

Date: 26 March 2014  
 Opposition: Sunderland  
 Competition: League

|             |           |                 |
|-------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Times       | Telegraph | Sunderland Echo |
| Guardian    | Mirror    | Echo            |
| Independent | Mail      | BBC             |

26 March 2014

# THE TIMES

Sturridge steers title chasers home by the seat of their pants

Liverpool 2 Gerrard 39, Sturridge 48  
 Sunderland 1 Ki 76

It had been a while since the Anfield crowd had experienced an outbreak of what an old adversary liked to call "squeaky bum time". A seventh consecutive victory took Liverpool to within a point of the Barclays Premier League's summit and, if things are going to be as tense over the coming weeks as they were in the closing stages last night, it could be excruciating. Liverpool cannot claim to have looked like champions-elect last night. After the recent flurry of goals and free-flowing football, this was a somewhat less vibrant performance, albeit embellished by spectacular goals from Steven Gerrard, with a free kick late in the first half, and Daniel Sturridge. That should have been the cue for Liverpool either to close out the game or to start producing the magic seen in recent weeks, but instead they were sloppy and endured some anxious moments after Ki Sung Yueng, the Sunderland substitute, scored with 15 minutes remaining.

Sunderland barely ventured out of their own half for the first hour -- a policy that looked sensible enough when they kept Liverpool at bay for 39 minutes -- but after the introductions of Adam Johnson and Ki, they threatened to rescue a precious point in their fight for survival. Lee Cattermole struck the crossbar midway through the second half before Ki was left unmarked to convert a corner at the far post. In the final moments, with Liverpool looking more and more nervous, Johnson's free kick picked out John O'Shea, who sent a header across the face of the goal, just beyond Jozy Altidore's outstretched leg. At the end, Liverpool had moved within a point of Chelsea, the Premier League leaders, and, after taking 32 points from 12 matches since the turn of the year, Brendan Rodgers's team have to be taken very seriously. If they are third favourites, though, there is good reason for it. They are not a team full of defensive expertise and, as last night seemed to indicate, there might be times when their natural inclination to entertain leaves them at risk of carelessness. They cannot, after all, rely on Luis Suarez to score every time. Much had changed in the 41/2 weeks since Liverpool's previous run-out at Anfield. The 4-3 victory over Swansea City on February 23 added to the sense of momentum, but it was their exhilarating subsequent form away from home, winning 3-0 against Southampton and Manchester United and 6-3 against Cardiff City on Saturday, coupled with Chelsea's slip-up at Aston Villa, that had brought a sense of genuine belief to Merseyside.

None of those opponents, though, defended as obdurately against Liverpool as Sunderland threatened to last night. It was not only a matter of deciding to field three central defenders -- Ole Gunnar Solskjaer tried something similar with Cardiff on Saturday, to little effect -- but that Gustavo Poyet seemed to have drilled his players in how the game plan would work.

For the first half-hour they frustrated the home team. If the plan was to deny Liverpool's front men the space in which they thrive, it was working very well. There is nothing new -- or, in many cases, reassuring -- about the sight of Suarez drifting into wider areas in search of possession, but on this occasion he usually found his route to goal blocked by the way in which Wes Brown, O'Shea and Santiago Vergini defended as a unit, with Phil Bardsley and Andrea Dossena in support. Farther forward -- just a little farther forward, anyway -- Sunderland had Cattermole and Liam Bridcutt trying to close space in front of the defence.

Philippe Coutinho tried to create an opening, but it was not easy with so little space in which to work. Glen Johnson, Coutinho, Suarez and Sturridge all tried their luck in the early stages, but Vito Mannone was more than content to see those efforts drift over or wide of the target. Liverpool's threat grew when Joe Allen and Jordan Henderson began to join the attack. Allen played a one-two with Suarez and hit a shot wide. Suarez found some space down the right-hand side before curling a shot beyond the far post. There was undeniably a sense that Sunderland, finally, were being stretched. The breakthrough came six minutes before half-time after Coutinho's through-ball was misjudged by O'Shea and Vergini, prompting a desperate lunge by the latter to prevent Suarez a run on goal. Despite the presence near by of Brown, it looked like the denial of an obvious goalscoring opportunity and, thus, a red card. Vergini escaped with only a yellow, but Gerrard administered further punishment, sending his free kick into the roof of the net via the hand of Mannone, who had fatefully taken a step to his right before the ball was struck to his left. Sunderland's attacking threat had been so negligible that it was hard to see a way back into the game once they fell behind. Connor Wickham, on his return to the Premier League after a spell on loan to Leeds United, had a deflected shot saved by Simon Mignolet, but otherwise the first-half action was all at the other end of the pitch. Three minutes into the second half it was 2-0. With space opening up, Henderson picked out Sturridge on the corner of the penalty area and Dossena inexplicably showed the England forward on to his left foot. That was as much invitation as Sturridge needed before curling an exquisite shot into the top corner of Mannone's goal to leave Sunderland two goals adrift.

A similar Sturridge effort, this time with his right foot, came back off the crossbar as Liverpool went in search of a third goal, but carelessness crept into their defensive play. Sunderland were emboldened by the introduction of Adam Johnson and Ki. Cattermole rattled the frame of the Liverpool goal before Johnson's corner was allowed to travel across the six yard area to reach the far post, where Ki reduced the deficit and set up a nervous finale.

# the guardian

Sturridge strike underlines Liverpool's growing belief

Liverpool held their nerve in response to Manchester City's marker at Old Trafford. There is no margin for error in this most absorbing of Premier League title races and a stunning free-kick from Steven Gerrard, plus a 20th league goal of the season for Daniel Sturridge, saw off a determined Sunderland side at Anfield. Just about.

There was relief and a return to second place for Brendan Rodgers' team after the substitute Ki Sung-yeung headed in a late goal for the visitors and Jozy Altidore missed an 89th-minute chance to puncture Liverpool optimism.

Only six times previously have two players scored 20 league goals in a season for Liverpool - the last coming in 1963-64 through Ian St John and Roger Hunt - but Sturridge joined Luis Suarez over that barrier to help maintain Liverpool's title challenge. The striker has 12 goals in his last 13 appearances for Liverpool. Gerrard's role was crucial, however, opening the scoring in fine style and telling Suarez "No more free-kicks for you" after taking on set-piece duties from the Uruguay international.

Rodgers labelled Sunderland a "very dangerous" threat to Liverpool's title pursuit and their 18th position in the table misleading. He had a valid argument, with Poyet's team taking more points against the top 10 than the bottom half of the Premier League and more points on their travels than at the Stadium of Light. The first half justified the Liverpool manager's caution, with Sunderland assured rather than adventurous, before Gerrard ended their resistance.

Poyet responded to the obvious threat of Suarez, Sturridge and Philippe Coutinho with a three-man central defence protected by Liam Bridcutt and Lee Cattermole. Emanuele Giaccherini was detailed to track Gerrard wherever he roamed.

The tactic succeeded where many other teams have failed at Anfield this season in keeping Liverpool at bay during their now customary early onslaught. There was panic from the first cross into the Sunderland area, goalkeeper Vito Mannone hooking clear after Santiago Vergini miss-controlled in front of his own goal, and long-range efforts from Suarez, Glen Johnson and Joe Allen sailed narrowly over. But otherwise Sunderland stuck to their shape, albeit without benefiting from the mountainous outlet of Altidore and Connor Wickham up front.

Liverpool's movement in the final third was typically sharp and imaginative but the final ball into the strikers dipped below recent standards.

Coutinho dispossessed Cattermole in central midfield and split the visitors' rearguard with a precision ball into Suarez. The Liverpool striker sensed danger the moment Coutinho won possession and was clear of John O'Shea and Vergini as the Brazilian's pass arrived, only to be sent sprawling by the Argentina defender's out-stretched leg.

With no obvious covering defender, Wes Brown was catching up with play when the foul was committed, a straight red seemed inevitable. The referee Kevin Friend showed only yellow but Anfield's anger evaporated when Gerrard drilled the free-kick beyond a non-existent wall and into the top corner from 20 yards. Oblivious to one reprieve, Vergini invited a second yellow card with a lazy trip on Suarez shortly afterwards. Again Friend proved to be just that for the Sunderland defender. At the other end, the visitors' one shot of the first half almost brought an equaliser when Wickham's shot deflected off Martin Skrtel but former Sunderland keeper Simon Mignolet made a fine save.

More of the same but with greater purpose in attack may have been the gist of Poyet's half-time message, but it was undermined three minutes after the restart as Sturridge struck his 20th Premier League goal of the season.

The Liverpool striker was afforded far too much space on the corner of the Sunderland area by Andrea Dossena as he collected Jordan Henderson's pass. Sturridge was even shown inside onto his left foot by the former Anfield defender and duly obliged with a shot that deflected off Brown and left Mannone rooted to the spot.

The two-goal cushion liberated Liverpool's attacking play. Suarez, producing several sublime touches, and Sturridge, combining well with team-mates, finally began to work the Sunderland goalkeeper. Anfield appealed for a penalty when Cattermole clearly clipped Suarez's heels. Replays showed the foul was just outside the area but nothing was given.

Liverpool 4-3-1-2

Mignolet; Johnson, Skrtel, Agger, Flanagan; Henderson, Gerrard, Allen; Coutinho; Suarez, Sturridge (Sterling, 77).

Subs not used

Jones, Aspas, Moses, Sakho, Cissokho, Lucas.

Referee K Friend

Sunderland 3-4-1-2

Mannone; Vergini\*, O'Shea, Brown; Bardsley\*, Bridcutt, Cattermole, Dossena (Colback, 83); Giaccherini (Johnson, 61); Altidore, Wickham (Ki, 61).

Subs not used

Ustari, Larsson, Roberge, Scocco.

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|             |           |                 |
|-------------|-----------|-----------------|
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26 March 2014

## The Mail

### GERRARD LIFTS RED FAITHFUL

DANIEL STURRIDGE received the pass from Jordan Henderson, altered his angle slightly, found his range and shot. The ball clipped the leg of Sunderland defender Wes Brown, taking it out of the reach of goalkeeper Vito Mannone.

Two up, job done. Here was a straightforward task, efficiently executed and no more. There will be a time for Liverpool to go for it, really go for it, and it is not yet, Manchester City come here on April 13, Chelsea on April 27. These are the games that will decide whether those chants about winning the league are so much hubris. A Sunderland goal in the 75th minute made for some understandable late jitters, but that happens when a team are fighting for their life at the wrong end of the table. Liverpool were, for the most part, completely in control. They have played better than this, much better, but that might be said of many prospective champions. Chelsea, City ... they all have off days.

It would have been different no doubt had Sunderland been reduced to 10 men before halftime, as should have happened, or had referee Kevin Friend given Philippe Coutinho a penalty for what appeared to be a trip.

Liverpool's defence is never entirely convincing and that was confirmed in the 76th minute when Adam Johnson's corner cleared Daniel Agger at the near post and fell to Ki Sung-yueng to force over the line.

Lee Cattermole had earlier hit the bar with a fierce shot -- although Sturridge replied in kind for Liverpool minutes later -- and memories of that narrow escape made for an anxious conclusion, not least when a Sunderland free-kick travelled across the face of goal just begging to have a head put on it.

Nights like this, however, are all part of the title chase. Sunderland are a medium-sized obstacle that must be overcome and that, ultimately, is what Liverpool did. They came through, they got over, even if not at their best.

Keep doing that and City and Chelsea will have much to fear next month. Winning when below par, after all, being one of the indicators of potential champions. How often do the others do it? It was, the locals remarked, just like old times around Anfield. Not the greatest of old times, obviously. Not the times when Liverpool's status as title contenders approaching April was almost taken for granted. Yet the best of recent old times, for sure.

Those seasons when Rafael Benitez had Liverpool in the mix, before a combination of his sizeable ego and his under-strength, undernourished squad contrived to blight his ambitions. There were red flares along Anfield Road and a deep red crowd, too, lining the streets and waving their flags as the team bus made its way towards the ground. Not those club-endorsed flags, either. Not the type one sees at Old Trafford -- The Chosen One, for instance -- that so belongs to the fans the stewards guard it at the end of matches in case it gets torn down and thrown in the bin. At Anfield, the faithful control the message and this season it is that they believe. Suddenly, everyone in the city wants to talk football again. Not as an icebreaker, but as the essence of life. It is nice to have them back.

Yet Anfield can also be a strange place on nights like this, at one moment cacophonous, at the next quiet, on edge. They know they are closer, perhaps closer than they thought possible this season, but that at any moment it could be taken away. Chelsea have the points advantage, Manchester City the games in hand, Arsenal's chances have expired. Liverpool are the true little horses in this race now, having never won over the Premier League course and distance.

What they are doing, however, is scoring for fun. That makes any team hard to beat and Chelsea and Manchester City are still to visit Anfield. So, as the club song says, there is hope; and plenty of it considering Sunderland's recent run of poor form. Gus Poyet's team have not won since their cup exploits ended and they were quickly under the cosh here. There is probably not a team in the Premier League that elicits more involuntary oohs and aahs from a crowd these days and last night, even not at their best, Liverpool were a pleasure to watch. A steeper, ooh, another one, aah. Their players try stuff that others don't, their manager encourages them in a way others won't. It cannot always work but, when it does, there is no team quite like them in English football right now.

Yet, by Liverpool's standards, this was largely average. A Luis Suarez lay back to Glen Johnson that the full back blasted over, a nice dipping shot from Sturridge after good work from Coutinho and Henderson, another Suarez set-up that produced a fine driving run from Joe Allen and a sadly inaccurate shot. Suarez cuts inside from the right, but shoots wide. Mannone, in Sunderland's goal, did not have a proper save to make. It is, however, hard to keep a good team down and with eight minutes to go before half-time, Liverpool broke the deadlock. It was hard to feel too much sympathy for Sunderland, considering what went before. The ball was played through to Suarez, who turned Argentine defender Santiago Vergini and made for goal. At which point the Sunderland man brought him down. He was heading to goal and if there was a covering defender he was almost certainly in Suarez's wake. It was a red card. Referee Friend gave a yellow. Why, who could say? Game management is the obvious explanation, the desire to keep the team numbers level and the spectacle live. Considering events later in the game, though, perhaps he just doesn't know a foul.

Either way, the award of a freekick outside the area seemed rough justice, but Steven Gerrard saw to that. His curling free-kick to the left of Mannone was more valuable than a reduction in numbers. No lucky escape for Sunderland but perhaps for Vergini. To celebrate, he tripped Suarez again, safe in the knowledge that a second yellow would have reduced Sunderland to 10 before half-time -- and a modern referee wouldn't be having that.

## The Daily Telegraph

Liverpool keep their title dream alive

Liverpool 2 Gerrard 39, Sturridge 48

Sunderland 1 Ki 76 Att: 44,524

Liverpool ended nervously, defending desperately against a late Sunderland fight-back, but Brendan Rodgers's side deservedly held on for three valuable points in their push for the Premier League title. The roar at the final whistle was etched with relief as well as joy. "We're going to win the league," chanted the Kop. Manchester City and Chelsea have other ideas but Liverpool are timing their run well. They have won 10 games and drawn two in their 12 league matches since the turn of the year, scoring 40 goals.

Steven Gerrard sent them on the way while Daniel Sturridge registered his 20th league goal of the season. Luis Suarez has 28. The last time Liverpool had two league scorers with 20 goals was in 1963-64 with Roger Hunt (31) and Ian St John (21). They lifted the title that season.

Sunderland have not won at Anfield since 1983 and with the pedestrian pair of Jozy Altidore and Connor Wickham in attack for two thirds of the game that record never looked like ending. Yet Gus Poyet's decision to send on Ki Sung-yeung and Adam Johnson so nearly turned the game in Sunderland's favour. Johnson was outstanding, causing problems in Liverpool's area while Ki scored with a header. It was all a surprise after Liverpool's long dominance.

The Kop had been chorusing "poetry in motion" before kick-off but it had been blank verse before Gerrard struck six minutes before the break. Sunderland parked a yellow bus which took time to move out of Liverpool's way. They started confidently, never losing their nerve or commitment to thoughtful football even when Sunderland were holding firm for 39 minutes.

From the start, Glen Johnson let fly with a long-ranger, Suarez curled a free-kick and then Sturridge cut in from the left and swept a shot into the Anfield Road End. Liverpool could have been three up within 10 minutes by which time the Kop was singing in praise of Rodgers.

His Sunderland counterpart, Poyet, had sought to envelop all these formidable attackers and creative mid-fielders with a back five, including Phil Bardsley and Andrea Dossena as wing-backs. Dossena's brief unspectacular spell at Liverpool is most fondly remembered by locals for the Italian scoring twice in five days in March 2009 against Real Madrid and Manchester United.

On it went, signs of Liverpool's dominance, Philippe Coutinho's back-heel to usher Gerrard upfield. Gerrard was anchoring at the base of Liverpool's midfield diamond with Jordan Henderson pushing down the right, Joe Allen on the left with Coutinho at the tip behind the roaming figures of Suarez and Sturridge. Poyet's three centre-halves, John O'Shea, Wes Brown and the hapless Vergini were under constant pressure. Every time they cleared, the ball came flying back quickly. Jon Flanagan and particularly Johnson were providing the width. O'Shea stepped in smartly to end one Johnson run.

Sunderland's attack looked physically imposing, Altidore and Wickham, but the pair failed to trouble Liverpool's defence. Gerrard dummied away from Altidore. Flanagan turned away from Wickham.

Any poor touch or hesitancy by Sunderland was seized on by Liverpool, whose pressing policy was embodied by even those less physical individuals, Allen and Coutinho. Sunderland continued to defend well, Bardsley dispossessing Coutinho. In front of Sunderland's back five were the industrious Lee Cattermole and Liam Bridcutt, who kept the visitors in contention for almost 40 minutes.

Such were the massed ranks of yellow facing them that Liverpool's best chances came on the rare occasions Sunderland were overcommitted forward. With 10 minutes remaining of the first half, Liverpool broke quickly, leading to a Suarez shot over. Liverpool's pressure told. Coutinho slid the ball through to Suarez, who was brought down by Vergini. He seemed the last man, clearly denying a goalscoring opportunity, but there was sufficient doubt and Kevin Friend awarded a free-kick and punished the Argentine with only a yellow.

Anfield expressed its derision that Vergini was not dismissed. They were soon celebrating. Suarez, Daniel Agger and Gerrard all surrounded the ball. Mannone appeared to be expecting a strike from Suarez or Agger and ordered his wall across to protect the right-hand side of his goal.

Gerrard took one look, ran in, and powered the ball with a touch of curl past the broken wall, the leaping figure of Giaccherini and Mannone.

Sunderland's keeper stretched out his left hand but the ball was moving too quickly, and the Liverpool fans in the Anfield Road End were already celebrating. Gerrard was sliding on his knees towards the fans, celebrating his 11th league goal of the season, his best tally since 2009. Gerrard went to Suarez and laughed 'No more free-kicks for you', and then playfully put his arm around Suarez's neck. Their game-plan wrecked, Sunderland ended the half threatening more. Briefly. Simon Mignolet, who spent three years on Wearside, saved from Wickham while Giaccherini forced a couple of corners. But the half concluded with Anfield wondering for the second time why Vergini had not walked, this time for fouling Suarez again. This time, Friend did not even deem the offence worth a yellow.

Liverpool's superiority was con-firmed three minutes into the second half when Henderson found Sturridge, who fired past Mannone, to make it 20 league goals for the season. As the Kop was chorusing "we're going to win the league", Sunderland began to demonstrate more ambition. Poyet sent on Ki Sung-yeung and Adam Johnson, who immediately set up Cattermole for a strike which

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|             |           |                 |
|-------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Times       | Telegraph | Sunderland Echo |
| Guardian    | Mirror    | Echo            |
| Independent | Mail      | BBC             |

26 March 2014

cannoned off Mignolet's bar. Liverpool raced down the Kop end and Sturridge also found woodwork with a shot. Sunderland were looking brighter with Johnson and Ki providing energy and precision. When a Ki shot was deflected behind for a corner, Johnson took responsibility, curling it back in. Liverpool's marking was poor, and Ki was able to head in, giving the Sunderland section in the corner of the Anfield Road End some hope. Liverpool went chasing a third. Suarez attempted a long-range freekick in front of the Kop, the ball dipping but only touching the roof of the net and continuing into the crowd. Gerrard applauded Suarez's effort. Raheem Sterling came on for Sturridge while Dossena departed to warm applause from the Liverpool fans. Gerrard was trying to keep a resurgent Sunderland at bay, diving to head out an Antidore cross. Johnson then dinked a free-kick across from the left but Altidore just failed to make contact. The final whistle was greeted rapturously. More challenges lie ahead, and City and Chelsea are formidable rivals, but belief grows ever stronger at Anfield.



### Anfield has reason to believe as Gerrard sets pace

Liverpool's wait for a time like this has been a long and often forlorn one. Even when the Premier League title seemed within sight again, for the Rafael Benitez team which lost only twice across the entire campaign five years ago, Manchester United were there on their shoulders, grinding them down again.

Now they are the ones doing the grinding - grinding down the oldest enemy and, while United suffer, grinding out the wins on a turf which has assumed all the fearsome qualities it once possessed.

They have fewer players at their disposal than Manchester City - whom they climbed back above into second place having played two games more, one point off the top last night - and infinitely fewer resources than City or Chelsea. But the best strikeforce in the country and the best collective mentality in the country continue to bridge the gap, driving them on and on.

"And now you're going to believe us, we're going to win the league" was the chant which rang out last night. It's a few years since that was heard here without anything other than irony and it was delivered briefly, without vast conviction, but the people feel it.

Steven Gerrard encapsulated things in his programme notes. "We know we're not favourites to win the league with too many people," he said. "That's irrelevant. Favourites or not, we'll be giving it our best shot."

Sunderland were set up to quell the kind of Liverpool tide which has swept away team after team before they have even settled to the turf in the past seven months. Gus Poyet has certainly seen enough of his compatriot Luis Suarez - whose 28 Premier League goals were two more than his Sunderland players had managed in total before last night - to know that a five-man defence was the requirement.

And it worked. Brendan Rodgers' players, returning to the stadium after a month's absence, were held in check. The match-night atmosphere was amplified by the noise the manager had asked the supporters to create for the returning team, though that was punctured, too.

Liverpool started with the usual intensity - Joe Allen surging 40 yards through midfield from his position in a first half which suggested his confidence is growing - but the door was closed on them.

John O'Shea's early hack from behind at Suarez gave him a free-kick which he bent two inches over the bar, and it was the Uruguayan who lifted a cross with the outside of his right boot that Daniel Sturridge, stretching his neck, could not place a head on.

Even when Sunderland's imperfections allowed the home side to come at them, there were numbers in yellow quickly behind the ball. Lee Cattermole, overrun at times in a two-man midfield shield, put the ball into a rapidly advancing Suarez's path but the striker was reduced to taking a pot shot from the edge of the area. It looked like a night when the weakest of links would need exploiting and that man was Santiago Vergini pulling down Suarez cynically on the edge of the penalty area when Philippe Coutinho had stolen a ball from Cattermole and run it in for the striker.

Screams for the Italian's dismissal were unjustified - Andrea Dossena was covering, on the pitch he once graced as Liverpool's first Italian signing - but that particular argument was academic as the captain wrapped his foot around one more of those free-kicks which have become a signature mark. When Gerrard's right foot had sent it to the top-right corner, the relief washed through Anfield. There was a brief and rare sign of life from Sunderland, when Connor Wickham's shot, deflected off Martin Skrtel, forced Simon Mignolet to scramble the ball away just before half-time. But the night seemed a forgone conclusion at that point.

Three minutes after the break, Sturridge, whose chances to attack this opposition had been limited, was allowed a foot or two of space to run at Dossena and thus deliver a shot from the right-hand side of the box which was deflected off Wes Brown to double the lead.

It was his 20th league goal of the campaign and you must reach back to the campaign of 1963-64 for the last time two players in a Liverpool team have scored 20 in the league. For Suarez and Sturridge read Roger Hunt and Ian St John. No one around here needs reminding that was a title-winning campaign. Liverpool then rapidly reached full flow - Sturridge's side-foot shot from Jordan Henderson's cut-back accidentally striking Suarez before a neat set of touches

between Coutinho and Suarez allowed Sturridge to bend the ball against the bar. But there was one more intervention by Poyet, looking for anything his football intelligence can deliver to rescue his team from the 18th place in which they languish. It was around the hour-mark that he introduced two players who epitomised that period of huge optimism which accompanied his arrival on Wearside and Sunderland's rally, Ki Sung-yeung and Adam Johnson, and they did deliver an impact. Ki added some immediate momentum and thrust to the fading side, while Johnson provided a lay-off from which Cattermole smashed against the bar. It was Ki who lost Jon Flanagan from a corner 14 minutes from time and bent down to head the ball home. That meant some terribly anxious moments at the death, none more than when O'Shea climbed to head a Johnson corner into the six-yard box a few minutes from time, with no one on the end of it. Anfield raised the roof again and Liverpool prevailed. Rodgers will not talk about titles and the impediments to the ultimate accolade include encounters with Manchester City and Chelsea in a 14-day period next month. But those sides must travel to this revived and reinvigorated place. Liverpool may not be favourites with too many people, as Gerrard put it, but not too many people will cherish the prospect of playing here either. The title remains anything but a two-horse race.



### QUIVER POOL

MAYBE the nerves are finally beginning to fray, as the extent of Liverpool's achievement comes ever sharper into focus.

They responded to the challenge set down by Manchester City on Tuesday with a response that contained all their usual attacking instinct - but not the goals it usually provides.

And Liverpool even had to face a nervous final few minutes as Sunderland showed enough spirit to peg them back with a 76th-minute diving header from substitute Ki.

But for all the tension at the end, Liverpool were good value for a win that keeps them firmly in the title hunt and keeps the records tumbling in a remarkable season. When Daniel Sturridge scored what proved to be the winner as he cut inside from the right of the box and unleashed a curling shot on 48 minutes, it took his tally to 20 league goals for the season.

With Luis Suarez currently on 28, it is the first time in 50 years two Reds strikers have scored more than 20 league goals in the same season - and that year, back in 1964, they won the league when Roger Hunt and Ian St John achieved the feat. They will be hoping it is an omen, even if there are signs that anxiety is taking hold at Anfield.

Dogged Sunderland will rue the late moments they had to snatch an unlikely equaliser, not least from a free kick just outside the box in the dying seconds when Jozy Altidore went close to converting from close range.

But the Wearsiders will take heart from the courage they showed as they refused to be swamped and there is clearly fight left in them yet.

With all the talk of scoring records and closing goal difference gaps, it was perhaps inevitable that Liverpool did not get off to their usual break-neck start. In fact, it was positively pedestrian.

The home fans are simply not used to that nowadays and it created something rarely experienced at Anfield this season - nerves, and even Suarez was affected, the South American trying too hard at times.

But it is a foolish defence which believes it has the striker leashed, and perhaps Sunderland were guilty of that as they comfortably survived the usually frantic opening half hour with only speculative efforts from Glen Johnson, Philippe Coutinho and Joe Allen to trouble them.

As they relaxed, Suarez struck, racing on to a clever ball from Coutinho to get the wrong side of Santiago Vergini, only to be clumsily felled by the Argentine defender on the edge of the box.

Referee Kevin Friend reached for his pocket and the Kop expected to see a flash of red because the covering defender Wes Brown seemed to get around rather belatedly, leaving his partner as the last man.

That it was yellow caused dismay for a few seconds only, as skipper Steven Gerrard stepped up to expose a ragged visiting wall and curl the 20-yard free kick into the top of the net. It was the goal Liverpool needed and they should have had the security they wanted soon afterwards, when Vergini blatantly tripped Suarez again as the striker skipped past him towards the box.

Friend chose to award the free kick but not a second yellow card, which was baffling - and frustratingly inconsistent from the official.

With 10 men, Sunderland had no chance, but with 11, they always posed a threat, even if the forwards they fielded had managed a paltry three goals between them in 86 games before last night.

That was emphasised when Simon Mignolet was forced to make a fine save from Connor Wickham, after a deflection looked like it would give the striker his first goal in 26 games.

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|             |           |                 |               |
|-------------|-----------|-----------------|---------------|
| Times       | Telegraph | Sunderland Echo | 26 March 2014 |
| Guardian    | Mirror    | Echo            |               |
| Independent | Mail      | BBC             |               |



### Reds have the edge on nerve-jangling night

If the mark of champions is being able to triumph when not at your best then **Liverpool** furthered their claims for the prize Kopites crave more than any other on a nerve-jangling night at Anfield. It wasn't pretty and it certainly wasn't convincing but, crucially, Brendan Rodgers' side got the job done against relegation-threatened Sunderland. Having made a habit of winning with a glorious swagger, Liverpool had to settle for limping over the line.

It was a world way from the 'poetry in motion' supporters have been treated to in recent weeks but victory was all that mattered. A seventh successive league win lifted the Reds back into second place and within a point of leaders Chelsea.

During the closing stages as the Black Cats pressed in search of an equaliser Anfield was engulfed by nerves and anxiety. As nails were bitten in the stands, Rodgers' men were reduced to hammering the ball aimlessly upfield and taking it into the corners in order to run down the clock. It shouldn't have come to that after goals from Steven Gerrard and Daniel Sturridge had seemingly put Liverpool on course for a routine three points. But other chances went begging and to their credit Sunderland rallied. After substitute Ki Sung-Yeung halved the deficit, the atmosphere was transformed. The finale was frenetic with composure conspicuous by its absence but once again Rodgers' side displayed the backbone which has underpinned their exhilarating progress. Rather than cave in, they stood strong to ensure the final whistle was greeted with a huge outpouring of relief. "We're gonna win the league", roared the Kop, and if that dream is going to be realised you can guarantee the final seven games will involve more emotional rollercoasters like this one. Rodgers' men were given a warm welcome home on their first outing at Anfield for a month. The team coach was greeted with banners, flares and a wall of noise as fans formed a guard of honour for the players prior to kick-off. One read: 'Anything is possible for those who believe'.

Lowly Sunderland's game plan was clear – get bodies behind the ball and try to frustrate Liverpool. For a long time it worked. With Gus Poyet employing a trio of centre-backs in Wes Brown, John O'Shea and Santiago Vergini, plus the defensive shield of holding midfielders Lee Cattermole and Liam Bridcutt, space was at a premium. Predictably, the Reds wrestled control from the start with the outstanding Gerrard stamping his authority on proceedings. The skipper, who avoided the booking which would have yielded a two-match ban, picked out the intelligent runs of Luis Suarez and Sturridge, who regularly darted out wide in order to escape their markers. However, for all the possession and all the moments of promise, there was no punch in the final third. O'Shea tripped Sturridge on the edge of the box early on but Suarez's curling 25-yard free-kick just evaded the angle of post and bar. Sturridge fired over from the edge of the box before the striker failed to control his header from Suarez's cross. Joe Allen showcased his growing belief as the Welshman surged forward with menace and worked tirelessly for the cause. Philippe Coutinho, flourishing at the tip of Rodgers' midfield diamond, produced some magical touches as he continued to probe and ask questions of the visiting backline. Patience was key but as passes started to go astray a sense of frustration around the ground grew. Liverpool were in need of inspiration and not for the first time Suarez and Gerrard combined to provide it as the breakthrough Anfield craved arrived six minutes before the break. Suarez spread panic as he latched on to Coutinho's inviting pass and was cynically upended by Vergini 22 yards out.

The Uruguayan would have been bearing down on goal but to the home fans' disgust referee Kevin Friend showed only a yellow card. Gerrard ensured that anger swiftly turned to joy as he sent an unstoppable right-footer beyond Vito Mannone and into the top corner for his 11th Premier League goal of the season. Sunderland had posed no attacking threat whatsoever. Their front two of Connor Wickham and Jozy Altidore boasted just one Premier League goal between them all season. But they flickered into life after going behind with Wickham, who had been recalled from a loan spell at Leeds to solve their striker crisis, seeing his shot deflect off Martin Skrtel and force a sprawling save from Simon Mignolet.

There was only brief respite for the visitors, who were fortunate that the hapless Vergini didn't get a second yellow after the Argentine brought down Suarez once again. The Black Cats' resistance was broken and three minutes into the second half Rodgers' side doubled their advantage.

After latching on to Jordan Henderson's pass, Sturridge was shown inside by former Reds left-back Andrea Dossena and gleefully accepted the invitation. His shot clipped Wes Brown and left Mannone beaten as it nestled in the far corner. A 20th league goal of the season ensured for the first time since 1964 Liverpool boast two strikers who have achieved that milestone.

Friend took pity on the Black Cats and further enraged the Kop soon after when Cattermole somehow got away with clipping Suarez's heels as he surged into the penalty area. Liverpool continued to press in search of greater reward. Sturridge's strike from Allen's cross was inadvertently blocked by Suarez, who was thwarted by Mannone as he attempted to bundle it home.

Suarez then fired high and wide with Sturridge screaming for a pass in the centre. The Uruguayan continued to torment Sunderland with a scooped pass for Coutinho but Mannone raced off his line to make the save.

The introduction of Adam Johnson and Ki Sung-Yeung for Emanuele Giaccherini

and Wickham improved Poyet's side with Cattermole hammering against the bar. Sturridge was also denied by the woodwork before Sunderland pulled one back in the 76th minute. Not for the first time this season the Reds' slack marking from a set-piece was punished as Ki turned home Johnson's corner at the far post.

Rodgers responded by replacing Sturridge with Raheem Sterling but the contest was transformed. Anxiety spread like wildfire. With two minutes to go Glen Johnson needlessly fouled substitute Jack Colback and Anfield collectively held its breath. Adam Johnson's delivery picked out the unmarked O'Shea but his header flashed just wide of the far post. It was a major let-off.

The Liverpool juggernaut rumbles on. This title push is not for the faint-hearted.

LIVERPOOL (4-4-2): Mignolet, Johnson, Skrtel, Agger, Flanagan, Henderson, Gerrard, Allen, Coutinho, Suarez, Sturridge (Sterling 77)

Not used: Jones, Aspas, Moses, Sakho, Cissokho, Lucas.

Goals: Gerrard 39, Sturridge 48

SUNDERLAND (3-5-2): Mannone, Bardsley, Brown, O'Shea, Vergini, Dossena (Colback 83), Cattermole, Bridcutt, Giaccherini (Johnson 61), Altidore, Wickham (Ki 61). Not used: Larsson, Roberge, Scocco, Ustari.

Goal: Ki 76 - Bookings: Bardsley, Vergini

REFEREE: Kevin Friend ATTENDANCE: 44, 524

STAR MAN: Philippe Coutinho. Some wonderful touches from the classy Brazilian who was a creative force.

## SUNDERLAND ECHO

### Late Ki strike gives title-chasing Reds scare

SUNDERLAND gave title-chasing Liverpool a real scare after mounting a late comeback at Anfield. But the Black Cats still succumbed to a fourth defeat in five Premier League outings, as Gus Poyet's side were unable to profit from one of the games in hand on their relegation rivals. Sunderland frustrated Liverpool during the first half before Steven Gerrard smashed home a 38th minute free-kick after Santiago Vergini was very fortunate not to earn a red card. The hosts then doubled their advantage early in the second half when Daniel Sturridge's shot was deflected beyond Vito Mannone. But the introduction of Ki Sung-Yeung and Adam Johnson injected a spark into Sunderland's play and after Lee Cattermole had hit the bar, Ki halved the deficit from a corner. John O'Shea then went agonisingly close to a late equaliser, but Sunderland couldn't narrow the three-point gap with the safety mark. Gus Poyet made five changes from the side which performed so poorly at Norwich last weekend, but more intriguingly opted for a new formation by introducing a five-man defence. Santiago Vergini lined up alongside John O'Shea and Wes Brown in central defence, while Andrea Dossena came in at left-back for the suspended Marcos Alonso. Emanuele Giaccherini and Lee Cattermole were given opportunities in midfield, with the latter starting alongside January signing Liam Bridcutt for the first time. And Connor Wickham was handed only his second start of the season after being recalled from his loan spell at Leeds United, with the England Under-21 international partnering Jozy Altidore up front.

Liverpool were unchanged from the starting XI which triumphed 6-3 at Cardiff City on Saturday, with former Sunderland duo Simon Mignolet and Jordan Henderson both starting. Luis Suarez tried his luck from a dangerous-looking free-kick 25 yards out in the seventh minute, but the Uruguayan's effort cleared the crossbar by a foot. Daniel Sturridge then let fly from the edge of the area three minutes later, but his left-footed shot from the right of goal was again over the top. But Liverpool were limited to efforts from distance during the opening 25 minutes, as Sunderland maintained their defensive shape well.

Suarez had another effort from long range in the 35th minute when he pounced on a ricochet off Lee Cattermole, surged inside off the right flank, but his shot from 20 yards was wide of the far post. Sunderland were very fortunate not to be reduced to 10 men two minutes later when Santiago Vergini's loose touch let Suarez in behind him, 25 yards out, and the defender swept away his legs when he would have had a clear run on goal. Referee Kevin Friend bafflingly decided to only hand Vergini a yellow card, although Sunderland's reprieve was only temporary. From the resulting free-kick, Steven Gerrard powered a right-footed shot into the roof of the net, with Vito Mannone slightly wrong-footed after taking a small step to his left. Wickham tested Mignolet three minutes before the interval when he let fly with a shot from the edge of the area which took a wicked deflection off Martin Skrtel and required the Liverpool keeper to readjust and push it behind. Vergini then somehow escaped a second yellow card on the stroke of half-time when he went to ground and brought down Suarez on the left-hand side of the area. Friend only awarded the free-kick though.

HALF-TIME Liverpool 1 Sunderland 0  
 Liverpool doubled their advantage after just three minutes of the second half when Henderson fed Sturridge on the far right-hand side of the area. Sturridge made a yard for himself and hit a left-footed shot towards the far corner which took a wicked deflection off Wes Brown and looped into the far corner. Liverpool went close again in the 54th minute when Sturridge's shot from the edge of the area inadvertently clipped Suarez and fell invitingly into the path of the striker. Suarez attempted to back-heel the ball beyond Mannone from point-blank range, but the Sunderland keeper blocked at his near post.

The Premier League's top scorer went close again five minutes later when he easily shrugged off Vergini down the left-hand channel, surged inside, but curled his shot wide of the far post. Suarez produced a magical dink over the top for the onrushing Coutinho in the 65th minute. but the Brazilian could only lift his shot

Date: 26 March 2014  
 Opposition: Sunderland  
 Competition: League

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| Times       | Telegraph | Sunderland Echo |
| Guardian    | Mirror    | Echo            |
| Independent | Mail      | BBC             |

26 March 2014

straight into the arms of Mannone. Sunderland were desperately unfortunate not to pull one back in the 71st minute after Cattermole was denied his first Black Cats goal by the woodwork. Poyet's side produced a flowing move which culminated in Phil Bardsley crossing from the right and substitute Adam Johnson directing the ball back across goal from the far post. It rolled into the path of Cattermole on the edge of the area, who hit across the ball with his right foot, only to be denied by the underside of the crossbar. Moments later, Sturridge was denied by the bar at the other end when Joe Allen inadvertently sent the ball back into his path on the edge of the area and the England striker curled a shot towards the far corner which came back off the woodwork. Sunderland were rewarded for a decent spell of pressure though when they halved the deficit in the 76th minute. Johnson's corner from the right was allowed to go all the way across the face of the goal where Ki Sung-Yueng was free to head it home on the far post. Suarez then just cleared the bar with a free-kick from 25 yards in the 81st minute, as Liverpool looked to restore their two-goal advantage. Sunderland had a great chance to level with two minutes to go when Johnson curled in a free-kick from the left which was met by John O'Shea, whose glancing header bounced agonisingly across the face of goal.

FULL-TIME Liverpool 2 Sunderland 1

LIVERPOOL: Mignolet, Johnson, Skrtel, Agger, Flanagan, Gerrard, Allen, Henderson, Coutinho, Suarez, Sturridge (Sterling 77). Subs not used: Jones, Sakho, Lucas, Cissokho, Moses, Aspas

SUNDERLAND: Mannone, Bardsley, Dossena (Colback 83), Brown, O'Shea, Vergini, Cattermole, Bridcutt, Giaccherini (Johnson 61), Altidore, Wickham (Ki 61). Subs not used: Ustari, Roberge, Larsson, Scocco. Booked: Vergini (37), Bardsley (40)  
 Attendance: 44,524



Liverpool continued their Premier League title charge, overcoming Sunderland after suffering a scare.

With the Reds thwarted early on, Santiago Vergini was fortunate to stay on the pitch after fouling Luis Suarez.

But Steven Gerrard drew the full reward from the free-kick, finding the top corner from 23 yards.

Daniel Sturridge curled in his 20th league goal but, after Ki Sung-Yueng's header, the hosts held on to move above Manchester City into second place.

The Merseyside team, who are chasing their first top-flight title since 1990, earned their seventh consecutive win and are now just a point behind leaders Chelsea, who they welcome to Anfield on 27 April.

They also host Tottenham and City before then and, though those teams may ask more questions than Gus Poyet's struggling side, it was still a well-earned victory against a team which had more of an attacking threat after going two goals behind.

The Black Cats are mired in the relegation zone, three points from safety, so were expected to be cautious. But once they introduced substitutes Ki and Adam Johnson, they caused some nervy moments among the Anfield crowd with John O'Shea missing the target with a header from six yards out late on.

Prolific partnership

Daniel Sturridge's goal means that, alongside Luis Suarez, it is the first time for 50 years that two Liverpool strikers have scored 20 league goals in a season. Poyet's decision to play three centre-backs largely paid off in the first half as Sturridge and Luis Suarez were denied the time and space that has allowed them to be so prolific this season.

Both strikers hit efforts over the bar but, crucially, Sunderland's defence in numbers stopped them breaking on the counter-attack.

The Liverpool supporters, who had escorted the team bus on its way into Anfield, were subdued but sparked to life when Philippe Coutinho dispossessed Lee Cattermole in midfield. He played in Suarez, who was brought down by Vergini 25 yards from goal.

With the Uruguayan striker seemingly clean through, the incident looked like it merited a red card for the Sunderland defender but referee Kevin Friend opted for yellow.

If Liverpool fans were feeling short-changed, they need not have worried.

Liverpool skipper Gerrard fired in, wrong-footing Vito Mannone with the free-kick. Four minutes later, Liverpool goalkeeper Simon Mignolet was drawn into his first action, pawing away a shot by Connor Wickham, who was recalled from his loan spell with Leeds to start up front.

It was a wake-up call for the Liverpool defence but the hosts went further ahead in the second half when ex-Red Andrea Dossena stood off Sturridge and the striker found the top corner via a deflection off Wes Brown.

That gave Liverpool breathing space and, after Suarez tested Mannone with a backheel, the home supporters started to sing "We're going to win the league". But Poyet brought on Johnson and Ki and, after Cattermole crashed a shot against the bar, with Sturridge doing the same, Ki grabbed a goal back with 14 minutes remaining as the ball came through to him from a corner.

There followed a nervous period for the hosts, with collective relief at the final whistle after O'Shea wasted a golden chance to draw level from Johnson's late free-kick.

Sunderland boss Gus Poyet: "For some reason everyone was writing us off, everyone was expecting a party where Liverpool win four-five or six nil. Maybe we will not that good in the beginning but we didn't allow them to play. The substitutes gave us that quality on the ball we were missing and in the end it looks like they were asking for the time and the fact the Liverpool fans celebrated shows that it was a tough game [for them].

"I would like to start the [next game against West Ham] now with same names that finished with that tempo and belief. If we don't believe in ourselves in the way we finished today then we make a massive mistake."

Date: 26 March 2014  
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| Times       | Telegraph | Sunderland Echo |
| Guardian    | Mirror    | Echo            |
| Independent | Mail      | BBC             |

26 March 2014



Full time Match ends, Liverpool 2, Sunderland 1.  
 90:00+3:01 Full time Second Half ends, Liverpool 2, Sunderland 1.  
 90:00+2:44 Foul by Raheem Sterling (Liverpool).  
 90:00+2:44 Jack Colback (Sunderland wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 90:00+1:22 Raheem Sterling (Liverpool wins a free kick on the right wing.  
 90:00+1:22 Foul by Lee Cattermole (Sunderland).  
 90:00+0:43 Attempt blocked. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from the left side of the box is blocked. Assisted by Luis Suarez.  
 88:00 Attempt missed. John O'Shea (Sunderland header from very close range misses to the right. Assisted by Adam Johnson with a cross following a set piece situation.  
 87:19 Foul by Glen Johnson (Liverpool).  
 87:19 Jack Colback (Sunderland wins a free kick on the left wing.  
 84:56 Joe Allen (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 84:56 Foul by Santiago Vergini (Sunderland).  
 82:15 Substitution Substitution Substitution, Sunderland. Jack Colback replaces Andrea Dossena.  
 81:48 Martin Skrtel (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 81:48 Foul by Jozy Altidore (Sunderland).  
 80:13 Attempt missed. Luis Suarez (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is just a bit too high from a direct free kick.  
 79:25 Luis Suarez (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.  
 79:25 Foul by Lee Cattermole (Sunderland).  
 77:45 Attempt saved. Luis Suarez (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the top centre of the goal. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.  
 76:27 Substitution Substitution Substitution, Liverpool. Raheem Sterling replaces Daniel Sturridge.  
 75:30 Goal scored Goal! Goal! Liverpool 2, Sunderland 1. Ki Sung-Yueng (Sunderland header from very close range to the bottom left corner. Assisted by Adam Johnson with a cross following a corner.  
 75:05 Corner, Sunderland. Conceded by Daniel Agger.  
 75:02 Attempt blocked. Ki Sung-Yueng (Sunderland right footed shot from the right side of the box is blocked. Assisted by Phil Bardsley with a headed pass.  
 74:58 Attempt missed. Phil Bardsley (Sunderland right footed shot from outside the box misses to the left. Assisted by Lee Cattermole.  
 73:33 Daniel Agger (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing.  
 73:33 Foul by Jozy Altidore (Sunderland).  
 71:38 Attempt missed. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool left footed shot from the right side of the box misses to the left.  
 71:34 Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool hits the bar with a right footed shot from outside the box. Assisted by Joe Allen.  
 70:29 Attempt missed. Ki Sung-Yueng (Sunderland left footed shot from outside the box is too high. Assisted by Jozy Altidore.  
 70:23 Lee Cattermole (Sunderland hits the bar with a right footed shot from the centre of the box. Assisted by Adam Johnson.  
 68:40 Attempt saved. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Jordan Henderson.  
 66:02 Attempt saved. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool header from the centre of the box is saved in the top centre of the goal. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho with a cross.  
 65:34 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Phil Bardsley.  
 65:03 Attempt saved. Adam Johnson (Sunderland left footed shot from outside the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Lee Cattermole.  
 64:26 Attempt saved. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from the left side of the six yard box is saved in the top left corner. Assisted by Luis Suarez.  
 61:22 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Santiago Vergini.  
 60:58 Delay over. They are ready to continue.  
 60:57 Substitution Substitution Substitution, Sunderland. Ki Sung-Yueng replaces Connor Wickham.  
 60:31 Substitution Substitution Substitution, Sunderland. Adam Johnson replaces Emanuele Giaccherini.  
 59:49 Delay in match Jozy Altidore (Sunderland because of an injury).  
 57:58 Attempt missed. Luis Suarez (Liverpool right footed shot from the left side of the box is close, but misses to the right. Assisted by Steven Gerrard.  
 57:26 Offside, Sunderland. Jozy Altidore tries a through ball, but Emanuele Giaccherini is caught offside.  
 56:29 Hand ball by Lee Cattermole (Sunderland).  
 53:30 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Vito Mannone.  
 53:27 Attempt saved. Luis Suarez (Liverpool right footed shot from the right side of the six yard box is saved in the bottom right corner. Assisted by Daniel Sturridge.  
 53:25 Attempt blocked. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Jon Flanagan.  
 53:04 Attempt saved. Phil Bardsley (Sunderland right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom right corner. Assisted by Jozy Altidore.  
 47:44 Goal scored Goal! Goal! Liverpool 2, Sunderland 0. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool left footed shot from the right side of the box to the top left corner. Assisted by Jordan Henderson.  
 45:46 Attempt missed. Luis Suarez (Liverpool left footed shot from the right side of the box is high and wide to the left.  
 45:00 Second Half begins Liverpool 1, Sunderland 0.  
 45:00+1:06 Half time First Half ends, Liverpool 1, Sunderland 0.  
 44:34 Luis Suarez (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing.  
 44:34 Foul by Santiago Vergini (Sunderland).  
 43:12 Corner, Sunderland. Conceded by Daniel Agger.  
 43:01 Attempt missed. Santiago Vergini (Sunderland header from the centre of the box misses to the left. Assisted by Emanuele Giaccherini with a cross following a corner.  
 42:30 Corner, Sunderland. Conceded by Jon Flanagan.

41:51 Corner, Sunderland. Conceded by Simon Mignolet.  
 41:47 Attempt saved. Connor Wickham (Sunderland right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom left corner. Assisted by Jozy Altidore with a headed pass.  
 40:43 Offside, Liverpool. Simon Mignolet tries a through ball, but Daniel Sturridge is caught offside.  
 40:13 Offside, Sunderland. John O'Shea tries a through ball, but Emanuele Giaccherini is caught offside.  
 39:46 Booking Phil Bardsley (Sunderland is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.  
 39:42 Jon Flanagan (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 39:42 Foul by Phil Bardsley (Sunderland).  
 38:12 Goal scored Goal! Liverpool 1, Sunderland 0. Steven Gerrard (Liverpool from a free kick with a right footed shot to the top right corner.  
 36:54 Booking Santiago Vergini (Sunderland is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.  
 36:31 Luis Suarez (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.  
 36:31 Foul by Santiago Vergini (Sunderland).  
 35:43 Martin Skrtel (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 35:43 Foul by Connor Wickham (Sunderland).  
 34:25 Attempt missed. Luis Suarez (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box misses to the left following a fast break.  
 31:02 Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 31:02 Foul by Connor Wickham (Sunderland).  
 28:25 Jon Flanagan (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 28:25 Foul by Jozy Altidore (Sunderland).  
 26:19 Attempt missed. Joe Allen (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is high and wide to the right. Assisted by Luis Suarez.  
 19:38 Foul by Joe Allen (Liverpool).  
 19:38 Phil Bardsley (Sunderland wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 17:31 Foul by Jordan Henderson (Liverpool).  
 17:31 Connor Wickham (Sunderland wins a free kick on the left wing.  
 14:41 Offside, Liverpool. Luis Suarez tries a through ball, but Glen Johnson is caught offside.  
 13:00 Glen Johnson (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 13:00 Foul by Jozy Altidore (Sunderland).  
 12:46 Attempt blocked. Phil Bardsley (Sunderland right footed shot from outside the box is blocked.  
 9:37 Attempt missed. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is too high. Assisted by Jordan Henderson.  
 8:25 Foul by Luis Suarez (Liverpool).  
 8:25 John O'Shea (Sunderland wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 8:21 Attempt blocked. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Steven Gerrard.  
 7:21 Attempt missed. Liam Bridcutt (Sunderland right footed shot from outside the box is too high. Assisted by Lee Cattermole.  
 6:11 Attempt missed. Luis Suarez (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is too high from a direct free kick.  
 5:16 Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.  
 5:16 Foul by John O'Shea (Sunderland).  
 4:15 Attempt missed. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is too high. Assisted by Jordan Henderson.  
 3:24 Luis Suarez (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 3:24 Foul by Wes Brown (Sunderland).  
 1:53 Attempt missed. Glen Johnson (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box misses to the left. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.  
 0:00 First Half begins.  
 0:00 Lineups are announced and players are warming up.