

Date: 1 October 2014
 Opposition: FC Basel
 Competition: Champions League

Times	Telegraph	Echo
Guardian	Mirror	BBC
Independent	Mail	Baseler Zeitung

1 October 2014

THE TIMES

Streller punishes lethargic Liverpool

Basle 1
 Streller 52
 Liverpool 0

Liverpool's transformation from being a team that few knew how to stop to one that no longer seems to know itself continued in Switzerland last night when they lost limply to Basle. The recovery that Brendan Rodgers maintains is only a matter of time is yet to materialise and on this evidence it remains some way off.

Predictably, a set piece proved to be their undoing as Basle became the latest beneficiaries of a weakness that is yet to be corrected. The sight of Marco Streller taking advantage of another bout of defensive ineptitude will have concerned Rodgers, but it was far from being his only worry as their first Champions League away assignment for five years turned into a showcase of all that is currently wrong.

An attacking line-up, with Lazar Markovic, Philippe Coutinho and Raheem Sterling all supporting Mario Balotelli, may have signalled Rodgers' intentions but the fluid, adventurous display that the Liverpool manager had envisaged failed to materialise during the first half, largely because of Balotelli's failure to bring others into play.

The sight of Rodgers shaking his head in disappointment as successive counterattacks foundered at Balotelli's feet told its own story and, while the forward was producing the kind of workrate that his critics claim he lacks, the technical side of his game was malfunctioning. That meant that a promising start, during which Sterling hit the post from an offside position after just three minutes, soon fizzled out.

Liverpool's first moment of panic came when Simon Mignolet decided to pass to Steven Gerrard, even though the Liverpool captain was under pressure from Mohamed Elneny. Gerrard was duly robbed of possession but managed to rescue matters by blocking Marco Streller's effort as the forward bore down on goal. The withering look that Gerrard gave to his goalkeeper required no further explanation.

Mignolet redeemed himself with a competent save from Elneny and then another from Geoffroy Serey Die after the midfielder player had evaded token challenges from Jose Enrique and Dejan Lovren. In between those efforts, Ahmed Hamoudi shot wastefully wide after Balotelli had carelessly lost possession once more.

It was during that flurry of attacking activity from Basle that Liverpool looked most vulnerable and Paulo Sousa urged his team forward in the hope that they could turn their superiority into an advantage. That played into Liverpool's hands, though, by allowing them counterattack and it was the visiting team who ended the first half in the ascendancy with Tomas Vaclik, the Basle goalkeeper, holding Sterling's snap shot before dealing comfortably with Lovren's weak header from Coutinho's free kick.

More worrying for Basle than the late pressure they came under was the sight of an object being thrown on to the pitch from the crowd. The missile was retrieved by Jonas Eriksson, the referee, and handed to a Uefa official. In March, Basle were fined PS100,000 and ordered to play two games behind closed doors, one of which was suspended, after their Europa League clash with Salzburg was marred by similar incidents.

Having improved before half-time, Liverpool went back to being strangely lethargic after the interval and Basle sensed an opportunity to add another English scalp to their name after recent wins over Chelsea, Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur. Liverpool did not recognise the danger and were fortunate to survive a penalty claim when Derlis Gonzalez appeared to be fouled by Sterling before Mignolet did well to repel Hamoudi's low strike after the winger had escaped down the right.

The goal that Basle had been threatening duly arrived in the 52nd minute as Liverpool were once again undone by their ongoing failure to deal with set pieces. Taulant Xhaka's corner should have been cleared by Martin Skrtel but the defender unintentionally headed towards his own goal, forcing Mignolet to parry the ball into the path of Streller, who scored from close range.

Balotelli almost produced an immediate equaliser with a long-range free kick that Vaclik blocked in unorthodox fashion, but the Italy forward was becoming increasingly frustrated and was booked for dissent soon after. He was far from being Rodgers's only concern, though, with Sterling encapsulating his own below-par display with a weak finish after being put through by Adam Lallana, the substitute.

Balotelli had a late effort chalked off for offside but Liverpool's response was meek in the main and after winning their opening group game, last season's Premier League runners-up are now facing a three-way battle with Real Madrid and Basle to qualify for the knockout stage.

Basle (4-5-1): T Vaclik -- T Xhaka, F Schar, M Suchy, B Safari (sub: D Gonzalez, 9min) -- B Embolo (sub: D Calla, 81), G Serey Die, F Frei, M Elneny, A Hamoudi (sub: L Zuffi, 90) -- M Streller. Substitutes not used: G Vailati, M Delgado, S Gashi, Y Kakitani. Booked: Suchy.

Liverpool (4-2-3-1): S Mignolet -- J Manquillo, M Skrtel, D Lovren, J Enrique -- S Gerrard, J Henderson -- L Markovic (sub: R Lambert, 81), P Coutinho (sub: A Lallana, 70), R Sterling -- M Balotelli. Substitutes not used: B Jones, K Toure, A Moreno, L Leiva, F Borini. Booked: Sterling, Gerrard, Balotelli.

Referee: J Eriksson (Sweden).

the guardian

Streller reheats Liverpool's Basel hoodoo

Daniel Sturridge's importance to England irrespective of fitness will be revealed when Roy Hodgson announces his latest squad today. His value to Liverpool continues to rise in absentia with Brendan Rodgers' faltering team suffering a fresh setback with defeat in the Champions League to Basle.

Twelve years ago the Swiss champions signalled the end for Liverpool in the Champions League and, while it would be indecently premature to predict a repeat, Marco Streller's second-half goal could prove costly should Real Madrid seize control of Group B and leave these two clubs competing for second place. Not for the first time this season, a lack of purpose in attack and an aversion to defending set pieces were at the root of a Liverpool defeat.

Lively St Jakob Park has proved a troublesome destination for English clubs in the Champions League - Chelsea losing here last season, Manchester United being eliminated on this ground in 2011 plus Gerard Houllier's Liverpool in 2002 - but all was not well with the Swiss champions before the return of the Anfield club.

Paulo Sousa, Rodgers' predecessor as Swansea City manager, has taken Basle back to the top of their domestic league after 10 games of his inaugural season in charge yet there is already an online petition against his brief reign.

Constant team changes and the 5-1 Champions League defeat by Real Madrid are among the causes of discontent with Sousa. Rodgers' early-season problems pale by comparison although the quest for Liverpool's irrepressible attacking threat of last term and to install solidity in defence have become repeated frustrations.

Jose Enrique was given only his second start of the campaign in place of Alberto Moreno at left-back but was unable to stem Basle's attacks down his flank, although the Spaniard was one of Liverpool's better outlets in the final third. The pounds 20m summer signing Lazar Markovic started somewhat surprisingly ahead of Adam Lallana and, while livelier than in recent displays, has still to show the form that impressed for Benfica last term.

Raheem Sterling was characteristically prominent for Liverpool and struck a post from the visitors' first attack of the game when Mario Balotelli released Javi Manquillo down the right and the right-back's cross found the England international at the back post. The assistant immediately flagged for offside, however, cutting short Sterling's celebrations when he converted the rebound from the first attempt. A harsh booking for a trip on Ahmed Hamoudi followed shortly afterwards for the Liverpool forward.

Liverpool opportunities were generally limited. Basle lost the left-back Behrang Safari to a knee injury after nine minutes but suffered minimal disruption as Sousa switched to a 3-5-2, prompting Rodgers to respond by changing Liverpool to 4-4-1-1, and saw his team frequently stretch the visiting defence. Safari's replacement, Derlis Gonzalez, was quickly up to the speed of Basle's energetic start and Liverpool's midfield offered little resistance as the home side found spaces outside the visitors' area too easily.

Streller almost punished a Steven Gerrard error when the Liverpool captain squandered possession on the edge of his penalty box but made amends by blocking the Basle captain's low shot. The under-pressure Simon Mignolet saved from Hamoudi, and also denied Serey Die after the midfielder cut inside two Liverpool defenders after a neat exchange with the towering Basle centre-forward.

Basle's biggest problem on the night was self-inflicted when a battery appeared to be thrown in the direction of the assistant referee next to Tomas Vaclik's goal. The object was handed to a Uefa official, a warning was sounded over the PA but the Swiss club could face further sanction.

Basle were fined pounds 100,000 and ordered to play two matches behind closed doors (with one game suspended for two years) after a similar incident in a Europa League game against Salzburg in March.

On the field, the threat from Streller increased after the interval and Liverpool's defending at a set-piece was lamentable once again when they deservedly fell behind. Sterling was extremely fortunate not to concede a penalty when he pulled down Gonzalez inside the area. Not long afterwards, from Taulant Xhaka's corner, Martin Skrtel miscued a header towards his own goal, Mignolet scooped the ball clear but only into the path of Streller who converted from close range.

The breakthrough finally wakened Liverpool but Markovic was unable to convert several decent openings, one from a thunderous Balotelli free-kick that rebounded off the Basle goalkeeper, and Sterling wasted a great chance with a dreadful first touch when put clear by the Italian striker.

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The Mail

TOOTHLESS LIVERPOOL LEFT IN A REAL MESS

BRENDAN Rodgers has taken to describing his team as 'a little bit broken'. Suddenly it feels like it could take quite a while for Liverpool's manager to fix it.

This Liverpool side need a crash course in winning football matches after they lost, for the fourth time this season, in this Champions League Group B fixture against Basle.

There is no need for panic just yet, but this squad is struggling to manage two matches a week, in the Premier League and the Champions League.

In the short term, over six games in European competition, defeat to Paulo Sousa's spirited team will not prevent them qualifying for the second round if they win their home games.

The problem is that the next Champions League date at Anfield is against the reigning European champions, Real Madrid. Good luck.

They approached this one like a one-off game, abandoning Liverpool's traditional, patient approach to a fixture on European soil and throwing bodies forward.

Inexperience, naivety, call it what you will, but this was end-to-end stuff. Liverpool were gung-ho, a team out for glory in their second group game.

They piled forward, sending Lazar Markovic, Philippe Coutinho and Raheem Sterling to help Mario Balotelli in his role at the front of this Liverpool strike force.

He started well, unaware of the criticism he was subjected to from Jamie Carragher in the Sky Sports studio ahead of this fixture. 'I can't hide the way I feel about him,' Carragher admitted, and there are plenty of others who share his view.

Balotelli has scored once since his PS16million move from Milan, a neat finish that put Liverpool 1-0 up in their European opener against Ludogorets at Anfield.

Everyone is waiting for him to go on a run, to spark into life and provide Liverpool with some stability up front until the return of Daniel Sturridge.

He started well enough here, ducking and diving between the role of target man and genuine goal threat until Basle's defence got to grips with him.

The Italian's cute little touches on the spin, angling the ball into the path of the onrushing figures of Sterling or Markovic in the opening minutes should have given him the confidence to ensure this was his night.

Sterling was busting a gut, punished for straying offside when he eventually rolled the ball into the net after two minutes and later booked for a foul.

Liverpool gave the ball away too cheaply, surrendering possession on the halfway line when they should have been trying to take the sting out of the game.

Paulo Sousa's side have a good record against English opposition, raising themselves in recent years to record impressive wins against Manchester United, Chelsea and Tottenham in European competition.

Spurred on by their noisy fans stationed behind Tomas Vaclik's goal in the first half, they had two proper chances to go ahead.

Simon Mignolet, under the cosh in Liverpool's goal after some unconvincing performances of late, accepted the challenge.

He was on to Mohamed Elneny's curler before it left his right boot on the edge of the area, scuttling across his line to settle the nerves of Liverpool's defence.

Then there was the save from Geoffroy Serey Die, improvising to save with his feet when the Basle midfielder worked some space inside the penalty area.

There was a look of panic about this Liverpool team at times, uncertain in their approach work after a difficult start to the season in the Premier League.

Jose Enrique, who returned to the side for the Capital One Cup tie against Middlesbrough last week, lost his concentration.

Twice he failed to read the passes of Steven Gerrard, allowing one to roll under his foot and then bizarrely hitting Ahmed Hamoudi with an attempted pass.

Basle are a tricky team, far more cunning than the scoreline at the Bernabeu suggested when they lost 5-1 to Real Madrid on matchday one.

This was an eventful game for Sterling. At the start of the second half his lunge on substitute Derlis Gonzalez inside the area could easily have been a penalty.

Jonas Eriksson, the Swedish referee, was lenient, but it could easily have been given.

Still, Basle didn't quit. They went ahead when Martin Skrtel's attempted, misguided clearance forced Mignolet low to save with an outstretched arm.

There waiting to pounce was Marco Streller, the local Basle boy who returned to the city to finish his career with his boyhood team seven years ago.

He is always a threat and he was on to this unexpected chance early, sending this place into raptures by smashing his effort into the roof of Mignolet's net in the 52nd minute.

Liverpool responded, forcing a quality save from Vaclik when Balotelli drilled a 60th-minute free-kick straight at the Basle keeper. But they never found a way through.

The Daily Telegraph

Liverpool roll over as Swiss take advantage

Basle 1 Streller 52 Liverpool 0 Att: 36,000

Wherever Brendan Rodgers has left the Liverpool of last season, he needs to relocate them quickly before this season's ambitions turn to rust.

A Champions League defeat to Basle has left European hopes looking precarious.

As on domestic duty, Rodgers is finding the winning formula of last season notorious by its absence and this loss could be one of the most damaging.

Put bluntly, the Liverpool who qualified so impressively into the Champions League does not resemble the side now competing in it, and Marco Streller's 52nd-minute winner in St Jakob Stadium was a severe dent to the Merseyside club's ambitions of progression to the knockout phase.

Of broader concern is where the style, the passing and the goals have gone. Rodgers is certain there will be a recovery soon, but there is a danger the season will already be in salvage mode when it happens.

Basle talk about the legendary nights when they earned draws with Liverpool.

Rodgers would probably have been content with a similar outcome prior to kick-off with an Anfield return to come and the Swiss perceived as the direct competitor to progression from Group B. We must presume Real Madrid already have their seats booked for the knockout draw.

With Liverpool facing a double header with Real after their trip to St Jakob Park, it was certainly a fixture they could ill-afford to lose if their European ambitions were not to end as prematurely as those in the Premier League appear to be.

Rodgers made two changes to his line-up, with Alberto Moreno rested for Jose Enrique and Philippe Coutinho replacing Adam Lallana, but there was inevitable focus on Steven Gerrard following his manager's pre-match eulogy.

The last time Gerrard was here in 2002 was recovering from a mauling from his boss after a poor display, but Rodgers continues to feel indebted to him. When Gerrard dictates the tempo, Liverpool invariably play well but sides have been shutting him down.

Basle manager Paulo Sousa was evidently watching the DVDs of recent Premier League fixtures, as the home side almost benefited from a similar strategy on 13 minutes.

Their captain, Marco Streller, pounced on the Liverpool captain after an accident-and-emergency pass from Simon Mignolet that should have been accompanied by a siren. It required a recovery tackle from Gerrard to prevent what looked a certain goal and his fixed gaze on Mignolet made it clear where the captain would have pinned the blame had Basle benefited.

This was typical of an error-ridden first half, where neither side could take advantage of each other's defensive edginess.

Enrique looked especially vulnerable on the Liverpool left, much of the Basle threat emerging via scampering early substitute Derlis Gonzalez. Geoffroy Serey Die was also allowed to quick-step into the Liverpool penalty and force Mignolet into his first meaningful save on 35 minutes.

But having seen Basle concede five in their opening group game, Liverpool knew there were flaws to expose. How frustrating for Rodgers that without Daniel Sturridge he still lacks the ammunition to rip teams to ribbons as his side did last season.

Mario Balotelli still looks more lively with the ball rather than without it. He presses well for the first five minutes, presumably with the prematch instructions to be energetic still reverberating his eardrums, but soon reverts to type, his movement not random enough when midfielders are looking for a run beyond the defence.

There was joy to be had when Liverpool attacked. Raheem Sterling had the ball in the net after three minutes, but it was ruled offside, although an early booking seemed to fill his legs with caution. The youngster was hesitant several times, although he forced Tomas Vaclik into a save from distance on 42 minutes.

A Liverpool midfield consisting of Sterling, Coutinho and Lazar Markovic promised more than it was delivering, although the PS20million Serbian winger was enjoying his most promising evening since arriving.

He certainly has pace on the ball and looked far more confident than the timid display witnessed during last weekend's Merseyside derbies.

In contrast to the freestyle of last season, Liverpool's biggest threat came from set-pieces, Coutinho's deliveries twice locating Dejan Lovren who could not find the target.

Sterling was having an unhappy evening, and after he conceded possession on 52 minutes Mignolet was forced into his most impressive save, diving low to his left to push Ahmed Hamoudi's shot wide.

The reprieve was brief as the setpiece nightmare continued for Rodgers. Taulant Xhaka's corner was headed towards his own goal by Martin Skrtel, Mignolet managed to keep it out but Streller leapt on the rebound to put Basle one-up.

Balotelli almost hit a spectacular equaliser on the hour, a 30-yard free-kick saved in unorthodox fashion with a chest, which almost fell to Markovic.

As so often with Balotelli, the ridiculous often follows the sublime. An equally outrageous strike a minute later almost pitched outside the stadium. The Italian also received a caution late on, his on-field temperament increasingly questionable.

There was more urgency as Liverpool chased an equaliser, but it was unstructured and hopeful - a contrast to the order amid the mayhem of last season's goal-rushes.

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THE INDEPENDENT

Liverpool let down once again by defensive weakness as Basel prosper
 Basel's neat, compact ground is built into the side of a shopping centre but for Liverpool, as for so many other English clubs, success here has been as hard to find as Armani watches in Poundland.

It is not a venue Steven Gerrard will want to visit again. Twelve years ago, he had been brought off at half-time with G[c]rard Houllier's team three down and spiralling rapidly out of the Champions League.

Liverpool's captain lasted the full 90 minutes last night but, as he walked off, he would have realised the limitations of his side's return to the European Cup. The history will never change and nor will the passion of their support but the great comeback has thus far been more Take That than Elvis Presley - a fortunate victory over Ludogorets and now defeat at the hands of Basel, middleweights of the Champions League.

Once the hometown boy, Marco Streller, put Basel ahead, there was little real feeling that this was a scoreline Liverpool could overturn. In 2002, they had scored three times after the interval and still gone out. This was a reverse far less heroic.

The screeches from all around St Jakob-Park before the final whistle, and the embraces when Jonas Eriksson put it to his lips, signified that for Switzerland's most powerful team, this was a desperately required victory. It is one Brendan Rodgers will struggle to take the positives from. Real Madrid await, home and away.

Whereas one [pounds sterling]16m striker went into the half-time interval on his way to a Champions League hat-trick, the other had only sweat to show for his efforts. Danny Welbeck does, however, lack Mario Balotelli's Hollywood quality. Switzerland's biggest-selling newspaper, Blick, devoted a full page to detailing the Italian's every move as he travelled on the team bus from airport to hotel under the headline: "Here Comes the Cobra". Blick even noted gleefully that there was a sex shop opposite the team hotel, as if this would be Balotelli's first port of call after check-in.

One free-kick from fully 35 yards that struck Basel's keeper, Tomas Vaclik, in the chest apart, there was not much venom in the cobra's fangs. Mostly, his hair dyed the colour of Liverpool's yellow away shirt, he was to be discovered very deep and, when he did go forward, Balotelli found himself either chopped down or out of position.

On the touchline, clad in a dark suit, Rodgers was unusually demonstrative, throwing his arms around in anger when Raheem Sterling picked up a cheap booking, but more often the gestures were made in frustration.

Only Javi Manquillo, from right-back, provided any real kind of outlet - it was his cross that Sterling turned into the net from an offside position. There was, however, far too little support through the middle and not much for Germany coach Joachim L[paragrap]w, who lives just over the border in Freiburg, to enjoy from his seat in the directors' box.

The Liverpool fans who, perhaps appropriately given the majesty of their past, had occupied the square in front of Basel's history museum, brought with them a banner that proclaimed their club "European royalty".

Basel are not that but they could claim to be among the gentry of the continent's football teams, and having beaten Manchester United, Chelsea and Tottenham here, they boast an enviable record against English clubs.

Given their 5-1 annihilation by Real Madrid in the Bernabeu, this was a record Paulo Sousa's team needed to maintain if they were to entertain hopes of making it out of this group. They had possession and forced plenty of corners, though a combination of Gerrard's marshalling of his defence and some weak direction meant Basel did little enough with them in the first half.

Sousa had lost his left-back, Behrang Safari, before 10 minutes were up and his replacement, Derlis Gonzalez, was twice betrayed by his own touch as opportunities opened up. When he did force his way through on the counter-attack after the restart, Simon Mignolet blocked the shot.

Before the interval, the Liverpool keeper needed his legs to block Basel's way to goal as Geoffroy Serey Die turned first Jose Enrique and then Dejan Lovren. A dozen years ago, Basel had gone into the home dressing room at St Jakob-Park three goals up against Liverpool. Now it was goalless but the warnings as to what was to follow had already been given.

Three years ago, Streller's goal had helped knock Manchester United out of the Champions League on this ground and sparked one of the more curmudgeonly of Sir Alex Ferguson's press conferences - Basel, who had scored five times home and away against United, were he said, "a very defensive team". Liverpool are likely to pay a far lighter price than Manchester United but they were just as well beaten.

Now, after Mignolet blocked one attempt from a corner, Streller, born and brought up in Basel, swept the loose ball home. At the age of 33, his career is in its twilight but the afterglow will linger - especially in England's North-west.

DAILY MIRROR

EU TAKING THE SWISS

THE only thing missing was the funny walk, otherwise it was a case of Basel faulty for Liverpool.

In a country dominated by mountainous peaks, Brendan Rodgers' side were left in no doubt they now face a real uphill struggle in their quest for Champions League glory.

The manager was left frustrated by a performance that was lethargic and disjointed. They created few opportunities and failed to impose themselves on a spirited, but limited, Basel side.

The alarm bells must be ringing around Anfield, with their team still a pale shadow of the one that took the Premier League by storm last season.

Their set-piece failings were exposed once again by opponents not known for their physical attributes.

The goal which leaves the Reds facing a real challenge to get out of the group was a painful one, with yet another mix-up in the back line ending with Martin Skrtel almost scoring an own goal, and veteran Basel skipper Marco Streller finishing the job.

What will worry supporters most is that Liverpool hardly responded after that goal just before the hour mark.

Raheem Sterling scuffed one shot and Lazar Markovic sent another wide from a good position. Yet a fierce free-kick from Mario Balotelli (right) aside, the English club simply didn't look close to scoring.

It is hard to see where a goal is coming from, and the manager must now be praying Daniel Sturridge returns at the weekend for the game against West Brom. It is especially frustrating given the fact that the visitors seemed in control in the first half, when Balotelli was more of an influence and even Markovic came into the contest.

Yet the curse of Basel struck again, with Liverpool on the end of another major embarrassment here, despite the best efforts of captain Steven Gerrard.

Gerrard was one of the few who could escape criticism, unlike PS16million Italian striker Balotelli who had appeared engaged and committed in the first half. But as the game progressed, he lost his composure completely.

He was booked at the end for tapping a hand on the face of an opponent, and then appeared to inspire the wrath of his manager as he left the arena without acknowledging the Reds' support.

This is a stadium that still sends shivers down Red spines, the graveyard of a Champions League dream, and some still say the managerial career of Gerard Houllier, who never truly recovered from the draw here in 2002 which dashed their European dream.

Liverpool so very nearly made the perfect start when Raheem Sterling had the ball in the net in the opening minutes, only for the effort to be ruled out for offside.

That though, was probably the high point, though Balotelli's ferocious free-kick was very nearly followed in by Markovic.

The same can be said of their defending too - they never looked comfortable. And on 52 minutes they conceded what their angry manager described as a soft goal - and that is putting it mildly.

From a corner, the ball bounced off both Skrtel and Lovren, and even though Simon Mignolet saved, no one was marking Streller who forced the ball home.

Liverpool face a testing time after their fourth defeat of the season already, and they will go into the weekend game against West Brom under pressure.

Rodgers will know the weakness at set-pieces is a real worry, but perhaps even more serious is the lack of a goal threat. This was Liverpool's 11th game against Swiss opposition - and the first time they have ever failed to score.

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Champions League hopes take blow on wretched night in Switzerland
 So much for exorcising the demons of St Jakob-Park.

Liverpool's return to the Swiss city of Basel only yielded another dose of Champions League heartache. The ramifications aren't as costly as 12 years ago when Gerard Houllier's side crashed out of the competition but this was still a painful blow to the current crop's hopes of reaching the knockout stage.

Brendan Rodgers' optimism that Saturday's dominant derby display against Everton marked a return to the Liverpool of last season proved misplaced on a wretched night at the home of the Swiss champions.

Basel added the Reds' scalp to those of Manchester United, Tottenham and Chelsea on home turf over the past three years but they were given a sizeable helping hand. A lack of punch in the final third and a glaring defensive weakness is a potent cocktail and it's costing Liverpool dear during this worrying start to the campaign. Once again a set-piece decided their fate as Basel captain Marco Streller took full advantage. Last term those frailties were papered over by Liverpool's firepower at the other end but not any more.

No wonder Rodgers remains so furious with England over their treatment of Daniel Sturridge. Over the past six matches his absence has cost the club dear with Mario Balotelli unable to shoulder the goalscoring burden.

Sturridge's imminent return will at least improve matters ahead of a crunch Champions League doubleheader with European champions Real Madrid, who made it two wins out of two in Group B with a 2-1 victory over Ludogorets.

Rodgers made two changes following the Merseyside derby stalemate with Jose Enrique and Philippe Coutinho recalled at the expense of Alberto Moreno and Adam Lallana. The inclusion of Enrique was a surprise given that he had only made his first start for 11 months in the League Cup a week earlier.

The Spaniard faces a battle to regain his status as the club's No 1 left-back following the impact of Moreno since his £12million move from Sevilla.

For Coutinho, this was his opportunity to put a difficult start to the campaign behind him but he couldn't take it. The little Brazilian, who sat out the defeat to West Ham and the League Cup win over Middlesbrough before coming off the bench in the derby, is still a mile away from producing the electric form which lit up the club's pre-season schedule. In his favoured central role, Coutinho was part of a front front also boasting Lazar Markovic, Raheem Sterling and Balotelli which promised much but delivered little. The plan was crystal clear as Liverpool were compact when not in possession and then counter-attacked at pace.

Inside two minutes Balotelli found the lively Javier Manquillo and his cross picked out Sterling, who netted at the second attempt but he had strayed offside.

For the most part the Reds found themselves on the back foot with their cause not helped by Coutinho's wastefulness.

Sterling, who was booked for hauling back Ahmed Hamoudi, wasn't able to have the same kind of influence from wide on the left as he has done this term from the middle. Basel were forced into an early change when Behrang Safari limped off and was replaced by Derlis Gonzalez but their gave their vociferous home support plenty of encouragement. Many of the Reds' problems were of their own making with Simon Mignolet giving Steven Gerrard a pass he didn't want under pressure just outside the penalty box. The skipper had his pocket picked and Rodgers' side were relieved to see Marco Streller's effort deflected behind.

Midway through the first half Mignolet comfortably dealt with Mohamed Elneny's 25-yard curler. Liverpool looked to Balotelli to be the focal point of their attack.

He chased down his fair share of lost causes but it was another unimpressive outing for him. Too often he was careless and Rodgers couldn't hide his frustration on the touchline just before the half hour mark.

Balotelli gave it away cheaply and Basel countered with menace. Manquillo wasted one opportunity to clear and the Hamoudi's angled drive flew narrowly wide of the far post. The Swiss champions continues to show their greater cutting edge in the final third. Ten minutes before the interval Mignolet came to the rescue, saving with his legs after Geoffroy Serey Die had weaved his way past both Enrique and Dejan Lovren in the box. With Manquillo excellent at right-back as he kept Hamoudi under wraps and Lovren winning his physical tussle with Streller, the Reds finished the first half strongly. Sterling pounced on some defensive hesitation on the edge of the box but his sweetly struck drive was straight at Tomas Vaclik. Lovren then rose highest to meet Coutinho's free-kick but his downward header lacked the power required to beat the Czech keeper.

If that gave the 1,700 Kopites at St Jakob-Park hope, it was quickly wrestled away as Basel took control after the interval. Sterling was lucky when Gonzalez's penalty appeals were waved away and then Hamoudi burst clear only for Mignolet to make a fine one-handed save. Liverpool were second best and the pressure told in the 52 minute. Once again the Reds' vulnerability from set-pieces was exposed. Taulant Xhaka swung a corner into the box, neither Skrtel nor Lovren dealt with it and the ball flew goalwards off the Croatian's back.

Mignolet reacted to palm the ball away but only as far as Streller, who gleefully converted. Liverpool briefly threatened to restore parity. Markovic's acrobatic overhead kick was claimed by Vaclik before the Serbian's low strike was expertly blocked by Fabian Schar.

Just past the hour mark Vaclik unconvincingly kept out Balotelli's swerving 30-

yard free-kick. The rebound dropped into the path of Markovic but Schar got back to divert it behind. Rodgers introduced Lallana for the ineffective Coutinho with 20 minutes to go. Lallana made an instant impact as his neat pass released Sterling. However, the teenager's first touch was disastrous and allowed Vaclik to race out and gather. The home fans' joy turned to fury when the Reds declined to kick the ball out when Breel Embolo was on the desk asking for treatment. But Markovic squandered the chance anyway as he drilled wastefully wide. It summed up Liverpool's night.

Basler Zeitung

Embolo, Streller und der Basler Jubel

Der FC Basel sollte in der englischen Premier League mitspielen. Die Bilanz gegen die britischen Topteams ist unglaublich: Zuhause gewann der FCB vier der letzten fünf Vergleiche, auf Champions-League-Stufe gar die letzten drei in Serie.

«Langsam ist es schon fast beängstigend. Geil, wie wir gegen ein solches Team aufgespielt haben», entfährt es Matchwinner Marco Streller spontan nach dem Spiel. Dem ist eigentlich nichts mehr hinzuzufügen.

Weil es aber so viel Spass gemacht hat, Serey Die, Elneny, Hamoudi, Embolo, Streller – ja eigentlich allen Baslern – zuzuschauen, wollen wir uns dennoch den Blick auf die 93 Minuten gönnen. Begonnen hat es denkbar schlecht. Die Verletzung von Behrang Safari zwang Paulo Sousa zu einer frühen Systemumstellung. Nun verteidigte die Dreierkette Xhaka/Schär/Suchy gegen den Dreiersturm Sterling/Balotelli/Coutinho. Was nach argem Nachteil aussah, entpuppte sich schon fast als Glücksfall. «Nach der Umstellung haben wir fast noch konzentrierter gespielt», analysiert Streller. Die erste Halbzeit gehörte komplett den Hausherrn, Liverpool brachte keine vernünftige Torchance zustande.

Das bessere Kollektiv

«Mit etwas mehr Präzision hätten wir gar noch höher gewinnen können.» Die Behauptung Strellers ist nicht anmassend, sondern korrekt. Auch Paulo Sousa schliesst sich diesem Urteil an: «Wir haben mutig, schnell und kraftvoll gespielt.»

Der 17-jährige Embolo kreierte Chance um Chance, die alle teils sehr fahrlässig verschleudert wurden. Weder Gonzalez noch Hamoudi oder Streller konnten profitieren. Die beste Gelegenheit zur Führung aber vergab Geoffroy Serey Die. Der ivorische Kämpfer zeigte eine Riesenleistung und spielte sich zusammen mit Streller wunderbar durch die Liverpools Hintermannschaft. Sein Aussenristschuss (35.) konnte aber Simon Mignolet nicht bezwingen.

Der Belgier im Tor war der beste Mann der Engländer. In der 52. Minute verhinderte er mit tollem Reflex gegen Ahmed Hamoudi einen Verlusttreffer. Nach dem anschliessenden Eckball hielt Mignolet Schärs Kopfball miraculös auf der Linie, musste sich dann aber Streller geschlagen geben. Der Basler Leitwolf reagierte schneller als sein Bewacher und staubte zum vielumjubelten 1:0 ab. «Wer auswärts ein solches Tor kassiert, hat es ganz schwierig», meint der tief enttäuschte Liverpool-Trainer Brendan Rodgers. Was auf den Treffer folgte, war überraschend. Nicht, dass Liverpool vehement den Ausgleich suchte. Aber mit welcher Hilfllosigkeit Mario Balotelli und der völlig von der Rolle scheinende Raheem Sterling beste Gelegenheiten ausliessen. Liverpool hatte der mannschaftlichen Geschlossenheit, der verschworenen Einheit des FCB nichts Gleichwertiges entgegenzusetzen.

Die guten Perspektiven

Die jüngste internationale Grosstat ist für den FC Basel genau zum richtigen Zeitpunkt gekommen. Ein solches Ergebnis öffnet nicht nur in der Gruppe B wieder alle Optionen, sondern kann auch dem national etwas ins Stottern geratenen Motor neuen Antrieb verleihen. «Ich betone immer wieder, wie wichtig es ist, durch Siege Selbstsicherheit zu gewinnen», stellt Sousa klar. «Das war ein perfekter Abend für uns. Das war ein grosser Sieg für uns alle.» Nicht nur resultatmässig tut dieser Erfolg dem Portugiesen gut. Die Entscheidung, Shkelzen Gashi erneut auf der Bank zu lassen und dafür auf den Flügeln den unerfahrenen Hamoudi und Embolo das Vertrauen zu schenken, wäre ihm im Falle einer Niederlage um die Ohren geschlagen worden. Sein Risiko wurde aber belohnt. So konnte Sousa dazu sagen: «Ich habe aufgestellt, wie es das Spiel erforderte. Wir wollten Protagonist sein und mutig nach vorn spielen.» Niemand kann ihm widersprechen, denn die beiden gehörten zu den stärksten Baslern und wurden bei ihren Auswechslungen mit Standing Ovations verabschiedet. Vielleicht war das der Befreiungsschlag des «neuen» FC Basel – wie damals im Herbst 2009, als nach dem Heim Sieg gegen die AS Roma der FCB von Thorsten Fink zur grossen Aufholjagd in der Super League ansetzte. «Wir brauchen nach einem Trainerwechsel immer etwas Zeit, um uns zu finden», erklärt Streller. Gegen Liverpool hat sich der FCB offensichtlich gefunden.

FC Basel - Liverpool FC 1:0 (0:0) St.-Jakob-Park. – 36'000 Zuschauer. – SR Eriksson. – Tor: 52. Streller 1:0.

Basel: Vaclik; Xhaka, Schär, Suchy, Safari (9. Gonzalez); Serey Die, Frei, Elneny; Embolo (81. Callà), Hamoudi (91. Zuffi); Streller.

Liverpool: Mignolet; Javi Manquillo, Lovren, Skrtel, Enrique; Henderson, Gerrard, Markovic (81. Lambert); Sterling, Balotelli, Coutinho (70. Lallana).

Bemerkungen: Basel ohne Ivanov, Samuel (beide verletzt), Degen (rekonvaleszent) und Diaz (gesperrt). – Liverpool ohne Allen, Can, Flanagan, Johnson, Sakho und Sturridge (alle verletzt). – Verwarnungen: 9. Sterling, 54. Streller, 60. Suchy (alle Foul). 71. Balotelli (Unsportlichkeit).

Date: 1 October 2014
 Opposition: FC Basel
 Competition: Champions League

Times	Telegraph	Echo
Guardian	Mirror	BBC
Independent	Mail	Baseler Zeitung

1 October 2014



Liverpool's hopes of making the Champions League knockout stages were dented as they succumbed to a 1-0 Group B defeat at Basel.

Raheem Sterling and Mario Balotelli had goals ruled out for offside, but Liverpool rarely threatened.

Instead, the visitors' defensive problems were exposed as Martin Skrtel headed towards his own goal and Marco Streller swept home the loose ball.

Basel 1-0 Liverpool: Brendan Rodgers rues 'soft' goal

Steven Gerrard came close to a late leveller when his free-kick was saved.

While Liverpool roused themselves to apply concerted pressure in the final five minutes, it was not enough to merit an equaliser that would have denied the hosts victory.

Manager Brendan Rodgers returns to Merseyside with more concerns over the disjointed attack and dysfunctional defence that have undermined the start of their Premier League campaign.

Basel themselves looked vulnerable when they were beaten 5-1 by Real Madrid in their Group B opener, and they were cut open inside five minutes by the Reds.

However, Sterling strayed carelessly offside before turning in Lazar Markovic's cross, and Liverpool struggled to create a chance of similar quality for the rest of the match.

Instead full-backs Jose Enrique, preferred at left-back to Alberto Moreno, and Javi Manquillo were frequently exposed as their team were penned back.

Geoffroy Serey Die, exploiting space on Enrique's flank, came closest to scoring in the first half, slamming a shot into goalkeeper Simon Mignolet's shins.

While Liverpool looked vulnerable out wide in the first half, it was their deficiencies in the centre of defence that were exposed by the Swiss side's goal.

Skrtel, more concerned with grappling with his man, inadvertently headed the ball against Dejan Lovren and, while Mignolet got down sharply to prevent an own goal, the goalkeeper succeeded only in palming the ball into Streller's path for a simple finish.

Without the injured Daniel Sturridge and the departed Luis Suarez, Liverpool were stripped of the interplay and invention of last season and struggled for a response.

Only Mario Balotelli's long-range free-kick, blocked by goalkeeper Tomas Vaclík's shoulder, and Sterling's clumsy mis-control when clean through gave the home crowd cause for concern.

With back-to-back meetings against holders Real Madrid to follow in Group B, Liverpool will need a vast improvement to progress to the knockout stages.

Date: 1 October 2014
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1 October 2014



90:00+3:43 Full time Second Half ends, FC Basel 1, Liverpool 0.
 90:00+1:24 Substitution Substitution, FC Basel. Luca Zuffi replaces Ahmed Hamoudi.
 90:00+0:42 Foul by Marek Suchy (FC Basel).
 90:00+0:42 Mario Balotelli (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 88:36 Hand ball by Rickie Lambert (Liverpool).
 87:54 Offside, Liverpool. Steven Gerrard tries a through ball, but Mario Balotelli is caught offside.
 85:19 Attempt saved. Steven Gerrard (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the top right corner.
 84:40 Delay over. They are ready to continue.
 83:41 Delay in match Fabian Frei (FC Basel because of an injury).
 83:05 Foul by Fabian Frei (FC Basel).
 83:05 Mario Balotelli (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
 81:13 Offside, Liverpool. Steven Gerrard tries a through ball, but Mario Balotelli is caught offside.
 80:40 Substitution Substitution, FC Basel. Davide Callà replaces Brel Embolo because of an injury.
 80:21 Substitution Substitution, Liverpool. Rickie Lambert replaces Lazar Markovic.
 80:00 Attempt missed. Serey Die (FC Basel right footed shot from outside the box misses to the right.
 79:30 Attempt missed. Mohamed Elneny (FC Basel right footed shot from outside the box misses to the left. Assisted by Marco Streller.
 78:49 Derlis González (FC Basel wins a free kick on the right wing.
 78:49 Foul by José Enrique (Liverpool).
 77:25 Attempt missed. Mohamed Elneny (FC Basel right footed shot from outside the box is high and wide to the right following a set piece situation.
 76:25 Mohamed Elneny (FC Basel wins a free kick on the left wing.
 76:25 Foul by Martin Skrtel (Liverpool).
 75:14 Attempt missed. Lazar Markovic (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box misses to the right. Assisted by José Enrique with a cross.
 70:23 Booking Mario Balotelli (Liverpool is shown the yellow card).
 69:15 Substitution Substitution, Liverpool. Adam Lallana replaces Philippe Coutinho.
 68:47 Offside, Liverpool. Lazar Markovic tries a through ball, but Philippe Coutinho is caught offside.
 68:24 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Taulant Xhaka.
 68:22 Attempt blocked. Raheem Sterling (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.
 66:03 Serey Die (FC Basel wins a free kick in the attacking half.
 66:03 Foul by José Enrique (Liverpool).
 65:15 Offside, FC Basel. Ahmed Hamoudi tries a through ball, but Marco Streller is caught offside.
 62:10 Attempt missed. Mario Balotelli (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is too high. Assisted by Lazar Markovic.
 60:52 Attempt missed. Steven Gerrard (Liverpool header from the centre of the box misses to the left. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho with a cross following a corner.
 60:40 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Tomás Vaclik.
 60:29 Attempt blocked. Lazar Markovic (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked.
 60:26 Attempt saved. Mario Balotelli (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the centre of the goal.
 59:10 Booking Marek Suchy (FC Basel is shown the yellow card for a bad foul).
 59:09 Foul by Marek Suchy (FC Basel).
 59:09 Lazar Markovic (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
 56:00 Attempt blocked. Jordan Henderson (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked.
 55:56 Attempt blocked. Lazar Markovic (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.
 53:54 Booking Steven Gerrard (Liverpool is shown the yellow card for a bad foul).
 53:49 Ahmed Hamoudi (FC Basel wins a free kick in the attacking half.
 53:49 Foul by Steven Gerrard (Liverpool).
 53:11 Attempt saved. Lazar Markovic (Liverpool right footed shot from the left side of the six yard box is saved in the bottom left corner.
 51:44 Goal scored Goal! Goal! FC Basel 1, Liverpool 0. Marco Streller (FC Basel left footed shot from very close range to the centre of the goal following a corner.
 51:00 Corner, FC Basel. Conceded by Dejan Lovren.
 50:57 Attempt saved. Ahmed Hamoudi (FC Basel left footed shot from the left side of the box is saved in the bottom right corner. Assisted by Mohamed Elneny.
 49:28 Hand ball by Mario Balotelli (Liverpool).
 48:16 Serey Die (FC Basel wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 48:16 Foul by Mario Balotelli (Liverpool).
 46:24 Corner, FC Basel. Conceded by Javier Manquillo.
 45:00 Second Half begins FC Basel 0, Liverpool 0.
 45:00+2:05 Half time First Half ends, FC Basel 0, Liverpool 0.
 45:00+0:35 Corner, FC Basel. Conceded by José Enrique.
 43:56 Corner, FC Basel. Conceded by José Enrique.
 43:24 Attempt saved. Dejan Lovren (Liverpool header from the centre of the box is saved in the top centre of the goal. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho with a cross.
 42:36 Foul by Fabian Schär (FC Basel).
 42:36 Mario Balotelli (Liverpool wins a free kick on the right wing.
 41:03 Attempt saved. Raheem Sterling (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the top centre of the goal.
 39:35 Attempt missed. Dejan Lovren (Liverpool header from the centre of the box is too

high. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho with a cross following a corner.
 39:09 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Marek Suchy.
 37:05 Offside, FC Basel. Brel Embolo tries a through ball, but Derlis González is caught offside.
 34:59 Ahmed Hamoudi (FC Basel wins a free kick on the left wing.
 34:59 Foul by Javier Manquillo (Liverpool).
 34:26 Attempt saved. Serey Die (FC Basel right footed shot from the right side of the box is saved in the bottom right corner. Assisted by Marco Streller.
 34:20 Attempt blocked. Serey Die (FC Basel right footed shot from outside the box is blocked.
 30:51 Offside, Liverpool. Jordan Henderson tries a through ball, but Lazar Markovic is caught offside.
 30:50 Attempt blocked. Jordan Henderson (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked.
 29:39 Attempt saved. Marco Streller (FC Basel left footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom right corner. Assisted by Fabian Frei.
 28:54 Offside, Liverpool. Steven Gerrard tries a through ball, but Mario Balotelli is caught offside.
 27:46 Attempt missed. Ahmed Hamoudi (FC Basel left footed shot from the left side of the box misses to the right. Assisted by Brel Embolo.
 26:03 Attempt missed. Javier Manquillo (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is high and wide to the right following a set piece situation.
 24:28 Foul by Serey Die (FC Basel).
 24:28 Mario Balotelli (Liverpool wins a free kick on the right wing.
 23:55 Foul by Marek Suchy (FC Basel).
 23:55 Mario Balotelli (Liverpool wins a free kick on the right wing.
 22:15 Attempt saved. Mohamed Elneny (FC Basel right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the top centre of the goal. Assisted by Ahmed Hamoudi.
 19:51 Foul by Serey Die (FC Basel).
 19:51 Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing.
 17:45 Foul by Fabian Schär (FC Basel).
 17:45 Mario Balotelli (Liverpool wins a free kick on the right wing.
 12:54 Foul by Ahmed Hamoudi (FC Basel).
 12:54 Simon Mignolet (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 12:07 Corner, FC Basel. Conceded by Steven Gerrard.
 12:05 Attempt blocked. Marco Streller (FC Basel left footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Brel Embolo.
 11:23 Offside, Liverpool. Mario Balotelli tries a through ball, but Javier Manquillo is caught offside.
 9:40 Corner, FC Basel. Conceded by Martin Skrtel.
 8:56 Substitution Substitution, FC Basel. Derlis González replaces Behrang Safari because of an injury.
 8:48 Booking Raheem Sterling (Liverpool is shown the yellow card for a bad foul).
 8:35 Ahmed Hamoudi (FC Basel wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 8:35 Foul by Raheem Sterling (Liverpool).
 7:50 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Marek Suchy.
 6:17 Corner, FC Basel. Conceded by José Enrique.
 5:36 Delay over. They are ready to continue.
 4:58 Delay in match Behrang Safari (FC Basel because of an injury).
 3:54 Marco Streller (FC Basel wins a free kick on the left wing.
 3:54 Foul by Martin Skrtel (Liverpool).
 2:03 Offside, Liverpool. Javier Manquillo tries a through ball, but Raheem Sterling is caught offside.
 0:22 Corner, FC Basel. Conceded by Javier Manquillo.
 0:00 First Half begins.
 0:00 Lineups are announced and players are warming up.