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1 March 2015

THE

TIMES

Tired City suffer fresh blow from classy Coutinho

Liverpool 2 Henderson 11, Coutinho 75 Manchester City 1 Dzeko 25

Referee M Clattenburg Attendance 44,590

As expected, energy made the difference, but not in the manner expected. Instead it was Liverpool, with only 52 hours' recovery time, who came on strong when the game was there to be won. The tiredness, of approach as much as of physicality, belonged to Manchester City on a day when their title challenge betrayed further signs of weariness as they succumbed to Philippe Coutinho's brilliance for a second successive season.

Recent history tells us that City can recover from the kind of setback that Liverpool inflicted upon them yesterday. Ten months ago, they bounced back from Coutinho's first decisive goal against them to go on and be crowned champions at Liverpool's expense. This, though, felt different.

Facing a Liverpool side who had returned from Turkey after playing extra time in a Europa League defeat by Besiktas, City laboured alarmingly, registering only one shot on target, Edin Dzeko's equaliser after Jordan Henderson had given Liverpool the lead, in their second insipid performance of a terrible week.

Credit for that must, of course, go to Liverpool who, like Barcelona five days earlier, recognised City's present vulnerabilities, particularly defensively, and exploited them. Tactically, Liverpool were better with the pressing game favoured by Brendan Rodgers laying the platform for victory while Manuel Pellegrini failed to elicit the required improvement from City despite tinkering with his team's set-up after Liverpool took control in the second half.

Being second best strategically is an occupational hazard for any manager, although Pellegrini's critics will say that it happens to him more often than it should. Of greater concern to City should be his failure to coax more effort from his players despite the knowledge that a win would have allowed them to reduce Chelsea's lead at the top of the table to two points. Statistics showed that the three players on the pitch who covered the most ground all wore red as Henderson, Joe Allen and Adam Lallana put in the hard yards that not enough in blue were willing to match. Pellegrini refused to give up hope of City retaining the title, pointing to the fact that their fourth, and potentially most damaging, defeat of the season had been inflicted as a result of two goals of extraordinary quality. Yet there was precious little in City's overall performance that should allow them to hide behind the brilliance of those strikes from Henderson, in the 11th minute, and Coutinho, in the 75th. Without the injured Mamadou Sakho, Steven Gerrard and Lucas Leiva, and Daniel Sturridge restricted to a late cameo, Liverpool were well worth their win, one that, in terms of character and substance, is one of the most significant of Rodgers's reign.

Liverpool's record of being the Barclays Premier League's only unbeaten team in 2015 was rarely under threat, although there was a spell, after Henderson had opened the scoring with a wonderful curling shot that beat Joe Hart, the City goalkeeper, all ends up when the visiting side threatened to seize the initiative. Before then, they had shown signs of weakness when faced with the relentless movement of Raheem Sterling, Coutinho and Lallana, the latter seeing one effort saved by Hart and another soar into the roof of the City goal only to be ruled out for offside. Having exposed the vulnerability at the heart of City's defence, Liverpool exploited it as Sterling mugged Vincent Kompany in his own half, triggering a typically incisive counterattack that culminated in Henderson scoring his fourth goal of the season in glorious fashion after being picked out by Lallana. It was in the period after conceding that City produced their most impressive spell and their improvement was almost reflected in the scoreline when Sergio Aguero struck a post after racing on to David Silva's long pass.

They continued to probe and were rewarded with an equaliser as Aguero turned creator with a perfectly weighted through-ball that allowed Dzeko to draw Simon Mignolet from his line before beating the goalkeeper with a precise finish. It was the 20th consecutive league fixture away from home in which City had scored, but whether the goal vindicated Pellegrini's decision to start with Dzeko in attack is a moot point, particularly as the forward was replaced by Milner in the second half as the City manager attempted to snatch the ascendancy.

By then, the momentum was with the home side, although that could have been different had Aguero not headed over from Pablo Zabaleta's cross at the start of the second half. Sterling then miscued from close range and Lallana had another effort ruled out for offside as Liverpool's belief grew that they could secure the victory that would further galvanise their hopes of finishing in the top four.

Coutinho, the game's outstanding performer, ensured that objective would be achieved as he controlled Sterling's pass on the left side of the penalty area and moved inside before shaping a curling shot beyond Hart's reach and into the top left-hand corner at the Kop end. Aguero and Silva were both unable to take the half-chances that came their way as City looked in vain for a second equaliser, but the best opportunity of the closing stages fell to Sturridge, who fired wide after Henderson dispossessed Yaya Toure.

It mattered not. Victory belonged to Liverpool and deservedly so. The ramifications for City in general and Pellegrini in particular could be significant as the chances of the season yielding no success were increased by defeat. Losing at Anfield last season failed to derail them, but this time around, their title bid looks in need of re-energising if they are to prevent Chelsea from snatching their crown.

ratings Liverpool (3-4-2-1): S Mignolet 6 -- E Can 7, M Skrtel 7, D Lovren 7 -- L Markovic 6, J Allen 8, J Henderson 7, A Moreno 7 (sub: K Toure, 83min) -- A

Lallana 7, P Coutinho 9 (sub: D Sturridge, 76) -- R Sterling 7. Substitutes not used: D Ward, R Lambert, F Borini, J Williams, M Balotelli. Booked: Lallana.

Manchester City (4-4-2): J Hart 7 -- P Zabaleta 7, V Kompany 6, E Mangala 6, A Kolarov 6 -- S Nasri 6 (sub: F Lampard, 83), Fernandinho 7 (sub: W Bony, 78), Y Toure 7, D Silva 7 -- E Dzeko 6 (sub: J Milner, 58), S Aguero 8. Substitutes not used: W Caballero, M Demichelis, G Clichy, Fernando. Booked: Nasri, Milner, Bony.

the guardian

Coutinho casts magician's spell over City to keep Rodgers looking upward

The only fatigue in evidence at Anfield lay in Manchester City's defence of the Premier League title. Liverpool were supposed to be travel-weary after their Europa League exertions in Istanbul yet were revitalised by Brazilian brilliance from Philippe Coutinho. Brendan Rodgers' young magician may have conjured a Champions League ticket and the end of a title contest at a stroke.

Coutinho created one stunning goal for Jordan Henderson and scored another of his own to condemn Manuel Pellegrini's champions to a second damaging 2-1 defeat in six days. City, for all their title-winning expertise and the incentive of closing the gap on Chelsea to two points, could not match the vibrancy or potency of the 22-year-old from Rio de Janeiro or the intensity of Liverpool's performance. Sergio Aguero and David Silva offered hope in flashes for the visitors but with the exception of their stellar talents, City were fresh out of ideas. The recent failure to sign players with the pedigree of Silva, Aguero and Yaya Toure, anonymous here until a late surging run into the Liverpool area, combined with Vincent Kompany's regression in the heart of defence has added to Pellegrini's problems in attempting to keep pace with Chelsea.

Liverpool extended City's wait for a first win at Anfield since 2003 with a result that will change their own perceptions of what is achievable in the league this season.

Rodgers did all he could to minimise the impact of Thursday's 120-minute outing against Besiktas and his decision to rest Coutinho in Turkey paid dividends. The opening suggested his concerns at Friday's 4.19am return had substance as City controlled possession; but they imploded during an error-strewn five-minute spell.

Central to the shift were Coutinho and Kompany. The first chance set a template for much that followed as Coutinho played Adam Lallana into a gaping hole in the City defence created by the decision by Kompany and Eliaquim Mangala to track Raheem Sterling. Lallana shot tamely at Joe Hart, and later had two goals disallowed for offside, but more City mistakes ensured the reprieve was short-lived.

Fernandinho, who replaced Fernando after the Brazilian's ineffectual performance against Barcelona, sold his captain short with a careless pass on the halfway line. Kompany lost out in the challenge to the slight Coutinho who broke with speed and found Sterling. The 20-year-old squared to Henderson and Liverpool's captain for the day cut in from the left to send an outstanding finish into the top corner from 20 yards. It was an exquisite breakthrough from a midfielder determined to take responsibility in the absence of the injured Steven Gerrard but also a worrying sign for Pellegrini in terms of his own captain's contribution.

Kompany had struggled in the Champions League on Tuesday and City's centre defence was vulnerable again at Anfield. The Belgian has resorted to the creaking centre-half's refuge of instinctively blocking a striker's run by any means necessary, yet Kompany was immune to a yellow card from the referee, Mark Clattenburg. Wilfried Bony also benefited from the referee's leniency when he caught Lallana in the face with a raised arm. The substitute was only booked.

City almost levelled immediately when Aguero latched on to Silva's ball over the top and sent a first-time shot beyond Simon Mignolet but also against the foot of a post. The visitors gradually rediscovered their composure on the ball, in the final third at least, and demonstrated their ability to grind down opponents with a fine team goal.

The equaliser originated from a loose pass by Coutinho, of all people. Pablo Zabaleta intercepted a pass intended for Sterling, Toure picked out Silva, the Spaniard released Aguero into space in front of Liverpool's back three and the striker picked out Edin Dzeko's run in behind. Dzeko despatched a measured finish into Mignolet's bottom corner.

City's defence repeatedly struggled against Liverpool's fast-moving forward line. Lallana swept a half-volley wide of the far post, Kompany blocked a Sterling shot and the winger scuffed an excellent chance wide shortly after the restart.

The second half developed into a scrappy, even affair in desperate need of a moment of class to lift it beyond the ordinary. Coutinho was the man to oblige. There were 15 minutes left when Sterling spun away from his marker and found Liverpool's No10 lurking with intent to the left of the City area. Coutinho stepped inside Samir Nasri and curled a superb shot into the far corner. A goal worthy of winning any game and, quite possibly, flooring a title challenge in the process.

Man of the match Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool)

Date: 1 March 2015
Opposition: Manchester City
Competition: League

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Date: 1 March 2015

Opposition: Manchester City

Competition: League

Times	Telegraph	Echo
Guardian	Mirror	MEN
Independent	Mail	BBC



Coutinho's stunning strike lands telling blow on City title ambitions

This was a match that turned two seasons. For Manchester City, five points behind Chelsea, having played a game more, it was the moment their grip on their title loosened, perhaps fatally. For Liverpool, this was a wildly improbable victory which makes it likelier than not they will finish in the Champions League places. Dawn would have been starting to break over the Mersey when Brendan Rodgers and his team reached their beds on Friday morning. They had endured two hours of gruelling, draining football against Besiktas. There would have been the crawl through Istanbul's choking traffic and a four-hour flight, carrying with them all the baggage that comes from a lost penalty shoot-out. They would have one day to prepare for the champions of England. There seemed no logical reason to imagine they might win. It may not have been coincidence, but neither Philippe Coutinho nor Jordan Henderson, the two principal reasons why Liverpool won this match, travelled to Turkey.

Each scored a staggeringly good goal and, far from fading, as most at Anfield would have expected, Liverpool finished the stronger. On the final whistle, Rodgers turned to the Main Stand, punched the air twice and grinned hugely. This was one of the biggest victories of his time as Liverpool manager.

"It was a brilliant result and a brilliant performance," he reflected. "We were relentless. Landing at half four in the morning and then not getting to your bed until six o'clock and then having to prepare for a game against the champions is no mean feat - but to play like that is something else.

"As the game went on, we became more dangerous and we restricted Manchester City to one shot on target. The momentum, the flow and the rhythm were always with us. If we reach the top four it will be a more significant achievement than it was last year because of where we are coming from."

The only travel City had to endure in midweek was negotiating the traffic jams on the Mancunian Way that lead to the Etihad Stadium but they still suffered a chastening European experience at the hands of Barcelona. As they came off the pitch, some of Manuel Pellegrini's side might have been grateful Luis Suarez had left Liverpool. However, they still had Coutinho to come to terms with.

Neymar, who was in the Barcelona side that sashayed through the same leaden 4-4-2 formation Pellegrini employed at Anfield, remarked that Coutinho, whom he has known since he was 16, could become the brightest star in the Premier League. This game demonstrated why. City never came to terms with either the young Brazilian or his strike partner, Raheem Sterling.

Coutinho did not appear to be in a dangerous position when the ball came to him with 15 minutes to go - he was on the left of the penalty area and there seemed to be too many blue shirts around him. One of them was Samir Nasri, who was just about to close him down when Coutinho shot. Once more Joe Hart flung himself to reach a ball bound for the top corner of his net. Once more, he clutched only rain-spattered air. "The kid has got so much ahead of him," said Rodgers. "He came to us at 19 and in a way he is still adapting to us and to this country. To have beaten Joe Hart, who is 6ft 5in, from that angle and with that power is astonishing. "He is a star and although there are improvements he can make to his game he loves it here because he is playing for a team that loves to play a technical game. He cost eight-and-a-half million quid, by the way."

City have never enjoyed the short journey to Anfield, having managed one victory here since Boxing Day 1981, but this defeat was one of the worst they can have experienced. Because of the reconstruction of Anfield, the coaches had to park outside where the Shankly Gates used to be, forcing the teams to walk through the crowded car park to their dressing rooms. City were given a reasonably good welcome but you wonder what reception will be in store when Manchester United come later this month.

Adam Lallana had already clipped a shot into the net, one of two he had ruled offside, when Liverpool went ahead in the 11th minute. It began with Vincent Kompany taking a swing at thin air and continued as Sterling found Henderson, who turned inside, taking Fernandinho with him, and sent a shot from 20 yards curling and dipping beyond Hart. Henderson has been chosen to be Steven Gerrard's successor as Liverpool captain and this was the kind of goal Gerrard would have scored. "Beautiful goals", said Pellegrini when assessing the two shots that left his season in the balance. Sergio Aguero too has his trademark goals and yesterday nearly brought one of his best. The Argentine remained fractionally onside as he ran to meet a long ball from David Silva. Pursued by Martin Skrtel, he allowed the ball to bounce twice before sending a left-footed shot against Simon Mignolet's post in front of the Kop. Aguero can provide goals as well as score them and in the 26th minute his pass took out four Liverpool defenders, dissected Emre Can and Dejan Lovren, allowing Edin Dzeko to slide the ball home.

But one of City's weaknesses when defending their title is that Kompany and Pablo Zabaleta, the cornerstones of a defence that won two championships, have endured indifferent seasons. Kompany in particular seemed very out of sorts here, getting nowhere near Sterling and committing far too many fouls for a footballer of his quality. Even after Dzeko equalised, City never seemed comfortable. Late last season, they came to Anfield and lost what seemed a critical game, one that looked to have cost them the title. The stories of their two Premier League titles are tales of remarkable recoveries but this is unlikely to be the third.



THUNDER STRUCK; Brilliant goals, brilliant tactics.. as Rodgers and his kids showed up Pellegrini

LIVERPOOL 2

Henderson 11, Coutinho 75

MANCHESTER CITY 1

Dzeko 25

REMEMBER this day, it was the day a frighteningly young Liverpool side came of age.

They had no right to win this dramatic, sublime contest against the champions. Not after their epic midweek journey and penalty shoot-out misery in Istanbul. Hell, even Manuel Pellegrini said his side never had a better chance of beating their bogey team.

Yet 54 hours after landing back in England, they out-thought and outplayed Manchester City, whose manager was exposed and embarrassed by his opposite number.

Tactically, this was perhaps Reds boss Brendan Rodgers' finest Anfield moment. In terms of his decisionmaking, he got all the big calls right from midweek to this game.

And in doing so, he showed up Pellegrini. Again. He spluttered afterwards City's title defence is far from over, but really, after his side - or rather he himself - was exposed tactically for the second time in a week, you wonder if they are good enough, or clearthinking enough, to overhaul Chelsea.

In fact, they may have to start looking over their shoulders at Liverpool, because Rodgers' team have momentum, and are the only side not to lose in the Premier League this year.

Remember too, they don't have the farce of Europa League commitment now to distract them.

That is why this win was so remarkable. In the second half, as Rodgers choked the life out of his opponents with a tactical flourish that constantly worked the sublime Philippe Coutinho into so much space, it looked as though the visitors had played 120 minutes in Turkey on Thursday.

Rodgers chose to leave Coutinho and skipper Jordan Henderson at home for that game - and here we saw why. Not only did they score breathtaking goals, they also stood head and shoulders above their direct opponents.

Add to that, Joe Allen's best performance in a Liverpool shirt, and the emergence of Dejan Lovren and Emre Can in the second half as vital outlets at the back keeping the supply open to a dominant midfield, and the home side could and should have won by a wider margin. That is perhaps the only grumble the home side will have, especially after a truly compelling second-half display which showed a young side have the quality and belief to not only go toe-to-toe with the biggest sides, but deliver knockout blows. Remember, they have not only outplayed City at Anfield, but also Chelsea and Arsenal, which suggests Manchester United will hardly be looking forward to their visit in a fortnight.

They traded blows with City in the first half, but as tactical cards were played after the break, took complete control. Coutinho had been the biggest influence in the first half, his pressing and passing tormenting Pablo Zabaleta, and alongside livewire Raheem Sterling, inspiring equal paranoia in Vincent Kompany and the woeful Eliaquim Mangala. It led to a tremendous opening goal for Henderson, when Sterling forced a mistake from Kompany and the skipper exploited space left by Mangala to curl home brilliantly from the edge of the box.

But City showed their class when Sergio Aguero first hit the post and then produced a stunning run to tee up Edin Dzeko for a smart finish.

After Aguero (below) missed a header on the restart though, Coutinho's use of space forced Pellegrini to blink first, and when he took off Dzeko to strengthen midfield, it gifted the game to Liverpool. City's only shot on target was the goal and their only other real chance was in the last minute when David Silva shot wide. Before that Adam Lallana, Sterling and sub Daniel Sturridge missed several (and how Rodgers also got that right in keeping his main man on the bench and playing Sterling as a lone forward), but Coutinho is a different story these days. He picked the ball up on the left, cut inside and unleashed a curling right-foot shot that thundered past Joe Hart.

It deserved to win the game and highlighted the quality of a young Reds side which will only grow.

And forget that god-awful Europa League, they have bigger targets now.

BACK WITH A BANG Henderson, rested by Liverpool in Istanbul last week, rifles home the opener after just 11 minutes

Date: 1 March 2015

Opposition: Manchester City

Competition: League

Times	Telegraph	Echo
Guardian	Mirror	MEN
Independent	Mail	BBC

LIVERPOOL

ECHO

One of the most impressive victories of Brendan Rodger's reign Philippe Coutinho struck a stunning winner as Liverpool beat Premier League champions Manchester City 2-1 on a thrilling afternoon at Anfield. The Reds delivered the perfect response to their agonising Europa League exit with one of the most impressive victories of Brendan Rodgers' reign. It was a Herculean effort from his Liverpool side just 55 hours after they had arrived back from Istanbul. Jordan Henderson fired them in front before Edin Dzeko levelled before the break. Both sides had their chances in the second half but it was Coutinho who made the decisive contribution – curling home his fifth goal of the season 15 minutes from time. The little Brazilian magician shone throughout as Liverpool maintained their relentless pursuit of Champions League qualification. Rodgers had freshened up his line up with four changes following their gruelling encounter with Besiktas. Henderson, Coutinho, Adam Lallana and Lazar Markovic all started in place of Kolo Toure, Jordon Ibe, Daniel Sturridge and Mario Balotelli. The early kick-off contributed to a flat atmosphere early on but Liverpool's blistering start soon brought the Kop to life. Inside eight minutes Coutinho released Lallana but he couldn't beat Joe Hart. Lallana found the net seconds later with an exquisite finish into the roof of the net but he had strayed offside and it was ruled out. In the 11 minute Liverpool were in front. Fernandinho sold Vincent Kompany short with a pass close to halfway and Coutinho pounced. The Brazilian found Raheem Sterling who in turn picked out Henderson. The stand-in skipper cut inside on to his right foot and curled an unstoppable 20-yarder into the top corner. City responded positively to going behind and could have levelled instantly. Aguero burst between Emre Can and Martin Skrtel before firing against the post with Simon Mignolet beaten. With Sterling and Lallana both pressing relentlessly, Liverpool forced City into coughing up possession. They could have added to their tally – Alberto Moreno cut inside before slicing wide and then no-one was on hand to convert Sterling's cross-shot after he had got away from Eliaquim Mangala. Just when the Reds appeared to be in control they shot themselves in the foot as City equalised in the 26 minute. It was a slick move but the marking was non-existent as David Silva and Aguero combined to find Dzeko, who tucked it past Mignolet. Liverpool could have restored their advantage before the break. However, Lallana hooked narrowly wide from Markovic's pass and then Sterling's scuffed shot was gathered by Hart. City should have taken the lead seconds into the second half but Aguero nodded over from Zabaleta's cross. It remained an exciting, open contest with Liverpool continuing to look threatening as an attacking force. Henderson, Coutinho and Lallana combined to find Sterling, who scuffed wide under pressure from Zabaleta. Lallana had the ball in the net for a second time when he tucked away a nod down from Skrtel but again he was thwarted by the offside flag. City made a change just before the hour mark as James Milner replaced Dzeko. Allen produced one of his best displays in a Liverpool shirt as he put in a tireless shift in midfield and kept the hosts on the front foot. With 15 minutes to go Anfield erupted. Coutinho looked up and dispatched a dipping 25-yarder beyond Hart and into the far corner. Sturridge came on for Markovic and then Kolo Toure for Moreno. Henderson epitomised the Reds' work rate and commitment as twice in quick succession he shut down Yaya Toure and forced mistakes. On the second occasion, Henderson's tenacity put a chance on a plate for Sturridge but he failed to hit the target. Silva could have equalised late on but he fired wide as Liverpool deservedly held on to a cherished triumph.

MANCHESTER EVENING NEWS

For the second year running, City's title hopes are left hanging by the slenderest of threads after a sobering defeat at Anfield. Last season it seemed more clear-cut, as a 3-2 reverse gave the buoyant Scousers a clear run to the finish line – only for them to stumble over a Steven Gerrard-sized divot and allow the Blues back into the race. This time, with Chelsea otherwise engaged, City had to win to keep the pressure on the leaders. But they came up with a performance that was not good enough – and again there are question marks over manager Manuel Pellegrini's tactics. The Chilean stuck with the 4-4-2 that had been so gleefully savaged by Barcelona in midweek, although this time he had a midfield pair of Yaya Toure and Fernandinho to shore it up. But with Liverpool effectively playing six midfielders, it meant they were often outgunned, and the spaces for David Silva and Samir Nasri to occupy were squeezed. To be fair to the manger, his team was beaten by two wonderful strikes from Jordan Henderson and Philippe Coutinho, with Edin Dzeko's clever goal sandwiched inbetween. With the pressure on, City - it has to be said - were a shambles at the back in the first half. They have not been great all season in that department, but it looked as though the wounds inflicted by Lionel Messi and his superhuman pals in midweek had left scars that were vivid and deep. Adam Lallana twice exposed them as too square and susceptible to runners in the opening ten minutes – and he had the ball in the net only to be pulled back for a marginal offside. Vincent Kompany has come under more scrutiny than most this week, as his game degenerated into hopeful lunge and nervous dash in the face of Barcelona's quickfire, bewildering passing and movement. The last thing the big Belgian needed was a dodgy pass in the opening phase, but he got one from Fernandinho. The Brazilian scuffed the pass slightly, Kompany was slow to react and Philippe Coutinho was onto it. The ball was then worked to Raheem Sterling and on to Henderson, who curved an unstoppable shot beyond Joe Hart. City had looked neat and penetrative, within limits, until that point, but when they mixed it up by lifting the ball over a jam-packed Liverpool midfield, it began to illuminate some serious shortcomings in the home side's defence. When Silva dropped one nine-iron of a pass into the path of Aguero's run, shortly after the Liverpool goal, the Argentine ran clear of the huffing and puffing Martin Skrtel. Few players would attempt, and execute, Aguero's half-volley, but his shot flashed past Simon Mignolet and bounced back off the far post. With Kompany looking like his confidence was suffering, and Eliaquim Mangala looking slightly skittish beside him, Liverpool's pace men were running at the City defence with abandon. Sterling turned the big French defender every which way, scooted to the by-line and watched in disbelief as his cross sliced across an empty six-yard box. The Blues had shown flashes of their quality, but needed to put it all together ito something more meaningful – and they did just that on 26 minutes. Yaya Toure had been excellent, dictating the rhythm of City's play and finding runs, and he did it ti great effect this time. His pass found Silva's run, and the Spaniard's touch and pass got Aguero on the ball, on the right of the penalty area. He went on a typical scurrying run across the 18-yard line and then reversed a delightful pass into Dzeko's run. The Bosnian had been anonymous until that point, but he has that happy knack of finding spce at the right time, and he finished without fuss. With neither defence covering itself in glory, it started to look like a case of who could score the most. Lallana again ran freely through the empty acres of City's defence to latch onto Lazar Markovic's dinked pass, but could only hook his shot wide of the far post. City should have had a penalty just before half time, when another incisive move sent Pablo Zabaleta haring into the box. Dejan Lovren grabbed a fistful of his shirt and then applied a firm shove to send the right back tumbling to the deck. With Liverpool breaking to the other end there was little chance for anyone to express their outrage – indeed, had it not been for Fernandinho sprinting back and getting in a great block on Sterling, the Scousers would have gone in at half time with the lead. As it was, City should have taken the lead just 20 seconds after the re-start as a sweet move down the right involving Silva and Nasri freed Zabaleta, and he dropped his cross perfectly on the head of Aguero – so deadly with his feet, but he placed a simple header over the bar. The game settled into an intriguing battle, with Toure impeccable in midfield, prompting his team forward, and with Kompany and Mangala sharpening up their act, City gained a degree of control – or at least put an end to the nervous panic that had passed through their ranks like an electric current in the first half. But when Liverpool's second goal came in the 75 minute, there was little that could be done about it, and all the Blues' good work started to unravel. Anyone who has watched Coutinho knows he can score from wide left positions, but Nasri and Zabaleta did not get close – and the Brazilian curved a wicked dipping shot into the far corner. Now Liverpool really had something into which they could sink their teeth, and they defended with a dogged tenacity and organisation that marke the out as a good bet to grab one of the Champions League spots. City brought on Frank Lampard and Wilfried Bony, but Lampard spent most of his time defending in his own corner and Bony's only contribution was to get booked for a loose elbow as he strove to get on the end of some pumped clearances. Aguero fired wide after some sharp footwork and Silva uncharacteristically flailed a shot wide after Toure's driving run had unhinged the Liverpool defence, but City simply did not have enough to worry Brendan Rodgers' side.

Date: 1 March 2015 Opposition: Manchester City Competition: League	Times	Telegraph	Echo		1 March 2015
	Guardian	Mirror	MEN		
	Independent	Mail	BBC		

BBC

Philippe Coutinho scored a stunning winner as Liverpool dented Manchester City's Premier League title defence with a narrow victory at Anfield.

Jordan Henderson's curling effort put the Reds ahead before Edin Dzeko finished off a slick move to equalise.

But Brazil midfielder Coutinho capped a fine display with the decisive goal when he struck from 25 yards.

The result leaves City five points behind Chelsea having played a game extra, while Liverpool move to fifth.

Liverpool's 3-2 victory in this fixture last April was seen as a pivotal moment for the Reds in last season's title charge, although ultimately it was City that went on to win the Premier League a month later.

With current league leaders Chelsea in League Cup final action against Tottenham, City manager Manuel Pellegrini had underlined the importance of this match and the need for his side to "keep fighting" in the title race.

City made a two-point gain on Chelsea last weekend but they were unable to make up further ground on Jose Mourinho's side after Coutinho scored the winning goal against them at Anfield for the second consecutive season.

For Liverpool, it kept their unbeaten league record in 2015 and, having taken 26 points from a possible 30, momentum appears to be building in their bid to finish in one of the Champions League places.

Liverpool only arrived back at 04:30 GMT on Friday following their penalty shootout defeat by Besiktas in the Europa League last week, and despite the physical toils of their travels Rodgers felt his players would be "mentally ready" to face City.

They showed few signs of tiredness, although it was Coutinho, rested for last week's trip to Istanbul, who was at the heart of Liverpool's attacking play.

Coutinho's sharpness helped Liverpool take an 11th-minute lead when he stole the ball off Vincent Kompany, making his 200th league appearance for City, and Raheem Sterling slipped the ball out wide to Henderson.

The England midfielder, who wore the Liverpool captain's armband in the absence of the injured Steven Gerrard, cut inside onto his favoured right foot and curled a stunning shot past Joe Hart and into the top right corner of the net.

The goal brought greater urgency to City's play and they almost equalised when Sergio Aguero latched on to David Silva's through ball only for the Argentine forward's shot to rebound off the post.

City got themselves on level terms before the half-hour mark with a slick move that culminated in Aguero's clever pass into the area for Dzeko, and the Bosnia forward clinically dispatched a low shot past Simon Mignolet in the Liverpool goal.

Aguero headed over from a dangerous position shortly after half-time, while Liverpool's Adam Lallana had the ball in the net again when he glanced in a free-kick only for the officials to judge he did so from an offside position.

Coutinho always seemed Liverpool's most likely source of another goal and delivered the telling blow with a strike akin to the quality of the one he scored in their 2-0 win against Southampton last Sunday.

The playmaker jinked in from the left flank and curled a spectacular shot past Hart and into the top right corner of the net in front of the Kop.

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BBC

90:00 +3:24 Full time Second Half ends, Liverpool 2, Manchester City 1.
90:00 +2:25 Attempt missed. Sergio Agüero (Manchester City left footed shot from outside the box misses to the left. Assisted by David Silva.
90:00 +0:48 Foul by Wilfried Bony (Manchester City.
90:00 +0:48 Kolo Touré (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
90:00 +0:26 Aleksandar Kolarov (Manchester City wins a free kick in the defensive half.
90:00 +0:26 Foul by Raheem Sterling (Liverpool.
89:02 Attempt missed. David Silva (Manchester City left footed shot from the centre of the box misses to the left. Assisted by Yaya Touré.
86:58 Attempt missed. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool left footed shot from the left side of the box is close, but misses to the right. Assisted by Jordan Henderson.
86:10 Foul by Pablo Zabaleta (Manchester City.
86:10 Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing.
85:24 Booking Wilfried Bony (Manchester City is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.
85:13 Foul by Wilfried Bony (Manchester City.
85:13 Adam Lallana (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
84:23 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Vincent Kompany.
84:22 Attempt blocked. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Raheem Sterling.
83:14 Booking Adam Lallana (Liverpool is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.
83:00 James Milner (Manchester City wins a free kick on the right wing.
83:00 Foul by Adam Lallana (Liverpool.
82:10 Substitution Manchester City. Frank Lampard replaces Samir Nasri.
82:06 Substitution Liverpool. Kolo Touré replaces Alberto Moreno.
81:19 Booking James Milner (Manchester City is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.
81:13 Foul by James Milner (Manchester City.
81:13 Raheem Sterling (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
80:10 Foul by Yaya Touré (Manchester City.
80:10 Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
78:39 Attempt missed. Sergio Agüero (Manchester City right footed shot from a difficult angle on the right is close, but misses to the left.
77:45 Substitution Manchester City. Wilfried Bony replaces Fernandinho.
77:22 Hand ball by Emre Can (Liverpool.
75:45 Substitution Liverpool. Daniel Sturridge replaces Lazar Markovic.
74:40 Goal scored Goal! Goal! Liverpool 2, Manchester City 1. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box to the bottom right corner. Assisted by Raheem Sterling.
69:35 Foul by Fernandinho (Manchester City.
69:35 Adam Lallana (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
68:23 Pablo Zabaleta (Manchester City wins a free kick on the right wing.
68:23 Foul by Alberto Moreno (Liverpool.
64:07 Hand ball by James Milner (Manchester City.
57:16 Substitution Manchester City. James Milner replaces Edin Dzeko.
56:40 Booking Samir Nasri (Manchester City is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.
56:36 Foul by Samir Nasri (Manchester City.
56:36 Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
56:11 Foul by Edin Dzeko (Manchester City.
56:11 Lazar Markovic (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
54:55 Foul by Edin Dzeko (Manchester City.
54:55 Emre Can (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
53:38 Offside, Liverpool. Philippe Coutinho tries a through ball, but Martin Skrtel is caught offside.
53:02 Foul by Fernandinho (Manchester City.
53:02 Joe Allen (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing.
51:41 Attempt missed. Raheem Sterling (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is close, but misses to the right.
50:50 Foul by Vincent Kompany (Manchester City.
50:50 Raheem Sterling (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
47:21 Offside, Manchester City. Fernandinho tries a through ball, but Samir Nasri is caught offside.
45:22 Attempt missed. Sergio Agüero (Manchester City header from the centre of the box is just a bit too high. Assisted by Pablo Zabaleta with a cross.
45:00 Second Half begins Liverpool 1, Manchester City 1.
45:00 +1:05 Half time First Half ends, Liverpool 1, Manchester City 1.
45:00 +0:09 Attempt saved. Raheem Sterling (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the bottom right corner.
43:50 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Pablo Zabaleta.
42:12 Attempt saved. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Alberto Moreno.
40:52 Offside, Manchester City. Fernandinho tries a through ball, but Sergio Agüero is caught offside.
40:21 Offside, Manchester City. Yaya Touré tries a through ball, but Edin Dzeko is caught offside.
38:24 Offside, Liverpool. Joe Allen tries a through ball, but Raheem Sterling is caught offside.
37:17 Offside, Manchester City. Vincent Kompany tries a through ball, but Samir Nasri is caught offside.
36:59 Fernandinho (Manchester City wins a free kick in the attacking half.
36:59 Foul by Raheem Sterling (Liverpool.
35:28 Foul by Vincent Kompany (Manchester City.

35:28 Raheem Sterling (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
34:18 Attempt missed. Adam Lallana (Liverpool right footed shot from the right side of the box misses to the left. Assisted by Lazar Markovic with a through ball.
31:53 Attempt missed. Edin Dzeko (Manchester City left footed shot from outside the box is high and wide to the left. Assisted by Fernandinho.
29:09 Foul by Vincent Kompany (Manchester City.
29:09 Raheem Sterling (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
27:34 David Silva (Manchester City wins a free kick in the attacking half.
27:34 Foul by Joe Allen (Liverpool.
26:55 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Fernandinho.
26:01 Foul by Yaya Touré (Manchester City.
26:01 Alberto Moreno (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
24:59 Goal scored Goal! Goal! Liverpool 1, Manchester City 1. Edin Dzeko (Manchester City right footed shot from the centre of the box to the bottom left corner. Assisted by Sergio Agüero with a through ball.
23:08 Offside, Manchester City. David Silva tries a through ball, but Edin Dzeko is caught offside.
20:46 Attempt missed. Alberto Moreno (Liverpool right footed shot from the left side of the box misses to the right. Assisted by Joe Allen.
14:42 David Silva (Manchester City wins a free kick in the attacking half.
14:42 Foul by Lazar Markovic (Liverpool.
12:41 Attempt missed. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is too high. Assisted by Alberto Moreno.
12:09 Sergio Agüero (Manchester City hits the right post with a left footed shot from the left side of the box. Assisted by David Silva with a through ball.
10:05 Goal scored Goal! Goal! Liverpool 1, Manchester City 0. Jordan Henderson (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box to the top right corner. Assisted by Raheem Sterling.
8:42 Offside, Liverpool. Philippe Coutinho tries a through ball, but Adam Lallana is caught offside.
7:57 Attempt saved. Adam Lallana (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.
7:08 Attempt missed. Yaya Touré (Manchester City right footed shot from outside the box misses to the right.
5:28 Aleksandar Kolarov (Manchester City wins a free kick in the defensive half.
5:28 Foul by Adam Lallana (Liverpool.
3:26 Hand ball by Edin Dzeko (Manchester City.
1:59 Offside, Manchester City. Edin Dzeko tries a through ball, but Sergio Agüero is caught offside.
0:00 First Half begins.
0:00 Lineups are announced and players are warming up.