wide when well placed before the Reds were wrongly denied the opening goal in the 20th minute.
Once again Suarez released Sterling and this time the young winger burst clear, rounded Joe Hart and rifled home. The offside flag curtailed his celebrations but replays showed Sterling had timed his run perfectly.
Liverpool's frustration turned to joy in the 24th minute. The impressive Jordan Henderson found Suarez whose classy flick picked out Sterling.
The youngster touched it past Hart and Coutinho was on hand to drive a shot inside the near post. Predictably, City raised their game and it took a fine last-ditch tackle from Skrtel to thwart Yaya Toure.
The hosts only trailed for seven minutes and the manner of the equaliser was a bitter pill for Rodgers to swallow. Skrtel was more interested in wrestling Kompany than getting off the ground to challenge for David Silva's corner and paid the price. Joe Allen was on the line but could only help the Belgian's header into the roof of the net. Liverpool should have restored their lead five minutes before the interval. It was a slick breakaway as Allen found Coutinho, who scampered into space. Suarez played a neat one-two with Sterling and the Uruguayan's perfect touch teed up Coutinho. The Brazilian only had Hart to beat 12 yards out but fired too close to the keeper who parried his effort to safety.
It was a costly miss as City ended the first half with a flourish. Skrtel's sliding tackle thwarted Negredo after he had been put through by Fernandinho but in stoppage time the Reds fell behind. They were caught napping by a devastating counter-attack with Cissokho failing to track Navas' run down the right and he found Negredo in acres of space.
The Spaniard went for the spectacular with the outside of his left boot. It should have been dealt with comfortably but Mignolet misjudged it and palmed the ball into his own net. The depth of the respective squads was highlighted by City introducing £63million worth of talent in the second half, while Rodgers turned to the on-loan Victor Moses and unproven Iago Aspas.
Liverpool's injury troubles are such that Academy teenager Brad Smith was named in a matchday squad for the first time. Yet it was the Reds who pressed City back in the second half. Hart beat away Suarez's piledriver and Glen Johnson squandered a golden opportunity when his touch let him down.
Sterling should have made it 2-2 but blazed over with the net gaping after meeting Suarez's cross six yards out. When Mason ignored Suarez's pleas for a penalty the game was up. Liverpool headed home with plaudits rather than points. But repeat the standard of this performance at Stamford Bridge on Sunday and they won't leave the capital empty handed.
MANCHESTER CITY (4-2-3-1): Hart, Zabaleta, Lescott, Kompany, Kolarov, Fernandinho, Yaya Toure, Nasri (Milner 72), Silva (Garcia 87), Negredo (Dzeko 77), Navas. Subs not used: Pantilimon, Clichy, Boyata, Nastasic. Goals: Kompany 31, Negredo 45. Booking: Zabaleta.
LIVERPOOL (4-2-3-1): Mignolet, Cissokho, Skrtel, Sakho, Johnson, Lucas (Aspas 82), Allen, Henderson, Sterling, Coutinho (Moses 68), Suarez.
Not used: Jones, Toure, Agger, Alberto, Smith. Booking: Moses, Suarez. Goal: Coutinho 24.
REFEREE: Lee Mason ATTENDANCE: 47,351.
NEXT MATCH: Chelsea v Liverpool, Barclays Premier League, Sunday, kick-off 4pm.

BBC

Manchester City closed to within one point of Premier League leaders Arsenal with a comeback victory over Liverpool in an enthralling encounter at The Etihad. Liverpool topped the table on Christmas Day and, after Arsenal's win at West Ham earlier on Boxing Day, would have returned to the top had they been the first team to beat City at home this season. Philippe Coutinho gave them a first-half lead - only for Manchester City captain Vincent Kompany to swiftly head an equaliser. City's victory was secured in first-half injury time when Liverpool goalkeeper Simon Mignolet made a hash of his attempt to keep out Alvaro Negredo's chip, ensuring Manuel Pellegrini's side kept their flawless home league record. Liverpool, however, will take great encouragement from a performance that merited a draw, with Raheem Sterling wasting the best of several opportunities they created after the break, firing over with the goal at his mercy after good work from the dangerous Luis Suarez. Pellegrini will regard this as further evidence City's title challenge is gathering momentum, while Liverpool manager Brendan Rodgers will be convinced this proves they can live comfortably in such elevated company. The Northern Irishman will also question an offside decision against England winger Sterling in the first half and a late penalty claim when Suarez's shirt was pulled by Joleon Lescott. Another big plus for City was an excellent performance from recently recalled keeper Joe Hart, who saved crucially from Coutinho and Jordan Henderson either side of the interval. As a superb first half started to unfold, City were quickly into their stride and Mignolet was relieved to see a far post header from Jesus Navas glance off the woodwork to safety. But Liverpool grew into the game and were soon demonstrating the passing and attacking movement that has become a characteristic of their game this season. Sterling put the ball in the net after being incorrectly flagged offside - a desperately poor decision - but there was no escape for City when he was involved again as Liverpool went ahead. Skipper Suarez's flick played in Sterling, who rounded Hart then stood aside as Coutinho arrived to turn the ball into an unguarded net from the angle. Rodgers would have been desperate to see his side to at least consolidate their control but City were level inside seven minutes. Kompany escaped the close attentions of Martin Skrtel, who was tugging at his shirt, to head David Silva's corner down and past Mignolet.
The commitment of both sides to attack made a thrilling spectacle and only outstanding work by Hart at the end of another wonderful spell of Liverpool passing ensured City stayed on level terms. Suarez and Jordan Henderson were the creators as Coutinho pounced, but Hart was down low to his left to save.
The value of Hart's save was emphasised in first-half stoppage time as an error from opposite number Mignolet saw City go ahead. Samir Nasri's perfect early pass sent Navas clear. He found Negredo, whose attempted lofted finish carried neither power, pace or height, only for Mignolet's feeble attempt with a raised hand to make sure it dropped into the net behind him. Rodgers made his first change midway through the second half, in which both sides had once again refused to take a backward step, sending on Victor Moses for Coutinho.
City, as ever, were a constant threat on the attack but as the half progressed it was Liverpool who made the better chances.Glen Johnson's poor control allowed Hart to block at his near post before the keeper dropped down to grab a flick from Henderson. The best chance fell to Sterling with 18 minutes left when Suarez escaped down the left flank and set the youngster up with what looked a like a simple finish from eight yards, only for him to sky an effort hopelessly over the top. Suarez had appeals for a penalty turned down in the closing minutes. He had his shirt tugged by Lescott but his over-dramatic reaction may have persuaded referee Lee Mason against pointing to the spot. City are one point behind Arsenal, with Liverpool dropping to fourth behind Chelsea, meaning just three points separate the top four.

Compiled by Graeme Riley

Date: 26 December 2013
Opposition: Manchester City
Competition: League

Times	Telegraph	Echo
Guardian	Mirror	MEN
Independent	Mail	BBC

26 December 2013

Manchester Evening News

Manchester City passed their biggest test of the season with flying colours to move ominously into second place in the Premier League.
The Blues edged a breathtaking clash with title rivals Liverpool with goals from skipper Vincent Kompany and Alvaro Negredo, after Philippe Coutinho had put the visitors ahead.
But this was not the cakewalk to which Etihad Stadium season ticket holders have become accustomed.
The Blues had to find extra reserves of defensive resilience, as well as episodes of their usual attacking magnificence, to find a way to win – and they even managed the dollop of luck which every team challenging for honours needs at some point.
With the two highest-scoring teams in the Premier Leaguer going head to head, we had hoped that it might be a Boxing Day feats of attacking football, and so it proved.
The Blues received a huge boost when Pablo Zabaleta, who had only limped off clutching his hamstring at Leicester nine days earlier, was passed fit to play.
That instantly solved the worrying conundrum about what to do at right back, especially as Luis Suarez has a penchant for drifting in from that flank – and can be devastating when he does so.
Martin Demichelis picked up a training-ground injury the day before, and in a way that suited City, as it meant that Kompany shifted to the right side.
Instead of looking like a weak point, the right of the Blues' defence suddenly looked strong as ever.
City began at a lively pace, with Zabaleta and Aleks Kolarov over-lapping on the flanks, and from a cross by the left back which bounced all the way through to Jesus Navas, the little Spaniard grazed the far post with a header.
But Liverpool were clearly not content with a point, and the game soon developed into a thrilling, absorbing contest of thrust and counter-thrust, punch and parry.
Liverpool were trying to work everything through the brilliant Suarez, and perhaps the marginal difference in the first half was that the Blues have a wider array of attacking options.
Alvaro Negredo mishit his shot wide after one typically swift, simple Blue blast down the left, Kolarov delivering the ball onto the centre forward's instep with precision.
At the other end City had a let-off when Raheem Sterling sprang the offside trap but was wrongly flagged offside as he raced through on Joe Hart's goal.
But the Scousers' threat increased as the half wore on, and on 24 minutes they were ahead.
Suarez was the architect, delivering a deft little flick around the corner which was intended for Sterling. Hart raced out and when the ball was taken wide of the keeper, Coutinho only had to place it into the empty net.
It was the first time City had gone behind at the Etihad since Romelu Lukaku's goal for Everton in October – that strike elicited a swift, stunning response.
This time the Blues were not so measured, but they showed all the class and confidence in their own powers of recovery which comes from a spotless home record.
Yaya Toure burst through the defence only for keeper Simon Mignolet to turn his shot round the post, but the Blues built intolerable pressure and on 31 minutes the visitors broke.
Set-pieces always looked like a good bet for City, with some big, powerful men supplementing their obvious class.
And so it was, as Silva's corner arrowed towards Kompany. The Belgian was clearly being held down by Martin Skrtel, who had one hand on his body and the other clasping his shirt.
But the defender has such power that he still managed to get off the ground and thump in a header which bounced down and up into the net.
If the game had been beautifully poised before, now it was see-sawing wildly. But this wasn't an old-fashioned English Christmas encounter, all pace and fire and brimstone.
There was a quality to it which defied the pace, world-class players on both sides producing touches of genius in tight spots, and at high speed. Exhilarating is the only way to describe it.
Both teams were at their most dangerous when the other team had a corner, such was the excellence of the counter-attacking, and one lightning City break ended with Navas firing over the bar.
But Liverpool showed they could also do it, and one bewildering move ended with Suarez expertly touching the ball sideways for Coutinho. His shot was heading for the corner, but Hart showed he has his reflexes back with a great left-handed stop down low.
With the scores tied, the two teams took it in turns to attack, but with a quality which will have had a global audience on the edge of their seats.
Another scintillating City break ended with Silva sliding a pass through to Negredo, on his less-favoured right foot. He got the shot away but a perfectly-times sliding challenge from Skrtel diverted it around the post.
Both teams needed half time to come, to get some respite from the lung-bursting pace. The television directors also needed half time, in order to show replays of the crucial moments – the pace was so relentless that they could find no breaks in play!
But City had one last effort left in them, and a minute into added time, they struck, not surprisingly from a Liverpool attack.
A swift and sudden interchange in midfield sent Navas away on the right, and he spotted Negredo peeling away to the left.
The pass split the two chasing Liverpool defenders and the Spaniard was in on goal. He opted for an audacious finish with the outside of his left foot, and got lucky as it appeared to fool Mignolet – he got a hand to the shot but could not stop it going in.
The second half saw Liverpool come out strongly in pursuit of the equaliser, and they provided the Blues with a stiff examination of their resolve – and of their title credentials.
This was where City were always going to be vulnerable. Going forward, they are without peer in England, but they have persistently leaked goals, and needed to find some resilience, with Suarez in full cry.
They dug deep for it, and also got a stroke of luck as the Uruguayan opened them up down the left and curved his cross perfectly for Sterling, who had the goal at his mercy, only to lift it above the bar.
The fact that City were on the back-foot, never a good place for them to be, was proved by the fact that three principal attackers were sacrificed for James Milner, Javi Garcia and Edin Dzeko.
Suarez was reduced to a ridiculous penalty-box dive which does a man of his talent no good at all, and the Blues saw it out for three valuable points.

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26 December 2013

BBC

Full time Match ends, Manchester City 2, Liverpool 1.
90:00+4:15Full time Second Half ends, Manchester City 2, Liverpool 1.
90:00+2:34 Offside, Liverpool. Jordan Henderson tries a through ball, but Luis Suárez is caught offside.
90:00+2:02 Foul by Fernandinho (Manchester City.
90:00+2:02 Jordan Henderson (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
90:00+0:53 Attempt blocked. Edin Dzeko (Manchester City right footed shot from the left side of the box is blocked.
90:00+0:18Booking Luis Suárez (Liverpool is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.
90:00+0:11 Joe Hart (Manchester City wins a free kick in the defensive half.
90:00+0:11 Foul by Luis Suárez (Liverpool.
89:05 Attempt missed. Yaya Touré (Manchester City right footed shot from the left side of the box misses to the right. Assisted by James Milner.
87:38 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Pablo Zabaleta.
87:05 Attempt saved. Aleksandar Kolarov (Manchester City left footed shot from outside the box is saved in the centre of the goal.
86:45Substitution SubstitutionSubstitution, Manchester City. Javi García replaces David Silva.
85:50Booking Victor Moses (Liverpool is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.
85:38 Pablo Zabaleta (Manchester City wins a free kick in the attacking half.
85:38 Foul by Victor Moses (Liverpool.
84:09 Attempt missed. Luis Suárez (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is too high from a direct free kick.
83:28 Foul by Yaya Touré (Manchester City.
83:28 Luis Suárez (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
81:16Substitution SubstitutionSubstitution, Liverpool. Iago Aspas replaces Lucas Leiva.
80:05Booking Pablo Zabaleta (Manchester City is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.
79:54 Foul by Pablo Zabaleta (Manchester City.
79:54 Victor Moses (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing.
78:39 Fernandinho (Manchester City wins a free kick in the defensive half.
78:39 Foul by Joe Allen (Liverpool.
76:55Substitution SubstitutionSubstitution, Manchester City. Edin Dzeko replaces Álvaro Negredo.
72:14 Attempt missed. Raheem Sterling (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is too high. Assisted by Luis Suárez.
71:55Substitution SubstitutionSubstitution, Manchester City. James Milner replaces Samir Nasri.
70:08 Attempt saved. Jordan Henderson (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Martin Skrtel with a cross.
69:59 Attempt blocked. Mamadou Sakho (Liverpool header from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Luis Suárez with a cross.
69:32 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Joe Hart.
69:05 Attempt saved. Álvaro Negredo (Manchester City header from the centre of the box is saved in the top centre of the goal. Assisted by David Silva with a cross.
68:30 Corner, Manchester City. Conceded by Martin Skrtel.
67:35Substitution SubstitutionSubstitution, Liverpool. Victor Moses replaces Philippe Coutinho.
67:12Booking Glen Johnson (Liverpool is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.
67:06 Aleksandar Kolarov (Manchester City wins a free kick in the defensive half.
67:06 Foul by Glen Johnson (Liverpool.
64:41 Aleksandar Kolarov (Manchester City wins a free kick in the defensive half.
64:41 Foul by Glen Johnson (Liverpool.
63:52 Hand ball by Aleksandar Kolarov (Manchester City.
63:48 Attempt blocked. David Silva (Manchester City left footed shot from the right side of the box is blocked. Assisted by Jesús Navas.
59:17 Foul by Pablo Zabaleta (Manchester City.
59:17 Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing.
58:12 Attempt saved. Álvaro Negredo (Manchester City left footed shot from outside the box is saved in the top centre of the goal. Assisted by David Silva.
55:32 Attempt missed. Vincent Kompany (Manchester City header from the centre of the box is close, but misses to the left. Assisted by Samir Nasri with a cross following a corner.
55:08 Corner, Manchester City. Conceded by Lucas Leiva.
52:19 Attempt blocked. Samir Nasri (Manchester City right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Álvaro Negredo.
50:52 Foul by Joleon Lescott (Manchester City.
50:52 Luis Suárez (Liverpool wins a free kick on the right wing.
50:06 Offside, Liverpool. Luis Suárez tries a through ball, but Jordan Henderson is caught offside.
50:05 Attempt missed. Luis Suárez (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is close, but misses to the left.
48:57 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Joe Hart.
48:54 Attempt saved. Luis Suárez (Liverpool right footed shot from the left side of the box is saved in the top left corner. Assisted by Aly Cissokho.
48:12 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Vincent Kompany.
47:33 Offside, Manchester City. Álvaro Negredo tries a through ball, but Samir Nasri is caught offside.
47:03 Attempt missed. Jordan Henderson (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is high and wide to the left. Assisted by Luis Suárez.
45:00 Second Half begins Manchester City 2, Liverpool 1.
45:00+1:23Half time First Half ends, Manchester City 2, Liverpool 1.
45:00+0:09Goal scored Goal!Goal! Manchester City 2, Liverpool 1. Álvaro Negredo (Manchester City left footed shot from outside the box to the centre of the goal. Assisted by Jesús Navas with a through ball following a fast break.
43:58 Foul by Fernandinho (Manchester City.
43:58 Raheem Sterling (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
42:03 Corner, Manchester City. Conceded by Martin Skrtel.
42:00 Attempt blocked. Álvaro Negredo (Manchester City right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Fernandinho with a through ball.
39:31 Attempt saved. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Luis Suárez.
36:53 Foul by Fernandinho (Manchester City.
36:53 Raheem Sterling (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
36:35 Attempt saved. Samir Nasri (Manchester City right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom left corner. Assisted by David Silva with a headed pass.
35:11 Corner, Manchester City. Conceded by Martin Skrtel.
34:11 Hand ball by Joe Allen (Liverpool.
32:51 Attempt missed. Jesús Navas (Manchester City right footed shot from the left side of the box is high and wide to the right. Assisted by David Silva following a fast break.
32:09 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Joleon Lescott.
30:11Goal scored Goal!Goal! Manchester City 1, Liverpool 1. Vincent Kompany (Manchester City header from the centre of the box to the top right corner. Assisted by David Silva with a cross following a corner.
29:49 Corner, Manchester City. Conceded by Glen Johnson.
29:29 Attempt blocked. Aleksandar Kolarov (Manchester City left footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Samir Nasri with a cross.
28:39 Hand ball by Lucas Leiva (Liverpool.
27:50 David Silva (Manchester City wins a free kick on the right wing.
27:50 Foul by Mamadou Sakho (Liverpool.
26:50 Corner, Manchester City. Conceded by Martin Skrtel.
26:45 Attempt blocked. Yaya Touré (Manchester City left footed shot from the left side of the box is blocked. Assisted by Aleksandar Kolarov.
23:49Goal scored Goal!Goal! Manchester City 0, Liverpool 1. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool left footed shot from a difficult angle on the left to the bottom left corner. Assisted by Raheem Sterling.
18:30 Offside, Liverpool. Luis Suárez tries a through ball, but Raheem Sterling is caught offside.
17:17 Attempt missed. Álvaro Negredo (Manchester City left footed shot from the centre of the box misses to the right. Assisted by Aleksandar Kolarov with a cross.
16:26 Attempt saved. Luis Suárez (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the centre of the goal.
15:33 Foul by Joleon Lescott (Manchester City.
15:33 Luis Suárez (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
13:09 Attempt missed. Luis Suárez (Liverpool header from the centre of the box misses to the left. Assisted by Lucas Leiva with a cross following a corner.
12:41 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Aleksandar Kolarov.
11:21 Attempt missed. Yaya Touré (Manchester City left footed shot from outside the box misses to the right. Assisted by Samir Nasri.
9:45 Attempt missed. Vincent Kompany (Manchester City header from the centre of the box is close, but misses to the right. Assisted by Samir Nasri with a cross following a corner.
9:27 Corner, Manchester City. Conceded by Aly Cissokho.
7:59 Foul by Yaya Touré (Manchester City.
7:59 Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing.
6:09 Samir Nasri (Manchester City wins a free kick in the defensive half.
6:09 Foul by Raheem Sterling (Liverpool.
4:30 Jesús Navas (Manchester City hits the left post with a header from the centre of the box. Assisted by Aleksandar Kolarov with a cross.
4:15 Attempt blocked. Samir Nasri (Manchester City left footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by David Silva.
2:03 Attempt missed. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is close, but misses to the left. Assisted by Joe Allen.
0:00 First Half begins.
0:00 Lineups are announced and players are warming up.

Compiled by Graeme Riley