

Date: 16 March 2015

Opposition: Swansea City

Competition: League

Times	Telegraph	Echo		16 March 2015
Guardian	Mirror	SW Evening Post		
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THE TIMES

Deflected glory after Henderson finds fortune on his side

Swansea City 0 Liverpool 1 Henderson 68

It took four minutes to make the point and claim all three. Four minutes between Steven Gerrard being reintroduced to the Liverpool team for the first time in six weeks and Jordan Henderson seeing off Swansea City, the sort of goal where he really meant the celebration even if he did not mean the strike. Gerrard was not directly involved: it was not his pass, not his run, not his doing. But at the same time he was central to it, because there was a direct correlation between his presence on the pitch and Brendan Rodgers' team displaying the measure of calm, the measure of intelligence they needed to break down Garry Monk's industrious, talented side.

Quite how central a role -- in the broader sense or the tactical one -- Gerrard has to play in Liverpool's late, attempt to reel in Manchester United and Arsenal and secure a place in the Champions League next season remains to be seen. There has been abundant proof in recent weeks that they can, indeed, cope without him. Just occasionally, though, there is no substitute for experience, even when the experience is a substitute. For an hour, this was one of those occasions. All over the pitch, Swansea were quicker, stronger, brighter. Bafetimbi Gomis bulldozed Emre Can. Jonjo Shelvey outmuscled Henderson. Jack Cork shadowed Philippe Coutinho's every step. When Raheem Sterling, shifted out to the right, was given the occasional glimpse of space, he found Neil Taylor faster, sharper. Given that Swansea occupy that mythical territory where there is nothing to play for -- neither Europe nor the relegation battle are on their horizons -- that speaks volumes for Monk's motivational capacity. The Liberty Stadium, in the thick of the campaign, is no simple trip, as Arsenal and United can attest, but Liverpool might have expected an easier ride given their hosts' reduced ambitions. That would not really be Monk's style. Indeed, the 36-year-old would have considered himself deeply unfortunate that his side had not finished this game off by half-time. Their intensity, as well as Liverpool's complicity, brought them chances; Rodgers' side were saved by a combination of Swansea's lack of composure and Simon Mignolet's reflexes. Ki Sung Yueng, certainly, should have done better from six yards out, choosing inexplicably to head Wayne Routledge's cross back across goal rather than trying to score, but at least Gomis had the excuse that his own header, a carbon copy, was cleared off the line by Martin Skrtel. The Frenchman also drew a fine save from Mignolet after a neat exchange of passes with Routledge left Can trailing in his wake and offered him a clear run on goal. Gylfi Sigurdsson curled one just over and had another effort, from the edge of the box, tipped wide by the Belgian. Alberto Moreno's face deflected a snapshot from the impressive Shelvey. Those were the opportunities the statistics will show, but there were countless other moments when Liverpool's hearts jumped into their mouths; last-ditch tackles from Mamadou Sakho, misplaced passes from Joe Allen, scrambled clearances from Skrtel. At the other end, they created precious little to trouble Lukasz Fabianski.

They looked, in other words, not like the Liverpool who are unbeaten in the league since being blown away at Old Trafford in December, but like the uncertain, fraught Liverpool who had toiled so badly on all fronts before that. They looked not like the Liverpool who have thrived without Gerrard, during his month-long injury-enforced absence, but like the Liverpool who desperately needed their captain -- back in the squad, but not the team, for the first time since last month -- for his calming influence. Perhaps that is a function of the pressure: Rodgers' team have forced their way back into contention for a Champions League place against all expectations and almost -- as much as any club of their size or aspirations can manage -- under the radar. Now they are nearly there, the mercury is rising, their rivals winning, the gap not closing. They seemed, for a while, to freeze. Half-time came as blissful relief. Parity was more than they deserved, and although Liverpool improved markedly after the break, they took the lead more by accident than design.

Rodgers' team, in their defence, had at least suggested that they were capable of mounting a cogent threat. Fabianski had to be alert to turn away a low shot from Coutinho after fine interplay -- the first of its kind -- between Daniel Sturridge and Sterling, and another clever move ended with Allen tamely steering Adam Lallana's cross straight at the Pole. When the goal came, Swansea would have cursed their fortune. A long pass from Skrtel found Sturridge in the middle of the Swansea half, and he slipped the ball round the corner and into the path of the onrushing Henderson. It was a good run. To claim credit for the finish -- Jordi Amat's sliding clearance ricocheting off the midfield player's legs and over Fabianski -- was pushing it. At Anfield this season, Lallana benefited from an equally sizeable portion of luck against these same opponents. It is a useful habit to have.

That brought Liverpool from their shells: Coutinho and Sterling went close to doubling the lead as Rodgers' side suddenly did all those things they had not done previously: pressing the ball, attacking in numbers, lifting their heads. Sturridge hit a post in stoppage time, coming within a whisker of giving the scoreline a gloss it did not warrant. Liverpool did not need it. Their luck had run out, for tonight at least. They will need more of it if they are to achieve their ambitions.

Swansea City (4-2-3-1): L Fabianski -- K Naughton, J Amat, A Williams, N Taylor -- J Cork, Ki Sung Yueng (sub: N Dyer, 80min) -- G Sigurdsson (sub: M Emnes, 89), J Shelvey, W Routledge (sub: J Montero, 73min) -- B Gomis. Substitutes not used: G

Tremmel, L Britton, N Oliveira, A Rangel.

Liverpool (3-4-2-1): S Mignolet -- E Can, M Skrtel, M Sakho -- A Lallana (sub: A Lallana, 88), J Henderson, J Allen, A Moreno (sub: S Gerrard, 64) -- R Sterling, P Coutinho -- D Sturridge. Substitutes not used: B Jones, G Johnson, K Toure, D Lovren, R Lambert, L Markovic. Booked: Henderson, Sterling, Moreno. Referee: R East.

the guardian

Jordan Henderson's luck brings Liverpool victory at Swansea

Manchester United are back in their sights as the Liverpool bandwagon rolls on courtesy of a huge slice of good fortune on what could prove to be a critical night in the race for a place in the top four.

Jordan Henderson knew little about the goal that settled the match. Liverpool rode their luck in more ways than one to leave south Wales celebrating three precious points and a fifth Premier League victory in a row.

Brendan Rodgers admitted his side "weren't anywhere near it" during a first half when the combination of Swansea's profligacy, desperate defending and Simon Mignolet's goalkeeping kept the visitors in the game.

Henderson's freakish goal in the 68th minute ensured Liverpool chiselled out an unlikely win and, in the process, closed the gap on United to two points before Sunday's meeting at Anfield.

Rodgers said it was all about the result at a stadium where United and Arsenal lost this season. For much of the first half it looked as though Swansea would be adding Liverpool to their list of scalps but the complexion of the game changed after the interval when Rodgers tweaked his tactics, urged his players to press higher up the pitch and was able to look on with delight when fate smiled on them midway through the second half.

Running on to a flick from Daniel Sturridge, Henderson was unable to get to the ball first as Jordi Amat came across to cover and make a sliding tackle. The ball cannoned off Henderson's right leg and looped over the head of the stranded Lukasz Fabianski. Henderson wheeled away in delight, Rodgers celebrated on the touchline and it was easy to imagine a few expletives being muttered in Manchester.

After such a miserable start to the season everything seems to be falling into place for Liverpool at just the right time. Rodgers' side are unbeaten in 13 league games going back to their defeat at United in December, and this clean sheet means they have gone six top-flight away games without conceding for the first time since 1972.

The last time Liverpool let a goal in on their travels in the league was when Robin van Persie scored the third in that 3-0 defeat at Old Trafford.

It has been some turnaround for Liverpool and Rodgers said Manchester City's defeat at Burnley on Saturday means a chance to finish even higher has now opened up.

"Everyone talks about fourth, but it's the same every year for me, we do the best that we can do. And I think that Manchester City's result gives us an opportunity to finish second," the Liverpool manager said.

"So our mentality and the run and the confidence that we have at the moment, we've just got to take that into every game and see where it takes us."

Rodgers acknowledged it was a night for Liverpool to show other attributes. "It was a wonderful demonstration of the character and resilience in the team, especially after how we played in the first half. We just weren't anywhere near it but that resilience and character kept us in the game. We knew we were going to be better in the second half, we changed the structure -- I thought second half we really dominated the game."

It was hard not to feel some sympathy for Swansea. Garry Monk's side are ninth and have nothing to play for on the face of it, yet that did not look like the case in a first half when they produced some of their best football of the season. The only thing missing was a goal.

Chances came and went. Mignolet kept out a low shot from Bafetimbi Gomis after the Frenchman, making his first appearance since fainting at White Hart Lane 12 days ago, broke clear.

The Liverpool goalkeeper produced an even better stop to keep out a curling effort from Gylfi Sigurdsson, Martin Skrtel was in the right place at the right time to head clear on a couple of occasions and Adam Lallana deflected a Jonjo Shelvey shot behind.

Playing with a diamond shape in the second half, and much greater intensity, Liverpool became a different proposition. Fabianski made a superb save to thwart Philippe Coutinho and also denied Joe Allen, while Sturridge's curling shot hit the post in injury time. There was nothing, however, the Swansea goalkeeper could do to stop Henderson's bizarre winner.

"Unfortunately we didn't capitalise as we should have done in the first half," Monk said, "and ultimately that cost us the game."

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SHIN IT TO WIN IT, JORDAN; Liverpool's charge for top-four berth boosted by a fluke

IN the absence of Steven Gerrard, this Liverpool side have come of age in the past month or so. They have stepped out of their captain's shadow, proving themselves worthy successors as well as serious contenders in the process. They owe much of their recent success to their manager, of course. Unlike some of his counterparts, Brendan Rodgers has worked through the problem of a misfiring team and come up with a most effective solution with tactically astute leadership.

But here last night, with the pressure on to secure the Champions League spot Liverpool so crave, even Rodgers would accept they were fortunate to close the gap to Manchester United with a hugely important victory.

It was a freakish winner from Jordan Henderson, who scored after chasing a flick-on from Daniel Sturridge. Jordi Amat got there first but succeeded only in kicking the ball against Henderson's shin, which sent it spinning beyond the reach of Lukasz Fabianski.

In fairness to Henderson, it was reward for his endeavour; for the manner in which he almost singlehandedly lifted the team after a poor first half, when he was among Liverpool's poorer players. One must assume their shortcomings in that opening 45 minutes had nothing to do with Gerrard's return from injury and his uncomfortable presence on the bench.

But Henderson and Joe Allen were unusually disappointing. Henderson has nevertheless emerged as quite a leader, not to mention a natural actor. He was head and shoulders above his colleagues in that amusing television commercial, and in the end he proved himself to be a player of stature here, too. A further plus for Liverpool was the fact they have now gone 13 games without losing in the league, dating back to the defeat at Old Trafford in December. And it was another away game without conceding a goal, which was due to some fine defending and leadership from Martin Skrtel. Such strength on their travels will come in handy when they visit Arsenal after Sunday's game at home to United. Given how well Liverpool had been playing prior to this game, the decision to omit Gerrard from the line-up was understandable. It wasn't just the nine wins in 12. It was the fact they have proved so difficult to beat of late.

Liverpool came into this game on the verge of matching some of their finest predecessors, with only Swansea standing between them and the record of Emlyn Hughes and his colleagues of 1972 in surviving six away games in the league without conceding a goal.

Their desire to equal that mark was evident in the way Henderson tackled Neil Taylor in the opening few minutes.

It was actually a little too eager, Liverpool's captain earning a yellow card as a result.

Liverpool approached this match with their usual intensity; the high pressing game that is designed to dominate their opponents and stop them playing. But Swansea were managing to attack effectively, with Bafetimbi Gomis accelerating past Emre Can only for Joe Allen to make an important interception.

In the end Ki Sung-Yueng had a real chance to score but his header was weak and comfortably cleared by Skrtel. The Slovakian would make another headed clearance to deny Gomis, who had escaped the Liverpool back four to meet a cross from Kyle Naughton with a better header. Swansea were beginning to dominate possession.

After that initial promise from Liverpool, this was becoming a difficult game for them. They were defending valiantly, but they were under pressure. The fact that Raheem Sterling was the second player booked, for pulling on Wayne Routledge's shirt, said it all.

Gomis was proving a real threat. A neat one-two with Routledge and he was through on goal with only Simon Mignolet to beat, but much to manager Garry Monk's dismay his shot was scuffed and Liverpool's goalkeeper made the save. An effort from Philippe Coutinho aside -- gathered neatly by Lukasz Fabianski -- Liverpool offered little in response.

Swansea were offering plenty, Mignolet making a hugely impressive save to deny Gylfi Sigurdsson before Adam Lallana diverted a powerful strike from Jonjo Shelvey to safety with a courageous header.

Gomis was late returning for the start of the second half, presumably not because of a repeat of his fainting issue. But it was just as well he did reappear because Liverpool were much improved after the break. Coutinho went desperately close on 57 minutes, forcing a good save from Fabianski.

Rodgers sent on Gerrard after 64 minutes, but it was Henderson -- who immediately surrendered the armband to his senior colleague -- who ultimately made the difference four minutes later.

Henderson, of course, has scored better goals. But few have been more important when the stakes are this high, and it was down to his graft as well as the craft of the original ball forward from Skrtel.

It was tough on Swansea and Monk. Rodgers would have admired his former student for the way he organised his team last night.

Until Henderson's goal, Swansea looked the more likely winners. But Liverpool, rather like Henderson at that crucial moment, have what teams need come the business end of the season: momentum

The Daily Telegraph

LIVERPOOL ride luck to set up United crunch

Swansea City 0

Liverpool 1

Henderson 68 Att: 20,828

Analysed that one, then. All the fancy chalkboards and complex algorithms and touchscreen video consoles in football are sometimes no match for pure, blind luck. Liverpool claimed the points, but they will struggle to explain how they managed it.

A cruel and crazy deflection off Jordan Henderson supplied the only goal of this game, as Brendan Rodgers continued his fine record against his former club. It was desperately harsh on Swansea, who made a good deal of the running and fashioned a good deal of the opportunities. They will rue the fact that they failed to take any of them. As it is, Liverpool continued their surge up the table. They remain the only unbeaten Premier League side in 2015.

With just two points separating them from Manchester United above them, this Sunday's game at Anfield is now freighted with significance, the prospect of a straight Champions League shoot-out between England's two most decorated clubs now one step closer. But when Rodgers and his team debrief at Melwood this morning, they will surely begin by scratching their heads. For 45 minutes they were nowhere.

It was a first half that Swansea had dominated, enjoying all the best chances yet without converting any of them. Thus it was that as both sides disappeared down the tunnel, they both look a little glum. But there was little doubt that the tactical battle was being won by Garry Monk.

As they say in boxing, styles make fights, and Swansea's style could have been tailor-made to deal with Liverpool's throbbing 3-4-2-1. Swansea's midfield trio of Ki Sung-Yueng, Jonjo Shelvey and Jack Cork were able to control the central areas, sticking close together and squeezing the three-quarter spaces in which Philippe Coutinho and Raheem Sterling love to operate. While they were being denied quality ball, Daniel Sturridge was being starved of service. The one time he got the ball in a dangerous position, he was instantly surrounded by so many white shirts that you had to count the number of Swansea players on the pitch, just to make sure. Swansea were narrowing the game, and with some success.

Sterling was having a particularly difficult night. He had been dispatched to right wing-back early on, swapping places with Adam Lallana.

But he was equally ineffective there, frequently failing to track his runner. He ended the first half in the book, after a cynical pull on Wayne Routledge.

Meanwhile, Swansea were making headway. Jonjo Shelvey, as often happens when he plays against Liverpool, was having another storming night. An early boot in the mouth from Henderson - a pretty good metaphor for the way things panned out for him at Anfield - appeared only to raise his temperature, and he was figuratively everywhere.

Bafetimbi Gomis, playing his first game since his alarming but ultimately innocuous collapse at Tottenham a couple of weeks ago, was making a perfect nuisance of himself. First he shrugged off Emre Can like a comfortable dressing gown. Then he had a header cleared off the line by Martin Skrtel.

Then he had a low shot saved by Simon Mignolet.

The half finished with Shelvey and Gylfi Sigurdsson both having decent chances from the edge of the area, and as the teams swapped ends it was clear that Rodgers needed to change something. What he did was subtle. Joe Allen, and then later Steven Gerrard, dropped back a little deeper in midfield. The wingers pushed forward and so did Coutinho, until at times he was almost a second striker beside Sturridge. It was more attacking, more direct, and it paid almost immediate dividends.

Lukasz Fabianski made two sharp low saves from Coutinho and Allen. With a quarter of the game remaining, fortune showed its hand, and it was tinged red. It was a goal born from innocuous beginnings; a hopeful flick by Sturridge into the path of Henderson, whose run was being covered by Jordi Amat. Amat timed his sliding lunge perfectly, the ball ricocheted off Henderson and ballooned over Fabianski's head into the net.

On the sideline, Monk hung his head. A week of training, painstaking video analysis, opposition scouting, statistical research, and you get done by a freak deflection. Football is no kind of game, really. But it was a goal at least partly attributable to Liverpool's greater directness.

Back on the pitch, Swansea were reacting to their misfortune with gusto but little composure. Behind them, gaps were opening up. Coutinho, finding himself unmarked smack in the middle of Coutinho territory, lined up a curling shot that went only just over the bar. Sterling got behind the defence and stabbed over from a tight angle. In the final minute of injury time, Sturridge hit a post. But they - and fortune - had done enough.

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THE

INDEPENDENT



Henderson's lucky break sets up United showdown

If Liverpool end up playing Champions League football next season they may look upon Jordan Henderson's fortunate winner last night as the key moment in the remarkable recovery they have forged over the second half of the season. For most of the opening hour Liverpool had been second best to a hungry Swansea side who should have held the lead after creating half a dozen presentable chances. But that profligacy in front of goal proved costly when Henderson inadvertently found the net in the 68th minute, thanks to Jordi Amat's tackle cannoning off the Liverpool captain and past Lukasz Fabianski. It was harsh on Swansea but Brendan Rodgers will care not a jot as his side made it 13 games unbeaten and moved within two points of fourth-placed Manchester United ahead of their key meeting with Louis van Gaal's side at Anfield on Sunday. Once upon a time it would have been Steven Gerrard producing the key moment to get a Liverpool side out of trouble. The veteran talisman was only on the bench here, following recent injury, but he was on the field by the time Henderson struck. The former Sunderland man's constant cajoling and motivating will not have gone unnoticed by Gerrard, who may well feel he is leaving the captaincy in good hands as he prepares to head off into his L A sunset. Liverpool enjoyed a couple of bright early moments, and Daniel Sturridge registered the first shot on goal as Swansea riskily backed off and allowed him to fire wide of the right-hand post. Despite those scares, Swansea looked lively in possession and soon it was the visiting defence doing all the worrying. Joe Allen, facing his former club, made a crucial tackle as Bafetimbi Gomis, selected in Garry Monk's starting line-up just 12 days after his dramatic collapse at White Hart Lane, bore down on goal. Martin Skrtel then blocked Ki Sung-yueng's header back across the face of goal as the pressure slowly intensified. Gomis thought he had found the opener when his powerful header from Wayne Routledge's cross beat Simon Mignolet, but was headed to safety by Skrtel. The French striker was having his best game in a Swansea shirt and he worked Mignolet again as he drove on to Routledge's delicate flick and got away a low shot. Gylfi Sigurdsson curled an effort over the bar as Neil Taylor's foray forward caused problems for the Liverpool back three, and the Iceland international later produced a more accurate strike that had Mignolet at full stretch. Liverpool were listless, and they were almost punished from the resulting corner as Jonjo Shelvey wandered away from his marker and struck a shot that would have found the net but for Alberto Moreno's intervention. The visitors retreated to the sanctuary of the dressing room fortunate to still be level, having produced a performance that suggested they were the side with little left to play for over the remainder of the season. Liverpool's frustrations were perfectly summed up when Moreno picked up a booking for two petty fouls on Kyle Naughton early in the second half. Yet there was finally some spark to their play with at least some suggestion of the quality that has seen them drag themselves into top-four contention. Philippe Coutinho almost gave them the lead after Raheem Sterling's astute cutback found the forward, but it was little surprise when Rodgers summoned Gerrard from the bench. So often during his stellar career the club stalwart has rescued them from such situations. Then again there have been few times in his career when he has had to sit on the bench even upon his return from injury. Within five minutes of his introduction Liverpool led, although it had nothing to do with him, instead it was the man who had taken the Anfield armband off him who landed the critical blow. Sturridge's flick put Henderson in against Amat. The Spaniard got in to make the tackle but the ball struck the midfielder and flew beyond Fabianski into the net. Adam Lallana almost extended the lead moments later, but his close-range effort was well held by Fabianski.

DAILY

Mirror

Jordan Henderson strikes as Reds' top four challenge rolls on

Liverpool's compelling pursuit of a Champions' League place continues, as does their unlikely collection of defensive records. Yet they will wonder quite how they escaped from South Wales with not only the three points that keeps them on course to repeat last season's second place finish, but also a share of a Reds clean sheet record that has stood for more than 40 years. Stand in skipper Jordan Henderson ultimately gave them victory, but it was the heroics of keeper Simon Mignolet who kept the his side in the game, and denied Swansea what should have been a comfortable winning position by half time. The keeper has been transformed of late, and three outstanding saves before the break from Bafetimbi Gomis and Gylfi Sigurdsson, twice, illustrated not only the home side's dominance, but also the vulnerability of a back line so regularly exposed earlier in the season had not disappeared completely. Crucially though, while Liverpool's defence was bent almost double by the South Wales storm that broke figuratively and literally around them, they did not break...and that is the reason behind their remarkable run in 2015. They are the only side in all four English divisions not to be beaten this year, and this was their sixth consecutive clean sheet on their Premier League travels, equalling a record set in both the 1965-66 and 71-72 seasons. Which all goes to support the old adage, if you can't be good, belucky...though in reality, Liverpool were both, as they almost outrageously rode their luck in the first half, before delivering a flinty-tough display in the second to steal the points and break Swansea hearts. On a wild night, it suggested Liverpool have both momentum and resilience, which will be crucial as they go into Sunday's showdown with Manchester United that will do so much to decide the Champions League pecking order. Nowhere was that momentum and resilience better offered than in the form of stand-in skipper Henderson, who suffered his own horrors before the break, as he struggled to get find his passing rhythm, but rallied brilliantly to provide the leadership Liverpool so desperately required. So much has already been said of his potential to replace Steven Gerrard, but the reality here was that Henderson stood up and delivered when his side were under the cosh, just as his team-mate and mentor has done so many times before. In fact, Gerrard was on the pitch by the time the 68th winner came, a second half substitute providing not only a calming influence in the middle, but a measure to the Reds' passing that was painfully missing for much of the game. It was Henderson who provided the perfect lung-bursting run forward though, to maraud on to an exquisite flick from Daniel Sturridge, that he somehow contrived to steer into the net, even after Swans defender Jordi Amat had hammered the attempted clearance into him. As boss Brendan Rodgers said afterwards: "It was a wonderful demonstration of the character and resilience in the team. We just weren't near it in the first half, but the character we have got us through that." It needed to. Even the qualities of form and confidence are protection against an up for it Swansea side on home turf, as Arsenal and Manchester United will this season testify. They should have led before the half hour after creating several positions which stretched the Reds defence, and exposed the vulnerability that undermined Liverpool earlier in the season. Twice, the imposing figure of Martin Skrtel was forced to clear from almost his own goal line, the first just 15 minutes in when he expertly diverted Ki's header, and then even more impressively when Bafetimbi Gomis looked as though he must score. Joe Allen had to twice be alert against his former club too, making decisive tackles in the penalty area to deny Sigurdsson, before Simon Mignolet again illustrated the quality that has underpinned his resurgence in recent weeks. He dominated his area to twice punch clear impressively, before saving bravely at the feet of Sigurdsson, and then pulling off a stunning save to deny a crisp 20 yard shot from Gomis, and repeating the trick against the Iceland striker. Just to add to the sense of Swansea first half dominance, Liverpool old boy Jonjo Shelvey thought he had scored just before the break, but somehow Adam Lallana turned his goal-bound shot wide, and that provided the sanctuary of the interval dressing room where Liverpool were able to regroup. Make no mistake, for all their first half fortune, they did so brilliantly, and now they have combined such character and belief with their undoubted attacking flair, they will take some stopping in the race for the top four.

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Lady Luck shines on Reds as defence matches Shankly's side of 1972
If you can't be good be lucky. Liverpool got a welcome helping hand as they maintained their pursuit of the Champions League spot they covet by grinding out a fifth successive league victory. Brendan Rodgers' side were far from their fluent best against Swansea City but that made the outcome all the sweeter. This is the business end of the campaign where it's all about points rather than plaudits. Winning ugly is a necessary skill and Liverpool had to dig deep to achieve the three-point haul they so desperately required having sat and watched top-four rivals Arsenal and Manchester United march on in style at the weekend. Lady Lucky shone on the Reds in the Principality as Jordan Henderson took the acclaim but knew little about his match-defining contribution. Henderson was beaten to Daniel Sturridge 's flick by Jordi Amat but the defender's clearance slammed against the Reds midfielder and rebounded over a helpless Lukasz Fabianski. It was a freak goal but it was a gift Liverpool gleefully accepted as they moved back to within two points of fourth placed United ahead of their crunch showdown at Anfield this Sunday. Kopites breathed a collective sigh of relief but they will know that standards will need to be raised for the eagerly anticipated revenge mission against Louis van Gaal's men. They will need quality to go with the bags of character. Liverpool got out of jail against Rodgers' former club as they somehow escaped unscathed from a wretched opening 45 minutes. Too many had an off night but they were indebted to the heroics of Simon Mignolet as they equalled a long-standing club record. Not since Bill Shankly's class of 1971/72 have the Reds kept six successive away league clean sheets. Remarkably, it's been 559 minutes of action since Liverpool conceded on the road when Robin van Persie scored at Old Trafford way back in December. That defensive resilience and organisation has been crucial to the transformation Rodgers has overseen. The Reds boss had spoken in the build up about Liverpool being energised after the luxury of a full week to prepare but they served up an inspid first-half display. They were lacklustre in all departments. They were second best to everything. It was baffling considering the personnel on display with Rodgers having made three changes following the FA Cup tie with Blackburn. Joe Allen 's recovery from a hip injury meant that he returned alongside Henderson in midfield with Emre Can moving into the defensive role where he has looked so assured. Mamadou Sakho was preferred to Dejan Lovren with Alberto Moreno recalled in the left wing-back role as Glen Johnson and Lazar Markovic dropped to the bench. Steven Gerrard was named among the substitutes after proving his fitness and, predictably, it was his entrance which helped steady the ship after the break. So many of Liverpool's problems in the first half were of their own making as they repeatedly tossed away possession cheaply. Sakho looked a bag of nerves every time Garry Monk's side put him under pressure and they continued to target him. The Frenchman wasn't the only one to struggle with Can also a pale shadow of the rock-solid performer who has been rightly lauded in recent months. Liverpool succeeded in making Bafetimbi Gomis look like Didier Drogba in his prime as the striker caused havoc. Gomis skipped past Can far too easily but Allen was alert to the danger and got back to make a vital interception. Allen, back at the club where he spent his formative years, was the Reds' standout performer. The Wales international spent most of the first half putting out fires and atoning for the shortcomings of his team-mates. It was another dominant display from the pint-sized midfielder. The right wing-back role has proved problematic for Rodgers with Jordon Ibe injured and Markovic's form having nosedived. Adam Lallana started there at the Liberty Stadium but that experiment was quickly abandoned. Defensively, he's just not cut out for it and Neil Taylor had a field day. Within 20 minutes Sterling was out on the right with Lallana playing in his favoured central role but neither had much impact on proceedings. Lallana did at least force Fabianski into action but his rasping drive was easy for the keeper. For the most part Liverpool were on the back foot. Gomis' header was nodded away by Martin Skrtel and then Mignolet was out smartly to save at the feet of Gylfi Sigurdsson. The Reds' lack of edge was epitomised by the sight of Sterling and then Lallana tamely losing 50-50 challenges. Allen continued to thwart the Swans and show why Liverpool are in the process of rewarding him with a new long-term contract. As an attacking force, there was little spark. When Coutinho picked out Sturridge, his touch was so poor the opening quickly disappeared. Just past the half hour it took a fine sprawling save from Mignolet to deny Gomis after his one-two with Wayne Routledge had left the Reds exposed. With every near miss, you expected Liverpool to heed the wake-up call but it didn't happen. The chances kept on coming. Sigurdsson fired over and then his curler from the edge of the box was expertly clawed behind by Mignolet. From the ensuing corner, the visitors were caught napping once again. Jonjo Shelvey was granted the freedom of the penalty area but his goal-bound strike deflected off Lallana and flashed past the post. Liverpool needed the half-time whistle like a wounded boxer wants to hear the bell.

Rodgers had some patching up to do and from the start of the second half there was an instant improvement. There was more urgency, more purpose to the Reds' play. Sturridge and Sterling combined well to set up Coutinho, whose shot was brilliantly kept out at his near post by Fabianski. Swansea's relentless pressing ensured there were still some hairy moments to endure as Mignolet and the back three continued to play Russian roulette. But Liverpool survived and grew in confidence. Rodgers introduced Gerrard for Moreno with Henderson passing on the armband to the returning skipper. Liverpool switched to 3-1-4-2 with Gerrard sitting deep and dealing with the threat of Sigurdsson. The Reds gained control and in the 68 minute they struck lucky as Amat's attempted clearance bounced off Henderson and looped over Fabianski. Henderson has now scored in three successive league matches. Once in front, Rodgers' side cruised to the finish. Coutinho and Sterling went close before in stoppage time Sturridge was thwarted by the woodwork. Liverpool's pursuit of the top four continues but with tougher tests to come they will need more than good fortune on their side. The bar needs to be raised.

MATCH FACTS
Swansea City (4-4-2): Fabianski, Naughton, Amat, Williams, Taylor, Ki (Dyer 80), Cork, Shelvey, Sigurdsson (Emnes 89), Routledge (Montero 73), Gomis.
Not used: Tremmel, Britton, Oliveira, Rangel.
Liverpool (3-4-2-1): Mignolet, Can, Skrtel, Sakho, Sterling, Allen, Henderson, Moreno (Gerrard 64), Coutinho, Lallana (Johnson 88), Sturridge.
Not used: Jones, Toure, Lovren, Lambert, Markovic.
Referee : Roger East
Attendance : 20,828
Goals : Henderson 68.
Bookings : Henderson, Sterling, Moreno.
Man of the match : Joe Allen. Outstanding performance from the Welsh midfielder against his former club.

Date: 16 March 2015 Opposition: Swansea City Competition: League	Times	Telegraph	Echo		16 March 2015		
	Guardian	Mirror	SW Evening Post				
	Independent	Mail	BBC				
South Wales Evening Post			BBC				
Garry Monk’s men left feeling hard done by as Brendan Rodgers triumphs again GARRY Monk rates Brendan Rodgers as the most complete manager he knows. No wonder, perhaps, given that Rodgers’s Liverpool side keep on getting the better of Swansea City. Jordan Henderson’s scruffy goal settled a high-quality game which deserved to be decided by something more stylish. And it meant that for the fourth time in four meetings since Monk became a boss, Rodgers emerged triumphant. But not for the first time, the scoreline did not tell the whole story. Swansea were thumped when they went to Anfield just after Christmas. But in their three other encounters with Rodgers’s men over the last 13 months, Swansea might have easily have got results. That was very much the case last night. The difference between the sides was that Liverpool scored — with the help of some good fortune — when they were on top and Swansea did not. And so Rodgers could celebrate Liverpool’s first ever victory at the Liberty Stadium, while Monk’s men head to Aston Villa this weekend looking to avoid a third straight defeat. Yet Swansea should not be too downhearted about this setback, for they did plenty right. And Monk will feel that if games against his former boss continue with this sort of pattern, the apprentice will soon get the better of his old master. Responsible for many a victory during his time in these parts, Rodgers has masterminded various black days for Swansea since he left these parts almost three years ago. Michael Laudrup’s Swansea side did manage that memorable victory on Merseyside en route to their 2013 Capital One Cup triumph. But in these two clubs’ league encounters since Rodgers switched sides, Liverpool have tended to rack up points as well as goals. Swansea’s hopes of smothering the Reds’ star-studded forward line here were not helped by the withdrawal of Federico Fernandez, who has returned home to Argentina for family reasons. His absence meant Jordi Amat was drafted in for a first Premier League start since September. The Spaniard’s return to Monk’s top-flight XI might have come against a less menacing attack. In truth, however, the focus for the majority of an entertaining first period was on Rodgers’s rearguard rather than Monk’s rejigged back four. Liverpool have much more to play for than Swansea between now and the end of the season, for they are hunting down a Champions League qualification place. But you would not have known it in a first half when Monk’s men produced a vibrant display. Swansea dominated the ball, which is no mean feat against a Rodgers side, as the visitors found it difficult to cope with Monk’s new system. Ki Sung-Yueng, Jonjo Shelvey and Jack Cork were all sharp in midfield, while Wayne Routledge and Gylfi Sigurdsson buzzed around Bafetimbi Gomis. Even Neil Taylor was getting on the act, piling forward to good effect down the left flank despite having Adam Lallana and Raheem Sterling lurking in his territory. Liverpool had their moments. Daniel Sturridge fired wide from distance, while Philippe Coutinho and Lallana both hit the target from range. On each occasion, however, Lukasz Fabianski saved with comfort. At the other end, Simon Mignolet and Co were having to work much harder to keep their opponents at bay. Joe Allen got back to save Liverpool when Gomis skipped beyond Emre Can early on, then Martin Skrtel nodded out from under the bar when the Frenchman met Routledge’s centre with a header which would otherwise have found the net. Next Ki played the ball to Gomis, and his clever one-two with Routledge sent him galloping in behind Rodgers’s back three. The Swansea frontman chose to shoot early, and Mignolet leapt to his right to save his team, pawing the ball to safety. Next Taylor waltzed beyond Can and pulled back for Sigurdsson, who turned Allen on the edge of the box but placed his shot a yard too high. The Icelander came closer a few minutes later, curling a shot towards the top corner of the net only for Mignolet to intervene once more. From the smart Sigurdsson corner which resulted, Shelvey struck a first-time drive which was heading in until Lallana got a touch to keep the scores level. With that the sides turned around level. Monk would have been by far the happier manager, with his sole frustration the fact that Swansea’s control of the contest was not reflected on the scoreboard. Rodgers needed an improvement from his team, and Liverpool raised the tempo right from the restart. Suddenly they were bossing the ball and Swansea were having to defend their penalty area. They were very nearly breached just before the hour, when Sturridge’s reverse pass sent Sterling in behind and he pulled the ball back to Coutinho. The Brazilian did everything right, shooting low towards the bottom corner, but Fabianski got down to make one of the best saves of his fine season. Fabianski’s next stop was more routine, the Pole gathering Allen’s prodded effort as Liverpool continued to press. Steven Gerrard arrived from the bench to provide an extra weapon, but it was his likely successor as Liverpool captain who broke the deadlock in somewhat fortuitous fashion. When Skrtel played the ball forward to Sturridge, Swansea failed to track Henderson’s run from midfield. Sturridge’s flick hit Ashley Williams and squirted in behind the home defence. Amat tried his best to scamper across and cover, but his sliding clearance hit Henderson and looped over a helpless Fabianski. The goal had been coming, but this was a cruel way for it to arrive. Swansea huffed and puffed in search of a response, with Monk throwing on three attacking players in the latter stages. But even though Sturridge’s stoppage-time effort came back off the post, this was to be Liverpool’s night.			Liverpool moved within two points of the Champions League places and stretched their unbeaten run to 13 league games with a hard-earned win at Swansea. Swansea dominated the first half but, thanks to Simon Mignolet’s fine saves from Bafetimbi Gomis and Gylfi Sigurdsson, it was goalless at the interval. Liverpool were vastly improved after the restart and scored a fortuitous winner when Jordi Amat’s clearance deflected off Jordan Henderson and into the net. The Reds remain fifth in the Premier League table but are just two points behind fourth-placed Manchester United, who they host on Sunday. The mouth-watering prospect of that match at Anfield served as inspiration for Liverpool, who were aiming to seize on the indifferent recent form of their rivals for the top four. There was also the matter of personal pride for manager Brendan Rodgers, returning to the club he managed for two years before moving to Anfield in 2012. Rodgers’ final game in charge of Swansea was a 1-0 victory against Liverpool a month before his move. The Swans, who have not beaten Liverpool in the league since then, were aiming to become the first team to beat the Reds in the Premier League in 2015, and they made a purposeful start. Their fluid five-man midfield controlled possession early on, while Gomis had the first genuine chance as his low shot was pushed away by Mignolet. The Belgian goalkeeper produced an even better save five minutes later, stretching to turn a curling effort from Sigurdsson around the post. Having been in such fluent form lately, Liverpool were restricted to a couple of hopeful long-range shots by Philippe Coutinho and Daniel Sturridge. Their frustration was typified by yellow cards for Henderson and Raheem Sterling but, having withstood so much pressure, they might have been relieved to enter the break on level terms. Liverpool emerged for the second half a different team, with Coutinho and Joe Allen both forcing Lukasz Fabianski into saves. Rodgers’ side increased the tempo and, moments after bringing on club captain Steven Gerrard, they took the lead in fortuitous circumstances. Henderson bore down on goal and, although Amat got to the ball first, his sliding clearance hit the Liverpool midfielder and looped into the net. The visitors took control from that point and, while Sturridge could only hit the post when well set in injury time, Liverpool were ultimately comfortable winners as they sealed a 10th win in 13 league games.				

Date: 16 March 2015 Opposition: Swansea City Competition: League	Times	Telegraph	Echo		16 March 2015		
	Guardian	Mirror	SW Evening Post				
	Independent	Mail	BBC				
BBC 90:00 +4:22 Full time Second Half ends, Swansea City 0, Liverpool 1. 90:00 +3:20 Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool hits the right post with a right footed shot from the centre of the box. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho with a through ball following a fast break. 90:00 +1:32 Raheem Sterling (Liverpool wins a free kick on the right wing. 90:00 +1:32 Foul by Jonjo Shelvey (Swansea City. 90:00 +0:01 Raheem Sterling (Liverpool wins a free kick on the right wing. 90:00 +0:01 Foul by Neil Taylor (Swansea City. 88:53 Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half. 88:53 Foul by Kyle Naughton (Swansea City. 88:30 Substitution , Swansea City. Marvin Emnes replaces Gylfi Sigurdsson. 87:40 Attempt blocked. Gylfi Sigurdsson (Swansea City left footed shot from outside the box is blocked. 87:02 Substitution , Liverpool. Glen Johnson replaces Adam Lallana. 86:23 Raheem Sterling (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half. 86:23 Foul by Neil Taylor (Swansea City. 82:58 Foul by Raheem Sterling (Liverpool. 82:58 Jonjo Shelvey (Swansea City wins a free kick in the defensive half. 80:43 Attempt missed. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool header from the centre of the box misses to the left. Assisted by Raheem Sterling with a cross. 80:36 Attempt blocked. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Raheem Sterling. 79:55 Substitution , Swansea City. Nathan Dyer replaces Ki Sung-yueng. 79:27 Steven Gerrard (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half. 79:27 Foul by Gylfi Sigurdsson (Swansea City. 78:07 Attempt blocked. Bafétimbi Gomis (Swansea City right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Jonjo Shelvey. 76:47 Steven Gerrard (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half. 76:47 Foul by Bafétimbi Gomis (Swansea City. 76:15 Attempt missed. Raheem Sterling (Liverpool right footed shot from the right side of the six yard box is high and wide to the left. Assisted by Daniel Sturridge with a through ball. 75:44 Attempt missed. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is just a bit too high. Assisted by Joe Allen. 75:37 Attempt blocked. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Adam Lallana. 74:37 Raheem Sterling (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half. 74:37 Foul by Neil Taylor (Swansea City. 72:41 Substitution , Swansea City. Jefferson Montero replaces Wayne Routledge. 72:00 Attempt missed. Jonjo Shelvey (Swansea City right footed shot from long range on the right is too high. Assisted by Kyle Naughton. 69:08 Foul by Jordi Amat (Swansea City. 69:08 Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool wins a free kick on the right wing. 67:32 Goal scored Swansea City 0, Liverpool 1. Jordan Henderson (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box to the centre of the goal. 66:15 Attempt saved. Joe Allen (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the bottom right corner. Assisted by Adam Lallana. 63:55 Substitution , Liverpool. Steven Gerrard replaces Alberto Moreno. 63:34 Foul by Jonjo Shelvey (Swansea City. 63:34 Adam Lallana (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half. 63:06 Bafétimbi Gomis (Swansea City wins a free kick in the defensive half. 63:06 Foul by Emre Can (Liverpool. 61:57 Foul by Kyle Naughton (Swansea City. 61:57 Alberto Moreno (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing. 59:57 Corner, Swansea City. Conceded by Emre Can. 59:23 Attempt saved. Gylfi Sigurdsson (Swansea City right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the centre of the goal. 58:24 Ki Sung-yueng (Swansea City wins a free kick in the attacking half. 58:24 Foul by Emre Can (Liverpool. 57:29 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Lukasz Fabianski. 57:28 Attempt saved. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the bottom right corner. Assisted by Raheem Sterling. 56:49 Foul by Bafétimbi Gomis (Swansea City. 56:49 Mamadou Sakho (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half. 56:32 Ki Sung-yueng (Swansea City wins a free kick in the defensive half. 56:32 Foul by Adam Lallana (Liverpool. 55:34 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Neil Taylor. 55:33 Attempt blocked. Jordan Henderson (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Adam Lallana. 54:49 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Ashley Williams. 52:15 Jordi Amat (Swansea City wins a free kick in the defensive half. 52:15 Foul by Alberto Moreno (Liverpool. 49:48 Booking Alberto Moreno (Liverpool is shown the yellow card for a bad foul. 49:38 Kyle Naughton (Swansea City wins a free kick on the right wing. 49:38 Foul by Alberto Moreno (Liverpool. 48:48 Delay over. They are ready to continue. 48:13 Delay in match Adam Lallana (Liverpool because of an injury. 46:21 Kyle Naughton (Swansea City wins a free kick on the right wing. 46:21 Foul by Alberto Moreno (Liverpool. 46:01 Bafétimbi Gomis (Swansea City wins a free kick on the right wing. 46:01 Foul by Alberto Moreno (Liverpool. 45:00 Second Half begins Swansea City 0, Liverpool 0. 45:00 +1:11 Half time First Half ends, Swansea City 0, Liverpool 0. 42:01 Attempt missed. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is high and wide to the left. Assisted by Joe Allen.							
41:46 Attempt missed. Alberto Moreno (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box misses to the right. Assisted by Joe Allen with a headed pass. 38:17 Corner, Swansea City. Conceded by Adam Lallana. 38:14 Attempt blocked. Jonjo Shelvey (Swansea City right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Gylfi Sigurdsson with a cross. 37:39 Corner, Swansea City. Conceded by Simon Mignolet. 37:38 Attempt saved. Gylfi Sigurdsson (Swansea City right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom right corner. 37:37 Attempt blocked. Bafétimbi Gomis (Swansea City left footed shot from outside the box is blocked. 36:28 Foul by Neil Taylor (Swansea City. 36:28 Raheem Sterling (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half. 34:39 Ki Sung-yueng (Swansea City wins a free kick in the defensive half. 34:39 Foul by Adam Lallana (Liverpool. 33:21 Gylfi Sigurdsson (Swansea City wins a free kick in the attacking half. 33:21 Foul by Adam Lallana (Liverpool. 32:53 Attempt missed. Gylfi Sigurdsson (Swansea City right footed shot from the centre of the box is high and wide to the right. Assisted by Neil Taylor. 30:43 Attempt saved. Bafétimbi Gomis (Swansea City right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom left corner. Assisted by Wayne Routledge. 28:33 Hand ball by Adam Lallana (Liverpool. 28:11 Attempt saved. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the top right corner. Assisted by Adam Lallana. 25:30 Booking Raheem Sterling (Liverpool is shown the yellow card for a bad foul. 25:26 Wayne Routledge (Swansea City wins a free kick in the defensive half. 25:26 Foul by Raheem Sterling (Liverpool. 20:42 Bafétimbi Gomis (Swansea City wins a free kick on the left wing. 20:42 Foul by Emre Can (Liverpool. 20:03 Attempt missed. Gylfi Sigurdsson (Swansea City right footed shot from the centre of the box misses to the right. 18:46 Attempt saved. Adam Lallana (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Daniel Sturridge. 17:14 Foul by Jordi Amat (Swansea City. 17:14 Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half. 13:34 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Jack Cork. 11:50 Corner, Swansea City. Conceded by Martin Skrtel. 8:42 Offside, Swansea City. Wayne Routledge tries a through ball, but Bafétimbi Gomis is caught offside. 7:06 Attempt missed. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is close, but misses to the left. Assisted by Raheem Sterling. 5:08 Booking Jordan Henderson (Liverpool is shown the yellow card for a bad foul. 5:02 Neil Taylor (Swansea City wins a free kick on the left wing. 5:02 Foul by Jordan Henderson (Liverpool. 2:48 Hand ball by Raheem Sterling (Liverpool. 1:46 Attempt missed. Martin Skrtel (Liverpool header from the centre of the box is high and wide to the right following a corner. 1:09 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Ashley Williams. 0:18 Jonjo Shelvey (Swansea City wins a free kick in the defensive half. 0:18 Foul by Jordan Henderson (Liverpool. 0:00 First Half begins. 0:00 Lineups are announced and players are warming up.							