Date: 25 April 2015
Opposition: West Bromwich Albion
Competition: League

BBC	Sunday Times	Times	Mirror
Echo	Sun Independent	Guardian	Mail
	Sun Telegraph	Telegraph	Birmingham Mail

25 April 2015

THE TIMES

Rodgers' search for new young striker could take him down to Memphis

West Brom 0
Liverpool 0
Referee R East Attendance 26,663

Brendan Rodgers, the Liverpool manager, remains confident that his club can attract worldclass talent to Anfield this summer despite the likelihood of missing out on qualifying for next season's Champions League.

Liverpool, fifth in the Barclays Premier League, were unable to find a way past a stubborn West Bromwich Albion side at The Hawthorns as the home side defended deep and Liverpool lacked the ingenuity or quality in front of goal to find a way to win.

Liverpool's need for a striker could scarcely be more obvious, so the pursuit of Memphis Depay, the PSV Eindhoven and Holland forward, has become an urgent priority.

Rodgers insists that players who are ready to buy into the club's project would be ready to forgo participating in Europe's premier club competition to further their careers at Anfield.

"If we are not in the Champions League, which now looks likely, players will still maybe want to come," he said. "It's clear that we need a goal threat."

Depay, rated at PS25 million, has attracted attention from Manchester United and Paris SaintGermain, who will offer the Dutchman the lure of Champions League football.

Rodgers refused to confirm whether the club were interested save for saying that "the kid is obviously a very talented player".

Philippe Coutinho, by far the most impressive player on the pitch, was denied by Boaz Myhill, the West Brom goalkeeper, and Jordan Henderson's followup effort was also blocked, while Jordon Ibe struck the crossbar.

Albion, though -- who moved another step closer to safety with this result -- almost snatched an unlikely victory when James Morrison's header was cleared off the line by Dejan Lovren.

RATINGS

West Bromwich Albion (442):
B Myhill 7 C Dawson 6, G McAuley 6, J Lescott 7, C Brunt 6 C Gardner 6, D Fletcher 7, C Yacob 6, J Morrison 7 (sub: C Baird, 81min) S Berahino 5 (sub: B Ideye, 75), V Anichebe 5 (sub: C McManaman, 64 7).
Substitutes not used: J Olsson, C Gamboa, S Sessegnon, J Rose.
Booked: Dawson.
Liverpool (3421): S Mignolet 6 E Can 7, M Skrtel 7, D Lovren 7 J Henderson 6, S Gerrard 6, P Coutinho 7, G Johnson 6 J Ibe 6 (sub: A Lallana, 75), R Sterling 6 M Balotelli 5 (sub: F Borini, 75).
Substitutes not used: B Jones, K Toure, J Manquillo, J Allen, L Markovic.

theguardian

Brendan Rodgers plans Liverpool development after a write-off season

Brendan Rodgers concedes that Liverpool's impending failure to qualify for the Champions League could lead to a double penalty as top-grade transfer targets are unlikely to head for Anfield and the dubious lure of Europa League football.

The Liverpool manager refused to dismiss reports that talks have been held with Memphis Depay, the Holland and PSV Eindhoven forward, as he seeks to replace last season's 52-goal contribution from Luis Suárez and Daniel Sturridge that catapulted the club back into Europe's elite on the back of amassing 101 Premier League goals.

Rodgers is more likely to be shopping in the Eredivisie than La Liga or Serie A, however, as Liverpool's chances of finishing in the top four of the Premier League dwindled with this listless goalless draw at The Hawthorns. More of the same against relegation candidates Hull City and QPR this week and Liverpool's chances of another dash for Champions League status and finance could be over.

Then the under-pressure manager will be attempting to persuade B-grade targets to buy into the club's long-term project where they can be assured of chances to develop their game. Winning trophies would appear all the more distant.

"That would be more for the players [we aim for]," Rodgers said. "But if it is right for the players and if the project is right for them to learn and develop …

"If we are not in the Champions League, which now looks likely, players will still maybe want to come. Of course, they want to play in the Champions League. I just think if they have watched us over a few years – and this is a season we miss out on – if we can regroup, get some quality starters in for the summer, we can go on another great adventure next season and hopefully get back in there."

It is 10 years since Liverpool's top scorer failed to reach double figures in a season but Raheem Sterling, who could be off this summer seeking Champions League football, leads the way with 11 so far.

Advertisement

Jordon Ibe struck the crossbar after surging on to a one-two with Mario Balotelli and Dejan Lovren headed wide late on when connecting with a cross from Steven Gerrard, who was making his 500th Premier League appearance for his club. West Bromwich Albion, however, were quite content to cede 74% of possession to edge their way towards safety in the knowledge that Liverpool are the least penetrative of the country's top seven teams.

If Alexis Sánchez, Wilfried Bony, Radamel Falcao and Edinson Cavani did not fancy replacing Suárez after Liverpool finished second to return to the Champions League last year, it is understandable Rodgers, who will surely offload Balotelli and Fabio Borini next month, will hope to nurture the likes of Depay, if the £20m target prefers Anfield to Old Trafford, and Divock Origi, when he returns from a season's loan at Lille and build gradually.

Whether Rodgers, caught between a rock and a hard place, is afforded the luxury of a fourth season without silverware would remain to be seen.

Man of the match Darren Fletcher (West Brom)

Compiled by Graeme Riley

Date: 25 April 2015
Opposition: West Bromwich Albion
Competition: League

BBC	Sunday Times	Times	Mirror
Echo	Sun Independent	Guardian	Mail
	Sun Telegraph	Telegraph	Birmingham Mail

25 April 2015

The Mail

Rodgers: We can still attract top stars

WEST BROM 0
LIVERPOOL 0

BRENDAN RODGERS insists Liverpool's transfer ambitions will not be compromised by their inability to offer Champions League football, as they step up their pursuit of Memphis Depay.

While Manchester United remain favourites to land the exciting Holland international, Liverpool were given permission by PSV Eindhoven to talk to Depay. Paris Saint-Germain have also spoken to the 21-yearold, who has scored 21 goals in the Eredivisie this season.

PSV are looking for PS25million for Depay, who has also been linked with Bayern Munich. Rodgers said: 'The kid is obviously a very talented player.

'It is clear we need a goal threat for next season. There will be a raft of players that will be looked at. Then it will be up to the club to see if they are affordable and available. There are targets that have been identified as a priority.' Rodgers does not intend to be as busy as last year when he made eight new signings. Burnley's Danny Ings and James Milner of Manchester City are prime targets, while Aston Villa striker Christian Benteke could be an option but Depay is a marker of their ambition.

How, though, will they lure targets from outside the top four? Liverpool's recent history is littered with moves for big players that collapsed -- Alexis Sanchez and Diego Costa are prime examples.

Rodgers, who saw similar failings hinder his side in a tepid draw with West Bromwich, accepts there is a big challenge facing Liverpool this summer but is confident they will be able to bring in the required quality.

'If we are not in the Champions League, players will still maybe want to come if the project is right for them to learn and develop,' said Rodgers, who could be without Steven Gerrard at Hull tomorrow night after he picked up a knock.

'But if we can regroup and get some quality starters in, we can go on another great adventure. If we are looking to regain what we had last season, we need that tempo to our game and our approach play. That is key. If we can do that, we will have an opportunity to really kick on again.' SUPER STAT: This was the first goalless draw at The Hawthorns between these sides since November 1968. WEST BROMWICH ALBION (4-1-4-1): Myhill 7; Dawson 7, McAuley 7.5, Lescott 7.5, Brunt 7; Yacob 6.5; Gardner 6, Fletcher 6.5, Morrison 6.5 (Baird 81min), Berahino 5.5 (Ideye 75, 5); Anichebe 5 (McManaman 63, 7).

Subs not used: Rose, Olsson, Gamboa, Sessegnon.

Booked: Dawson. LIVERPOOL (4-1-4-1): Mignolet 7; Can 7, Skrtel 6.5, Lovren 7, Johnson 6.5; Gerrard 7; Ibe 6.5 (Lallana 75, 6), Henderson 6.5, Coutinho 8, Sterling 6; Balotelli 6 (Borini 75, 4).

Subs not used: Jones, Markovic, Allen, Manquillo, Toure.

Man of the match: Philippe Coutinho. Referee: Roger East 7.

The Daily Telegraph

Rodgers in need of firepower

Att: 26,663 The Champions League anthem will not be on the Anfield playlist next season but Brendan Rodgers believes that he can still attract world-class players to Liverpool.

Rodgers is preparing to embark on another substantial rebuilding job this summer, with PSV Eindhoven winger Memphis Depay, Aston Villa's Belgian forward, Christian Benteke, and Burnley's Danny Ings all believed to be targets.

The Liverpool manager is determined to bring in goals and creativity after another frustrating afternoon at the Hawthorns which seems to have finally extinguished any lingering hopes of a top-four finish.

Yet Liverpool's failure to offer Champions League football is certain to prove a huge obstacle to the Anfield club's recruitment drive, with Depay understood to have also held talks with Manchester United. Depay met Liverpoolofficials on Wednesday and remains a priority target for Rodgers, who admitted that the 21-year-old represented the calibre of player he would target this summer.

Benteke is also on Liverpool's radar after his recent return to form, though he could cost more than PS30million, while Ings is expected to leave Burnley at the end of the season.

Rodgers and his transfer committee are under huge pressure to get it right this summer but the manager believes that Liverpool remain an attractive proposition to Europe's most coveted players. "If we are not in the Champions League, players will still maybe want to come," he said.

"They want to play in the Champions League [but] I just think if they have watched us over a few years - and this is a season we miss out on - if we can regroup, get some quality starters in for the summer, we can go on another great adventure next season and hopefully get back in there. It is clear that we need the goal threat for next season. There will be a raft of players that I am sure will be looked at. Then it will be up to the club to see if they are affordable and if they are available. There are targets that have been identified as a priority."

When asked directly about Depay, Rodgers said: "I can't confirm either way. The kid is obviously a very talented player but I wouldn't look to confirm anything."

Rodgers is also ready to offload players to raise additional funds, with Fabio Borini, Lucas Leiva and Mario Balotelli - anonymous in his first league start since November - likely to be sold. "I think the natural process for some players will be that they want to move on anyway," the manager said.

"We have had some for a couple of years that maybe haven't played as much as they would have liked. I have got a great squad of players but if we are looking to regain what we had last season, we need that tempo to our game and our approach play. If we can do that, I think we will have an opportunity to really kick on."

This was a turgid affair, as Steven Gerrard made his 500th Premier League appearance, with Albion producing a Tony Pulis defensive masterclass. Albion's back four were so well drilled that they resembled table footballers and Liverpool had just two chances, with Joleon Lescott heading Jordan Henderson's effort off the line before Jordon Ibe struck the crossbar.

Pulis is also counting down the days until he can start reconstructing his squad, though a PS150million sale is also on the horizon. Jeremy Peace, the Albion chairman, has met at least two interested parties and aims to agree any deal before June.

Pulis said: "The chairman has told me if there's anything positive he will keep me informed. He's said that if it's not sold by a certain time that will be it, he'll keep it and move forward."

Compiled by Graeme Riley

Date: 25 April 2015
Opposition: West Bromwich Albion
Competition: League

BBC	Sunday Times	Times	Mirror
Echo	Sun Independent	Guardian	Mail
	Sun Telegraph	Telegraph	Birmingham Mail

25 April 2015

THE INDEPENDENT

DAILY Mirror

CHOPPED LIVER? Rodgers: Miss top four, & stars will ignore Reds

WEST BROM 0 LIVERPOOL 0

BRENDAN RODGERS admitted Liverpool could miss out on their main transfer targets if they cannot offer Champions League football.

After a splendid prescription for worst game of the season, the Premier League's fab four are pulling away into the distance and Liverpool are no closer to getting back to where they once belonged.

The duel between Raheem Sterling and Saido Berahino, two precocious talents allegedly caught dabbling in that stupid laughing gas craze, was no laughing matter. In fact, it was a non-event.

Rodgers, the first Liverpool manager since the 1950s to go without a trophy during his first three years in the cockpit, is under pressure from supporters on the Radio Moan phone-in lines - and he knows it.

At the Hawthorns, Liverpool's 74 per cent possession, and Steven Gerrard's 500th Premier League appearance, were meaningless asides.

Mario Balotelli's first start for four months was, predictably, a let-down.

If Memphis Depay, the PS20million-rated Dutch striker Liverpool flew in by private jet for talks last week, had clapped eyes on this colossal monument to tedium, he would have asked to be evacuated on the first available budget airline.

Rodgers conceded his priority transfer targets would have to overlook a season of unfulfilment at Anfield and hopes they will be seduced by the giddy, freescoring near-miss with the title 12 months ago.

Good luck with that one, Brendan.

The Kop acquisitions committee, or whatever that panel of wise men is called, must have some smooth sales patter if they can persuade world-class players Thursday nights against Smorgasbord Rovers in the Europa League is more attractive than mixing with the Champions League elite.

Asked if that was a potential stumbling block in his plans for summer recruitment, the Anfield boss said: "That will be more for the players to decide.

"If the project is right for them to learn and develop, even if we are not in the Champions League, players will maybe still want to come here.

"Of course they will want to play in the Champions League, but if they have watched us over a few years - and this is a season we miss out on - if we can regroup, get some quality starters in for the summer, we can go on another great adventure next season and hopefully get back in there."

Liverpool's reduction in firepower has been alarming. The buccaneers who plundered 101 goals in 38 games last season have managed only 47 in 33 this term. Rodgers acknowledged: "If we are looking to regain what we had last season, we need that tempo to our game and our approach play."

Albion kept nine behind the ball and were content with a point. Tony Pulis was never going to turn the Hawthorns into a theme park, a n d for long periods the funfair was a cure for insomnia.

The Baggies should be safe with 37 points, and midfielder James Morrison said: "We are back to being solid again."

Compiled by Graeme Riley

Date: 25 April 2015
Opposition: West Bromwich Albion
Competition: League

BBC	Sunday Times	Times	Mirror
Echo	Sun Independent	Guardian	Mail
	Sun Telegraph	Telegraph	Birmingham Mail

25 April 2015

LIVERPOOL ECHO

Another uncomfortable day for transfer committee as toothless Reds lack firepower

This was another uncomfortable afternoon for the members of Liverpool's transfer committee.

A week after seeing the Reds' dreams of FA Cup glory dashed at Wembley, bullish talk of a late push for Champions League qualification was silenced after a dour stalemate at the Hawthorns.

Once again Liverpool's lack of firepower cost them dear as they failed to make their dominance count against West Brom. They had 74% possession but were toothless. It was a painfully familiar tale.

The stats make grim reading. With just five matches of the season to go Brendan Rodgers' side have scored just 47 league goals.

At the same stage last term that figure was 90 with deadly double act Luis Suarez and Daniel Sturridge tormenting top-flight defenders on a weekly basis.

How times have changed. Twelve months on top scorer Raheem Sterling boasts just seven league goals and you have to go back a decade to find the last time no Liverpool player reached double figures.

The Reds have lost their thrill factor. They are no longer the Premier League's great entertainers.

As a result the Europa League beckons. After a brief flirtation with Europe's elite, the Reds will be relegated back to the grind of Thursday night football.

Denied the £40million windfall from the riches of the new Champions League TV deal, Rodgers' transfer budget will be dented accordingly.

The immense frustration for Kopites is that it was all so avoidable.

The warning signs were there last summer but Liverpool didn't take the necessary steps to fill the void left by Suarez's exit.

Lessons should have been learned from Rodgers' first season when the Reds failed to replace Andy Carroll, who was off-loaded to West Ham on loan prior to deadline day, and paid the price for being a striker light.

But instead Liverpool went into another campaign ill equipped for the challenges ahead.

An approach which relied so heavily on Daniel Sturridge staying fit to lead the charge always looked doomed. His injury record should have set the alarm bells ringing.

Liverpool needed to invest a significant chunk of the £75million from selling Suarez in a genuinely top-class replacement to ease the burden on Sturridge.

Instead they made a hash of their search. Alexis Sanchez spurned their advances and went to Arsenal. They triggered Loic Remy's release clause but then pulled out of the deal over medical concerns.

Talks were held with the representatives of Wilfried Bony but his wage demands put Liverpool off. Enquiries about the availability of the likes of Radamel Falcao and Edinson Cavani came to nothing.

With deadline day looming, Rodgers was faced with a straight choice between signingMario Balotelli and Samuel Eto'o.

A fortnight after dismissing all talk of signing the controversial Italian, Rodgers opted for what he described as "a calculated gamble". It has never looked like coming off.

Balotelli has been unable to live up to the fanfare that accompanied the completion of his £16million move from AC Milan.

Injury and illness have hampered his progress but the truth is he's simply not mobile enough to fit the style Rodgers demands from his attackers.

At times he has been an easy scapegoat for Liverpool's troubles. At times he has fallen a long way short of the standards expected of him.

Balotelli showed flashes of his undoubted talent after being handed his first Premier League start since November against the Baggies.

There were moments when he worked tirelessly to win the ball back but when the Reds were in possession he was far too static.

After being placed in the shop window, there will undoubtedly be takers for him this summer but the Reds will have to take a financial hit.

Liverpool were dealt a cruel hand with the extent of Sturridge's injury woes with the England frontman making just eight league starts all season.

But the Anfield hierarchy had a duty to ensure the supporting cast was up to the task of deputising.

Instead Balotelli, Rickie Lambert and Fabio Borini boast just four league goals between them and none of them are likely to be at the club next season.

An area of weakness should have been addressed in January and the folly of Liverpool's inactivity in the winter window has since been exposed.

The arrival of £10million Belgian frontman Divock Origi from Lille will help this summer but he's a relatively unproven rookie.

Signing Burnley's Danny Ings would make sense but Liverpool would still need another established marksman. This season has shown there is no substitute for real quality.

For the best part of an hour at the Hawthorns they played like they still had the mother of all hangovers from their wretched FA Cup semi-final defeat at the hands of Aston Villa.

Rodgers rung the changes by bringing in Balotelli, Jordon Ibe and Glen Johnson for Alberto Moreno, Lazar Markovic and Joe Allen but there was no great response.

With the Baggies happy to sit back and contain the Reds, it had a real end of season feel to it with little urgency or energy on display as passes repeatedly went astray.

During an instantly forgettable opening 45 minutes, Boaz Myhill didn't have a single save to make. Steven Gerrard went close with a curling free-kick from the edge of the box, while Philippe Coutinho and Balotelli fired over from distance.

After the break Liverpool raised the bar. When Coutinho's low strike was pushed away by the keeper, Jordan Henderson looked destined to score but somehow the Baggies kept it out.

Ibe then played a neat one-two with Balotelli and hammered against the bar.

It was better from Liverpool but at the other end they rode their luck.

James Morrison's header was tipped away by Simon Mignolet and Dejan Lovren hacked off the line.

Lovren was one of the few to shine as the £20million centre-back produced arguably his most accomplished display for the club.

With 15 minutes to go Rodgers brought on Adam Lallana and Borini for Ibe and Balotelli but the Reds lacked the spark required to find a way through Tony Pulis' well drilled backline.

They could have nicked it late on when Lovren rose to meet Gerrard's enticing cross but he nodded wide.

A rollercoaster campaign appears to be limping to a low key conclusion.

MATCH FACTS

West Brom (4-2-3-1): Myhill, Dawson, McAuley, Lescott, Brunt, Yacob, Fletcher, Gardner, Berahino (Ideye 75), Morrison (Baird 81), Anichebe (McManaman 64).

Not used: Rose, Olsson, Gamboa, Sessegnon.

Liverpool (4-1-4-1): Mignolet, Can, Skrtel, Lovren, Johnson, Gerrard, Ibe (Lallana 75), Henderson, Coutinho, Sterling, Balotelli (Borini 75).

Not used: Jones, Toure, Manquillo, Allen, Markovic.

Referee: Roger East

Attendance: 26,663

Goals: none

Bookings: Dawson

Man of the match: Dejan Lovren. The £20million centre-back has come in for plenty of stick this season but he produced a commanding display at the Hawthorns.

Compiled by Graeme Riley

Date: 25 April 2015
Opposition: West Bromwich Albion
Competition: League

BBC	Sunday Times	Times	Mirror
Echo	Sun Independent	Guardian	Mail
	Sun Telegraph	Telegraph	Birmingham Mail

25 April 2015

THE INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

Steven Gerrard's waning star epitomises Reds failure to qualify for Champions League

The farewell tour promises to be a bitter-sweet ritual. As the mists of history start to swirl around Steven Gerrard, Liverpool's future is shrouded in a fog of frustration and false bravado. The mood is bleak and the problem is obvious. Gerrard brought some statistical symmetry to his career by making his 500th Premier League appearance at the Hawthorns, but the number that really matters is another big, fat zero. Goals, the currency of the game, are in desperately short supply. Manager Brendan Rodgers acknowledged: "The numbers will tell you clearly that it is an area we have to do some work on in the summer. We are showing the same effort and attitude, but we are not scoring as many goals as we were. " Given that context, it would distort debate by dwelling too deeply on Gerrard's failure to galvanise a performance of appropriate quality and merit. He has already been anointed a Liverpool great by Kenny Dalglish, and was warmly applauded by the home fans.

He will be fêted by his peers at tonight's PFA dinner in London, where, together with Frank Lampard, he will receive a special merit award. The road to semi-retirement in Major League Soccer is one long red carpet, yet he will not walk along it with lightness in his step.

Where he once unlocked defences with an instant of inspiration, or a pass of instinctive brilliance, he is now fumbling at the lock. West Bromwich Albion defended like a Tony Pulis team and were rewarded with a Tony Pulis result, a goalless draw which takes them seven points clear of the relegation zone.

Gerrard will, of course, leave with head held high. He will be welcomed back by acclamation. The same, surely, cannot be said for Mario Balotelli, whose route out of Anfield is destined to be dotted with potholes. His recall, for his first start since 8 November, placed him in the shop window of what is essentially a closing down sale, and succeeded only in driving down his price, still further.

His version of putting a shift in for the cause appears to consist of the occasional challenge and a rash of misplaced passes. He made only two tangible contributions, within the space of six second-half minutes, before his substitution. He had a shot on the turn blocked, which led to Boaz Myhill saving from Philippe Coutinho and Jordan Henderson in quick succession, and then played a one-two with Jordon Ibe, whose left-footed shot on the run hit the crossbar.

That was the sum total of Liverpool's attacking edge. They had 79% possession in the opening 25 minutes, and were hardly starved of the ball thereafter. It was as pointless as emptying an ink cartridge straight on to blotting paper, since Albion defended narrowly behind the barricade of two banks of four. It was the ninth clean sheet under Pulis, who followed a familiar script by way of explanation: "We have to be resilient and dogged defensively, because we have not got many goals in the team."

They were twice denied by Simon Mignolet in the second half. Dejan Lovren cleared from close to his own line when the Belgian goalkeeper got a touch on James Morrison's header, and he ensured equality by subsequently saving from Callum McManaman.

This was a different type of pressure for Rodgers' team, more subtle but no less insidious. Last Sunday's surrender at Wembley compromised credibility, and the manager was quick to stress the professional reality that "at the top level you have got to move on quickly".

Penance was paid against the sort of opposition whose nature exposes weakness in character and fragility of will. This was the first of six mood-setting fixtures, which will set the tone for what must be a summer of significant change.

To end a sequence of three trophyless seasons, Liverpool must do more than reflect the club's reputation for emotional excess. They are strangers to the middle ground, capable of reaching laudable heights and descending to daunting depths.

An unwieldy recruitment structure requires revision. Too much has been invested in Rodgers for him to be discarded as a fashion victim, but the owners' patience is finite. Gerrard is easing, slowly, to the margins, while Balotelli is a hopeless case. Daniel Sturridge is being repositioned as an unproductive luxury rather than a pivotal asset, even though the manager still mourns the "52 goals taken out of our team" by his injury issues and the transfer of Luis Suarez.

Rickie Lambert is a poignant afterthought, unable to break into the match-day squad. Fabio Borini is typecast as an anonymous late substitute. As uncomfortable as it appears, Rodgers' future may ultimately be in the hands of Liverpool's discredited transfer committee.

Line-ups:

West Bromwich Albion (4-4-2): Myhill; Dawson, McAuley, Lescott, Brunt; Morrison (Baird, 80), Gardner, Yacob, Fletcher, Morrison (Sessegnon, 84); Berahino (Ideye, 75), Anichebe (McManaman, 64).

Liverpool (4-1-4-1): Mignolet; Can, Skrtel, Lovren Johnson; Gerrard; Ibe (Lallana, 75), Coutinho, Henderson, Sterling; Balotelli (Borini, 75).

Referee: Roger East.

Man of the match: Fletcher (WBA).

Match rating: 5/10.

The Sunday Telegraph

Liverpool top-four hunt hit by stalemate

West Brom 0
Liverpool 0
Att: 26,663

Brendan Rodgers is facing the unpalatable prospect of the Europa League next season after hopes of a top-four finish were washed away in the rain here.

After being knocked out of the FA Cup last weekend, this was an excruciating experience for Rodgers and further stark notice of where Liverpool urgently need to strengthen in the summer.

Steven Gerrard made his 500th Premier League appearance but that will be the only memory of this insipid stalemate which surely extinguished any lingering hopes of a Champions League place.

Jordon Ibe produced their best chance by striking the crossbar but this was another damning example of how poor the club's recruitment was last summer. Mario Balotelli, making only his ninth league start, was anonymous while Dejan Lovren and Emre Can do not appear good enough for a team with ambitions of challenging for the title. And, on current form, Raheem Sterling does not look like a player worth more than PS100,000 a week.

When asked about Liverpool's prospects of finishing in the top four, Rodgers said: "It's very difficult. I felt we needed to win five of the remaining six games at least. We just don't score as many goals, it's as simple as that. We had two players last year who between them got 50 plus goals, and we don't have that. It's an area that we will look at in the summer and definitely one that we have to do some work on."

Gerrard was given a warm welcome but Albion were in no mood to extend any further courtesies. The lifeless first half emphasised where Rodgers needs to strengthen, with PSV Eindhoven forward Memphis Depay emerging as an early target.

At times it resembled a training session, with Gerrard displaying his full repertoire of passing as he was allowed to dictate play from a holding position in front of the back four. There was little threat to the Albion defence, however. Gerrard came closest to shattering the tedium in the 28th minute with a free-kick from 20 yards that drifted inches over the crossbar, while Balotelli was close with a fierce half-volley out of nothing.

Albion virtually secured safety last weekend with their win at Pulis's former club Crystal Palace and they struggled here to build any momentum.

Liverpool should have been ahead in the 55th minute. Philippe Coutinho's low shot was saved by Boaz Myhill and Jordan Henderson's attempt on the rebound was headed off the line by Joleon Lescott. Craig Gardner then volleyed into the side netting as a football match finally broke out. Ibe struck the crossbar after a neat exchange of passes with Balotelli and barely 60 seconds later Liverpool required Dejan Lovren to clear James Morrison's header off the goal line.

Albion finished the stronger teamand Pulis is now seven points above 18th-placed Sunderland. Typically, he was remaining cautious. "I've been in this game long enough to know that strange things can happen," he said.

West Bromwich Albion (4-4-1-1): Myhill 6; Dawson 7, McAuley 7, Lescott 8, Brunt 7; Gardner 6, Fletcher 7, Yacob 7, Morrison 7 (Baird 81); Berahino 5 (Ideye 75); Anichebe 4 (McManaman 63). Subs Rose (g), Olsson, Gamboa, Sessegnon. Booked Dawson.

Liverpool (4-1-4-1): Mignolet 6; Can 6, Skrtel 7, Lovren 5, Johnson 6; Gerrard 6; Ibe 6 (Lallana 74), Henderson 6, Coutinho 7, Sterling 5; Balotelli 5 (Borini 74). Subs Jones (g), Toure, Manquillo, Allen, Markovic.

Referee R East (Wiltshire).

Compiled by Graeme Riley

Date: 25 April 2015
Opposition: West Bromwich Albion
Competition: League

BBC	Sunday Times	Times	Mirror
Echo	Sun Independent	Guardian	Mail
	Sun Telegraph	Telegraph	Birmingham Mail

25 April 2015

THE SUNDAY TIMES

Rodgers upfront on goals shortage

WEST BROM 0 LIVERPOOL 0 BRENDAN RODGERS has been sending a non-toosubtle message to theLiverpool owners, Fenway Sports Group, since his side were knocked out of the FA Cup last week. Here was more evidence that major investment is required, especially up front, as his team missed the chance to revive their top-four push.

As if to emphasise the lack of attacking options with Daniel Sturridge again injured, Rodgers started the PS16m flop Mario Balotelli for the first time in the league since November and the Italian surprised nobody by producing an indifferent performance before being hauled off.

Liverpool scored 101 league goals last season, with Sturridge and Luis Suarez plundering 52 between them, but they have managed just 47 this season with five games left.

"The numbers will tell you clearly. It's an area that we will look at in the summer and we definitely need to do some work on," Rodgers said.

In terms of possession, Liverpool were dominant and Balotelli did play a role in the best move of the game just after the hour mark when he played a neat one-two with Jordan Ibe, whose shot struck the crossbar.

That came in Liverpool's best spell, when Boaz Myhill was also forced to make a good double save from Philippe Coutinho and Jordan Henderson.

Steven Gerrard would also be disappointed that he didn't do better with his effort on 68 minutes.

Other than that, Liverpool had huge difficulty making any inroads through the ranks of Albion players, who spent much of the second half defending in a 20-yard space around their own penalty box.

Adam Lallana had some nice touches on his return from injury when he replaced Ibe, but it was West Brom who could have snatched victory in the last 10 minutes with the introduction of the lively Callum McManaman. The wing produced a good cross which Gardner headed goalwards, only for Dejan Lovren to clear off the line. Then McManaman cut in from the left flank, beat Martin Skrtel and his shot forced a good save from Simon Mignolet.

"Liverpool really stepped it up in the second half and from the goalkeeper through to the front line everybody has thrown their lives into it," the West Brom manager, Tony Pulis, said. "That is nine clean sheets since I came here. We have to be resilient and dogged because we don't have many goals in the team."

Star man: Gareth McAuley (West Brom) Yellow cards: West Brom: Dawson Referee: R East Attendance: 26,663 West Brom: Myhill 7, Dawson 6, McAuley 7, Lescott 7, Brunt 6, Fletcher 6, Yacob 6, Gardner 6, Berahino 6 (Ideye 75min, 5) Morrison 6 (Baird 81min, 5), Anichebe 5 (McManaman 64min, 7), Liverpool: Mignolet 6, Can 5, Skrtel 6, Lovren 6, Johnson 5, Gerrard 6, Ibe 6 (Lallana 75min, 6) Henderson 5, Coutinho 7, Sterling 6, Balotelli 5 (Borini 75min, 5)

The Observer

Compiled by Graeme Riley

Date: 25 April 2015
Opposition: West Bromwich Albion
Competition: League

BBC	Sunday Times	Times	Mirror
Echo	Sun Independent	Guardian	Mail
	Sun Telegraph	Telegraph	Birmingham Mail

25 April 2015

BIRMINGHAM MAIL

West Bromwich Albion took another step towards Premier League safety with a point from their scoreless stalemate against Liverpool.
Albion took another step towards Premier League safety with a point from their scoreless stalemate against Liverpool at The Hawthorns.
After a first half to forget the game finally burst into life around the hour mark. But neither side did quite enough to win it.
The point edges Tony Pulis's survival tally up to 37 points, but the result does nothing for Brendan Rodgers's outside hopes of gate-crashing the Champions League places.
Albion were unchanged from the rot-stopping win at Crystal Palace last weekend, while Liverpool were hoping to bounce back from their FA Cup semi final defeat to Villa at Wembley.
The first half was 45 minutes (plus a minute stoppage time) to forget.
Albion failed to register a single opportunity of note before the break.
The closest they came to chance was when Gareth McAuley nearly made contact with Craig Gardner's cross-shot early on, but even then the defender was in an offside position.
Liverpool fared little better. Philippe Coutinho tried to return Boaz Myhill's poor clearance with interest from near the halfway line, only for his ambitious effort to drift wide.
In fact high or wide was where all the Reds other half-hearted efforts ended up.
Steven Gerrard, making his 500th Liverpool appearance, came closest with a whipped free-kick, just over the angle of post and bar.
Mario Balotelli, on his first Premier League start since November, threatened momentarily with a snapshot, but even that ended up in the Birmingham Road end.
Entertainment was in short supply, so much so that The Hawthorns faithful had to make their own, resorting to goading referee Roger East for seeming to favour the visitors with a string of decisions.
It was better after the break - it couldn't have been much worse.
Liverpool tried to crank up the tempo and it almost paid off early in the second half.
Goalkeeper Boaz Myhill produced a fine double save to deny Philippe Coutinho and Jordan Henderson in quick succession, before Jordan Ibe burst through to rattle the crossbar after a one-two with Balotelli.
Albion's best chance of the match came moments later when James Morrison's header was cleared off the line by Dejan Lovren after substitute Callum McManaman caused problems from his first involvement, a teasing cross from the right.
Craig Gardner had blasted into the side netting minutes earlier, arriving late at the back post to meet Chris Brunt's deep cross from the left.
Morrison required treatment for a cut to his eye after a stray elbow from Martin Skrtel, but his desire to return to the field summed up a battling display from the midfielder.
McManaman made a difference for Albion, adding much-needed width to a the hosts' attacks.
The former Wigan favourite almost won it in the closing moments with a raid down the left, but his angled shot was saved by Simon Mignolet, when the winger's team-mates were crying out for a cut-back.
Lovren nodded an opportunity wide deep into injury time, but ultimately neither side could make the breakthrough and a no score draw was a fair result.
It leaves Albion seven games clear of the dropzone.

BBC

Liverpool's hopes of securing a top-four finish were dealt a blow as they were held to a goalless draw by West Brom at the Hawthorns.
After a forgettable opening, the game came to life in the second half as both sides had chances to snatch the winner.
Philippe Countino brought a full-stretch save out of Boaz Myhill while Jordon Ibe hit the post for Liverpool.
James Morrison's header was cleared off the line for the hosts, but neither side could get the breakthrough.
Liverpool are fifth and seven points behind fourth-placed Manchester United.
The Reds' season is heading towards a disappointing conclusion, withdefeat to Aston Villa in the semi-final of the FA Cup last weekend ending their hopes of winning any trophies this season.
Three points at the Hawthorns on Steven Gerrard's 500th league appearance would certainly have boosted hopes of a top-four finish ahead of his summer move to the MLS.
It was the first time West Brom and Liverpool had drawn 0-0 at the Hawthorns since 1968
But a win looked unlikely for either side during a drab opening 45 minutes in which both sides failed to register a shot on target. Gerrard went closest with a free-kick that flew just over the bar.
It got better in the second half, with Liverpool becoming more adventurous and West Brom - who are seven points clear of the relegation zone - looking to exploit gaps on the counter-attack.
Somehow, Liverpool failed to score during a goal-mouth scramble when Countiho tried to sneak a shot through a crowd of players, Myhill made the save and Jordan Henderson was unable to get the ball home from close range.
When Ibe hit the woodwork after playing a one-two with Mario Balotelli - quiet in his first start in almost two months - it seemed it would only be a matter of time before Liverpool scored but instead it was West Brom who almost snatched the points when Morrison sent a header to the far corner, but Dejan Lovren got back to clear.
West Brom manager Tony Pulis: "Liverpool were very good in the last 20 minutes. The lads showed a lot of resilience and we are very pleased to get another point.
"We had a poor set of results here before this game and that was down to the mentality more than anything - when people say we are safe with this and that.
"We are not good enough to take our foot off the pedal we have to be 100% all the time."

Compiled by Graeme Riley

Date: 25 April 2015
Opposition: West Bromwich Albion
Competition: League

BBC	Sunday Times	Times	Mirror
Echo	Sun Independent	Guardian	Mail
	Sun Telegraph	Telegraph	Birmingham Mail

25 April 2015

BBC

Full time Match ends, West Bromwich Albion 0, Liverpool 0.
90:00+4:31Full time Second Half ends, West Bromwich Albion 0, Liverpool 0.
90:00+4:04 Attempt missed. Dejan Lovren (Liverpool header from the centre of the box is close, but misses to the left. Assisted by Steven Gerrard.
90:00+3:32 Dejan Lovren (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing.
90:00+3:32 Foul by Brown Ideye (West Bromwich Albion.
90:00+0:27 Adam Lallana (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
90:00+0:27 Foul by Claudio Yacob (West Bromwich Albion.
89:50 Attempt missed. Claudio Yacob (West Bromwich Albion right footed shot from outside the box misses to the right.
88:23 Corner, West Bromwich Albion. Conceded by Simon Mignolet.
88:21 Attempt saved. Callum McManaman (West Bromwich Albion left footed shot from the left side of the six yard box is saved in the bottom left corner. Assisted by Brown Ideye.
86:57 Adam Lallana (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
86:57 Foul by Craig Gardner (West Bromwich Albion.
82:59 Attempt saved. Craig Gardner (West Bromwich Albion left footed shot from outside the box is saved in the top right corner. Assisted by Callum McManaman with a cross.
80:38Substitution SubstitutionSubstitution, West Bromwich Albion. Chris Baird replaces James Morrison.
80:06 Attempt missed. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is just a bit too high.
79:24 Attempt saved. Darren Fletcher (West Bromwich Albion left footed shot from outside the box is saved in the centre of the goal.
77:40 Attempt saved. Steven Gerrard (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Adam Lallana.
76:18 Corner, West Bromwich Albion. Conceded by Martin Skrtel.
75:24 Foul by Dejan Lovren (Liverpool.
75:24 Brown Ideye (West Bromwich Albion wins a free kick in the defensive half.
75:19 Attempt blocked. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Jordan Henderson.
74:40Substitution SubstitutionSubstitution, West Bromwich Albion. Brown Ideye replaces Saido Berahino.
74:28Substitution SubstitutionSubstitution, Liverpool. Fabio Borini replaces Mario Balotelli.
74:22Substitution SubstitutionSubstitution, Liverpool. Adam Lallana replaces Jordon Ibe.
73:43 Attempt missed. Dejan Lovren (Liverpool header from the centre of the box is too high. Assisted by Martin Skrtel with a headed pass following a corner.
73:19 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Gareth McAuley.
72:56 Attempt blocked. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Raheem Sterling.
72:11 Attempt blocked. Mario Balotelli (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.
70:17 Offside, Liverpool. Philippe Coutinho tries a through ball, but Mario Balotelli is caught offside.
67:21 Attempt saved. Emre Can (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the top centre of the goal. Assisted by Steven Gerrard with a cross.
65:52 Delay over. They are ready to continue.
64:22 Delay in match James Morrison (West Bromwich Albion because of an injury.
63:36 Attempt saved. James Morrison (West Bromwich Albion header from very close range is saved in the bottom right corner.
63:03Substitution SubstitutionSubstitution, West Bromwich Albion. Callum McManaman replaces Victor Anichebe.
62:38 Foul by Mario Balotelli (Liverpool.
62:38 Gareth McAuley (West Bromwich Albion wins a free kick in the defensive half.
62:16 Jordon Ibe (Liverpool hits the bar with a left footed shot from the centre of the box. Assisted by Mario Balotelli.
60:23Booking Craig Dawson (West Bromwich Albion is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.
60:18 Jordon Ibe (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
60:18 Foul by Craig Dawson (West Bromwich Albion.
59:52 Attempt saved. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the top centre of the goal. Assisted by Jordan Henderson.
59:30 Glen Johnson (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
59:30 Foul by Victor Anichebe (West Bromwich Albion.
56:24 Attempt missed. Craig Gardner (West Bromwich Albion right footed shot from the right side of the box is close, but misses to the right. Assisted by Chris Brunt with a cross.
55:06 Attempt saved. Jordan Henderson (Liverpool left footed shot from very close range is saved in the centre of the goal.
55:04 Attempt saved. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the bottom left corner.
55:00 Attempt blocked. Mario Balotelli (Liverpool right footed shot from the left side of the box is blocked. Assisted by Raheem Sterling.
53:20 Attempt missed. Gareth McAuley (West Bromwich Albion header from the centre of the box misses to the left. Assisted by Darren Fletcher with a cross following a set piece situation.
52:50 Foul by Raheem Sterling (Liverpool.
52:50 Craig Gardner (West Bromwich Albion wins a free kick on the right wing.
51:11 Foul by Raheem Sterling (Liverpool.
51:11 Craig Dawson (West Bromwich Albion wins a free kick in the defensive half.
50:19 Raheem Sterling (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing.
50:19 Foul by Craig Dawson (West Bromwich Albion.
49:23 Foul by Mario Balotelli (Liverpool.
49:23 Joleon Lescott (West Bromwich Albion wins a free kick in the defensive half.
48:46 Martin Skrtel (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
48:46 Foul by Saido Berahino (West Bromwich Albion.
47:40 Attempt blocked. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Jordan Henderson.
45:00 Second Half begins West Bromwich Albion 0, Liverpool 0.
45:00+1:03Half time First Half ends, West Bromwich Albion 0, Liverpool 0.
45:00+0:39 Attempt blocked. Mario Balotelli (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked.
44:50 Steven Gerrard (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
44:50 Foul by Claudio Yacob (West Bromwich Albion.
41:54 Attempt missed. Chris Brunt (West Bromwich Albion left footed shot from more than 35 yards misses to the right from a direct free kick.
41:36 Foul by Martin Skrtel (Liverpool.
41:36 Victor Anichebe (West Bromwich Albion wins a free kick in the defensive half.
39:36 Foul by Jordan Henderson (Liverpool.
39:36 Craig Dawson (West Bromwich Albion wins a free kick in the defensive half.
39:13 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Gareth McAuley.
35:52 Foul by Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool.
35:52 Craig Gardner (West Bromwich Albion wins a free kick in the defensive half.
34:56 Attempt missed. Mario Balotelli (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is just a bit too high. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.
32:53 Dejan Lovren (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
32:53 Foul by Victor Anichebe (West Bromwich Albion.
30:48 Attempt missed. Emre Can (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box misses to the left. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.
27:42 Attempt missed. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from more than 35 yards misses to the right.
26:52 Attempt missed. Steven Gerrard (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is just a bit too high from a direct free kick.
25:53 Mario Balotelli (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
25:53 Foul by Saido Berahino (West Bromwich Albion.
24:15 Hand ball by Raheem Sterling (Liverpool.
20:13 Attempt missed. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is high and wide to the left.
18:00 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Craig Dawson.
16:51 Offside, West Bromwich Albion. Craig Gardner tries a through ball, but Joleon Lescott is caught offside.
16:14 Foul by Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool.
16:14 Darren Fletcher (West Bromwich Albion wins a free kick in the attacking half.
12:14 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Craig Gardner.
11:15 Attempt blocked. Mario Balotelli (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Raheem Sterling.
9:53 Attempt blocked. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Jordon Ibe.
8:11 Raheem Sterling (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
8:11 Foul by Claudio Yacob (West Bromwich Albion.
5:38 Attempt missed. Victor Anichebe (West Bromwich Albion right footed shot from the centre of the box misses to the left. Assisted by Craig Gardner following a set piece situation.
5:36 Attempt missed. Craig Gardner (West Bromwich Albion right footed shot from outside the box misses to the left. Assisted by Craig Dawson with a headed pass following a set piece situation.
5:05 Foul by Dejan Lovren (Liverpool.
5:05 Craig Gardner (West Bromwich Albion wins a free kick in the attacking half.
0:33 Mario Balotelli (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
0:33 Foul by Craig Gardner (West Bromwich Albion.
0:00 First Half begins.
0:00 Lineups are announced and players are warming up.

Compiled by Graeme Riley