

Date: 12 September 2015
 Opposition: Manchester United
 Competition: League

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2015

THE TIMES

Heat on Rodgers to revive Liverpool passion play

Manchester United 3
 Blind 49, Herrera 70 (pen), Martial 86
 Liverpool 1
 Benteke 84

Referee: M Oliver. Att: 75,347

There are times in a manager's career when the victories barely register and when every loss leaves another scar. This campaign always threatened to be like that for Brendan Rodgers. The Liverpool manager claimed that a line had been drawn under last season's tribulations, but this limp defeat at Old Trafford, of all places, only added to an alarming sense of drift.

It is hard to know what is more troubling for Liverpool: their dearth of attacking intent until after they fell behind to Daley Blind's goal or that their defence disintegrated just about every time they were put under pressure. If there have been times down the years when opposing teams could have been forgiven for pitching up at Manchester United with a sense of dread, this is not one of them, yet still the home team, restricted by their tactical straitjacket and by the cumbersome presence of Marouane Fellaini as a makeshift centre forward, scored almost at will on Saturday evening.

Jamie Carragher sat in the Sky Sports studio shaking his head. "I don't understand this obsession with playing 4-3-3," the former Liverpool defender said. "They've got a lot of strikers, no wide players, and [Rodgers] continues to play 4-3-3." Graeme Souness agreed, saying: "It's square pegs in round holes and it just doesn't work."

There are certainly questions to be asked about how the system Rodgers has employed so far this season -- more 4-1-4-1 than 4-3-3 -- can work when, as Carragher said, there is so little natural width in this squad. In happier times, though, Rodgers has been able to work wonders for Liverpool with square pegs in round holes. What has changed, in addition to the departure of Luis Suarez and the loss of Daniel Sturridge to injury for much of the past year, is that Liverpool now look, individually and collectively, like they are plagued by self-doubt. Confidence does not exactly course through this United team either, but there is, as Gary Neville acknowledged in what was otherwise a fairly scathing appraisal of their progress under Louis van Gaal, a well-organised defensive structure. That defence still creaked when pressure was belatedly applied in the second half, but, unlike Liverpool's, it did not crumble.

Liverpool's goal, a spectacular overhead kick from Christian Benteke to reduce United's lead to 2-1 with six minutes remaining, was only their third of the season so far. In goalscoring terms, it equals the record for the slowest start in the club's history. Two of those goals (Philippe Coutinho's late winner away to Stoke City and Benteke's strike on Saturday) came like bolts from the blue and the other (Benteke's against Bournemouth) should not have stood. There was a vibrant first-half performance in the 0-0 draw away to Arsenal, but otherwise they have been almost devoid of the verve and creative energy that were the defining traits of their title challenge two seasons ago.

The first half was dreadful. Michael Carrick and Bastian Schweinsteiger kept things moving in the United midfield, however slowly, and Luke Shaw got forward well from left back, but there was little to admire on either side. There was no passion, no energy, no creative spark whatsoever -- not an unfamiliar story for either side of late. United came out for the second half with a new sense of urgency. Ashley Young, on as substitute, won a free kick, from which Juan Mata picked out Blind, who curled a shot home from the edge of the penalty area. Liverpool, inexplicably, looked oblivious to the danger. Liverpool briefly threatened an equaliser, but then Joe Gomez showed his inexperience with a naive challenge on Ander Herrera, who converted the resulting penalty. Almost without breaking sweat, United were 2-0 up and coasting, with Carrick and Schweinsteiger untroubled in setting a tempo that suited them down to the ground.

Blind was forced into a goalline clearance and David De Gea, on his return to action, saved well from Danny Ings and Jordan Ibe, but United seemed to have weathered the storm -- more like light drizzle, in reality -- until Benteke's acrobatic volley gave Liverpool hope.

That was the cue for Anthony Martial's big moment. The French teenager, making his debut as a substitute, had barely touched the ball to that point, but, receiving possession from Young on the left-hand side, he ran at a backpedalling Martin Skrtel and, with a sleight of foot reminiscent of Thierry Henry, he beat the defender before placing his shot into the far corner. The projected PS58.8 million transfer fee might be "ridiculous" -- Van Gaal's word -- but there could be no better way for the player to announce his arrival.

By nature, Rodgers is an optimist. Had this kind of performance happened during the first two years of his tenure, he might have been more upbeat -- persuading himself and others that they kept United at arm's length in the first half and created the better chances after being caught napping at a free kick early in the second -- but he knows that will not cut it when, after the misery of last season, optimism looks already to have flown out of the window again.

A glance at the Premier League fixture list offers Liverpool some immediate hope, but even if they sail through routine-looking home games against Norwich City and Aston Villa, they must negotiate trips to Everton, Tottenham Hotspur, Chelsea and Manchester City.

Rodgers knows he needs to find answers -- fast.

the guardian

In his comments on Anthony Martial, Michael Carrick strengthened the sense of what strange times these are at Manchester United.

Martial made an explosive debut after coming on as a substitute, a superb slaloming goal capping victory against United's bitterest rivals, but Carrick admitted knowing little about the 19-year-old for whom United paid £36m on the final day of the transfer window.

Carrick said of the acquisition from Monaco: "I have to be totally honest, I didn't know an awful lot -- like many -- but I do now. We haven't really trained this week too much; by the time the lads have come back from internationals. We haven't seen an awful lot of him. It's a lot of money, of course it is. I suppose time will tell, won't it?"

The French striker is the world's most expensive teenager. With add-ons the fee could rise to £58m, thus making Martial British football's second-highest transfer behind the £59.7m Ángel Di María cost United.

That is, indeed, a heck of a lot of money even in a super-inflated market. It should secure a high level of talent, especially for a club whose business is the serial pursuit of trophies, and Martial's weaving, jinking goal four minutes from time may be the first down payment on his astronomical fee.

Yet two years after Sir Alex Ferguson retired -- and following David Moyes's ill-starred period in charge -- the uncertainty at United continues. It caused the fiasco of David de Gea's transfer to Real Madrid collapsing and the sanctioning of a "ridiculous" price -- Louis van Gaal's description -- for a punt on Martial's potential, as the manager continues to rebuild. On the evidence of Martial's 25 minutes against Liverpool, Van Gaal might actually have found a footballer who, in time, can symbolise United's identity, just as Wayne Rooney currently does.

Carrick said: "To start like that you can't really ask for more. It doesn't get any better than that, does it? Coming in and coming on and scoring against Liverpool like that. He has done well to get in that position and I thought the finish was terrific, how he just slotted it home. He was so calm and composed and you can't ask for a better start."

"He is off the mark now. He has announced himself. Everyone has seen it on the big stage. I am sure his confidence will be sky high. It's a good way to settle him and if that has raised expectation then so be it but that is part of the game."

Van Gaal had insisted Martial would be eased into the side but the hamstring injury that ruled out Rooney and is likely to keep the captain out of Tuesday's Champions League match against PSV Eindhoven meant Martial was given an early opportunity.

Martial entered with United leading 1-0 from Daley Blind's opener. An Ander Herrera penalty and Christian Benteke's breathtaking overhead volley took the score to 2-1. Then came Martial's moment.

Taking the ball on the left he twisted Liverpool's defence before beating Simon Mignolet with the kind of direct dribble and finish last seen by a player in United livery when Cristiano Ronaldo was at the club.

So is Martial the real deal? Has Van Gaal been brave and made a prescient signing? A 25-minute cameo is too little to build a credible verdict on, of course. As with Van Gaal and his United team and how they might fare, the jury remains out. Now, the real work of offering consistently high performances begins.

Van Gaal said: "That is why I am saying all of these things -- that he is 19 years old, that he had to adapt, that we have bought him for the future, that he is for my successor. These are all signals from me that we have to protect him. You cannot expect from players of 19, 20 or 21 the same consistency of a Schweinsteiger or Carrick. I hope by my declarations it shall be that expectation dampens."

Reminded that he called the fee ridiculous, Van Gaal said: "We have bought him because of his talent but you have to show your talent at the right time on the pitch and Martial has done that in his first match. We will have to wait and see if he can be consistent and do it every game. You have an average from strikers of around 50 or 60% [goal rate] every match. His average at Monaco was lower because his finishing was not so good but today it was 100%."

In Rooney's absence Marouane Fellaini started at centre-forward and when Martial came on it was for Juan Mata rather than the Belgian. Van Gaal praised Fellaini and so the latter may well keep his place at PSV for the opening Champions League group match.

Martial, though, has given Van Gaal a welcome dilemma regarding whether to name him in Tuesday's XI. "You will have to wait and see how the players recover," the manager said. "That is the most important thing because it was an important match -- for everybody, also with the pressure, for the result against Liverpool -- so they need three days to recover. Then I shall decide."

The 64-year-old has won each of his three games managing United against their firm rivals. This latest victory takes the club to 10 points, five behind the leaders, Manchester City.

Brendan Rodgers's Liverpool, though, were devoid of ideas throughout. On this evidence they -- and the manager -- have the more serious problems.

Man of the match Daley Blind (Manchester United)

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The Mail

INSTANT HERO! Martial's a big hit... but United can't relax
 MAN UTD 3 LIVERPOOL 1 AS a wave of euphoria swept around Old Trafford, it was tempting to think that Manchester United's problems had been washed away in an instant by Anthony Martial's sensational debut goal.

A new hero had arrived and that staggering PS58million transfer fee was suddenly starting to look like money well spent as the French teenager lapped up the adulation from the Stretford End.

That may prove to be true in time. And at the end of a very difficult week for manager Louis van Gaal, with talk of rigid tactics and unhappy players, Martial could not have chosen a better time to sprinkle a little stardust over his new club. But it could not mask United's problems and some of them were evident in a turgid first half against Liverpool in which they laboured without injured captain Wayne Rooney, meaning there was still plenty of cause for concern amid the celebrations.

MARTIAL ART AS DREAM debuts go, this was up there with the best of them at United: think Rooney's hat-trick against Fenerbahce or Federico Macheda's injury-time strike to beat Aston Villa.

It was even sweeter for Martial and the club because so many questions have been asked of their decision to spend an astronomical fee on a relative unknown. 'I have to be totally honest, I didn't know an awful lot about him, like many, but I do now,' said midfielder Michael Carrick after seeing Martial bamboozle the Liverpool defence and beat Simon Mignolet with an ice-cool finish. No wonder United fans went home with a sense of genuine optimism.

NET GAIN WHO would have thought that a farcical summer in United's goalkeeping department would end with David de Gea back between the posts after signing a new deal? The Spaniard was given a rapturous reception before kick-off and there is no underestimating what he will bring to Van Gaal's defence. There were a few shaky moments -- 'I have a criticism for him and I am sorry I have to say that,' admitted the United boss -- but of the numerous options open to United, De Gea is the best.

LOOKING UP FOR all the criticism of United's bland football, they are third in the Premier League with 10 points from five games -- twice as many as the same stage last season after a shocking 5-3 defeat at Leicester which Van Gaal described as his darkest day at the club. United are also back in the Champions League and fly out to Holland today to face PSV in a far from daunting Group B that also includes Wolfsburg and CSKA Moscow.

VAN'S MASTERPLAN VAN GAAL has come under fire but there was no faulting the Dutchman's acumen here. Ashley Young was sent on as a half-time substitute and had an immediate impact for the first goal -- note, a training-ground set-piece -- and was also involved when Martial, another United replacement, rewarded his manager's faith with the third. Van Gaal (left) has now won all three of his games against Liverpool.

STRIKING OUT ROONEY'S hamstring injury exposed the chronic lack of attacking options available to Van Gaal since the departures of Robin van Persie, Radamel Falcao, Angel di Maria, Javier Hernandez and Adnan Januzaj.

It's extraordinary a club of United's stature should be so light in this area that they have to rely on Marouane Fellaini or a teenage debutant. 'We bought him for the future, he is for my successor,' Van Gaal said of Martial, fearing the level of expectation has already risen too high.

STAYER DE GEA? THE goalkeeper said all the right things after signing his contract on Friday and was clearly forgiven by supporters 24 hours later.

But has De Gea's desire to join Real Madrid to be near his girlfriend and family suddenly disappeared? Or is the four-year deal a marriage of convenience that guarantees him a wage rise to PS200,000 a week and United a substantial transfer fee if he moves to Spain next summer? Whatever it says on that contract, the De Gea saga is just on hold for another nine months.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE BASE THE drama of stunning late goals from Martial and Christian Benteke could not hide the fact that, for 45 minutes, this was one of the most insipid United-Liverpool games in memory.

Nor was it out of character with the majority of United's performances so far this season. There is very little of the old swagger about them. Van Gaal is building a solid unit that will implement his muchvaunted philosophy. Entertainment is not high on the agenda.

LOUIS RULES ANYONE who doubted Van Gaal when he said he could change his approach following a warning from Rooney and Carrick that the dressing room had gone 'flat' would hardly have been encouraged by his post-match comments. The United boss could not resist calling Daley Blind's opening goal a 'consequence of our meetings and our tactical sessions on set-plays'. He added: 'I have heard the words "boring" and "too rigid", but it is like that. It means a lot of meetings and a lot of training sessions.' That squad might get flatter yet.

The Daily Telegraph

Martial's dream debut sparks talk of Cantona moment
 Manchester United 3

Blind 49, Herrera 70pen, Martial 86

Liverpool 1

Benteke 84

Att: 75,347

It can often take just one player, one mercurial addition, for a team to make the leap from mediocrity and Manchester United have had a few of those down the years.

Eric Cantona and Cristiano Ronaldo set the bar unreachably high at Old Trafford with their own brand of inspiration, and the likes of Juan Sebastian Veron, Dimitar Berbatov and Angel Di Maria all fell well short of scaling such heights in a United shirt when handed the challenge of doing so.

Whether Anthony Martial follows the Cantona path or becomes another Di Maria - who shone brightly initially before fading away - will not become evident for months and years, but not many footballers score with their first shot in the Premier League and even fewer do so with a goal of such breathtaking audacity and composure as that which crowned United's victory against Liverpool. How Brendan Rodgers, the Liverpool manager, must have yearned for the talismanic brilliance of Luis Suarez as Martial slalomed through his back four to restore United's two-goal advantage, moments after Christian Benteke's bicycle kick had given the visitors hope.

Suarez once did for Liverpool what Martial did for United, only on a game-by-game basis. But life after Suarez has proved to be grim for Liverpool, who alarmingly lacked any kind of flair or zest at Old Trafford, and the flash of gold provided by Martial only served as a reminder of the value of a player who is prepared be bold and daring when a game is in the balance.

Martial, whose deadline-day arrival from AS Monaco could ultimately cost United a fee of PS56 million, was Louis van Gaal's 11th-hour gamble - a young prospect, courted by many of Europe's top clubs, but still regarded as too raw to warrant such an exorbitant outlay.

Van Gaal and United, who had allowed the forwards Robin van Persie, Radamel Falcao and Javier Hernandez to leave Old Trafford, needed attacking options, however, so Martial was signed to howl of derision in France and an expectant audience in Manchester waited anxiously to see whether the boy - the world's costliest teenager - would make his mark.

After spending the first 13 minutes of his debut as a substitute waiting for a first touch, Martial exploded on to the scene with a goal which will do little to silence those comparisons to Thierry Henry.

"I have to be totally honest, I didn't know an awful lot about him - like many," United midfielder Michael Carrick said. "But I do now. It doesn't get any better than that, does it? Coming on and scoring against Liverpool like that. He has done well to get in that position and I thought the finish was terrific, how he just slotted it home. He was so calm and composed and you can't ask for a better start."

Van Gaal, who claimed last week that Martial was a long-term signing "for my successor", immediately warned against expecting the player to repeat his debut heroics on a consistent basis.

However, Carrick, who saw a young Ronaldo develop alongside him at Old Trafford, believes that Martial's goalscoring introduction may actually reduce the pressure and expectancy. "He is off the mark now, he has announced himself," Carrick said. "Everyone has seen it on the big stage."

"It's a good start for him and I am sure his confidence will be sky high after that. It's a good way to settle him and if that has raised expectations, then so be it, but that is part of the game. It's a lot of money [for a teenager], of course it is. I suppose time will tell. But to start like that, you can't really ask for more."

With Wayne Rooney, the captain ruled out of the Champions League game with PSV Eindhoven in Holland tomorrow with the hamstring strain which forced him to miss the Liverpool game, Martial may yet feature from the start against the Dutch champions.

His introduction into the action changed United's approach and injected the pace and movement that had been absent with Marouane Fellaini deployed as a makeshift centre-forward.

The question mark now hanging over United and Van Gaal is whether Martial, 19, will be given the chance to provide the X-factor on a regular basis or if the more methodical approach will continue.

Against Liverpool, a turgid first half of few chances showcased United at their worst under Van Gaal, against limited opponents who were seemingly bereft of confidence. But once United clicked, after Daley Blind's 49th-minute opener as a result of well-rehearsed free-kick, the home side played with more flair and belief, culminating in their second goal, when Ander Herrera converted a penalty after being fouled by Joe Gomez.

Benteke's wondrous strike reduced the arrears before Martial sealed United's victory, which moved them into second position, to Carrick's surprise. "Are we?" Carrick said, when told of United's league position.

"You can look at it both ways - you can say it's a good start and you can say we have dropped points. But we have shown signs that we have improved. It's just about that consistency, but it feels like the season has started now after the internationals."

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Rodgers has to find some answers - or face the sack

When asked what he intended to do to reverse Liverpool's slide, Brendan Rodgers said something about "working harder in training". Rodgers is the most articulate manager Liverpool have had since Bill Shankly, but in the press room at Old Trafford the power of words failed him.

"Working harder in training" is the kind of phrase a manager comes up with when he has nothing to say. It is like "We need a goal to go in off someone's backside". They desperately want things to change but are not sure how.

Liverpool, you imagine, already work pretty hard in training and the deficiencies exposed by Saturday evening's 3-1 defeat to Manchester United are not going to be solved by giving Lucas Leiva a few more laps of Melwood.

When, in mid-December, Liverpool conceded three times at Old Trafford - a defeat that left them 10th in the Premier League table, between Swansea and Stoke, and already eliminated from the Champions League - Rodgers acted rather than talked.

He persevered with a radically altered formation that until the wheels came off in April suggested it would carry Liverpool back into the Champions League. Unless he can do something similar now, his chances of remaining in charge appear slim even before the start of a Europa League campaign that usually drains energy and points.

There was a time when a banner with an image of Rodgers with the word "Boss" appeared on the Kop but now an icon is ready to become an effigy. Once the final whistle went on Saturday, owner John W Henry's Twitter account was bombarded with messages urging him to do away with the man he appointed to succeed Kenny Dalglish.

Whether the Liverpool owner would pay them any heed is open to conjecture - he has not tweeted since April - but he is ruthless enough. Anyone who can sack Dalglish can fire Rodgers. And having acquiesced in the removal of his own backroom staff in May, it would be hard to imagine how Rodgers might evade responsibility now.

There are, however, a few cards to play before we reach for phrases like "mutual consent". Liverpool were abject, surrendering possession at every available opportunity before the interval but their midfield was missing Philippe Coutinho, Adam Lallana and Jordan Henderson. The return of Daniel Sturridge to partner Christian Benteke is not far off. Liverpool have always been slow starters under Rodgers. In the first five games of each of his four seasons at Anfield they have taken 25 points from a possible 60.

That, essentially, is the case for the defence and Rodgers would hope it might be slightly more robust than the defence that failed to notice the cleverly taken free-kick that triggered Manchester United's opener or prevent Anthony Martial running through them to score an exquisite third.

Louis van Gaal had remarked that Martial's fee of [pounds sterling]36m was "ridiculous" for a teenager who had scored just 11 times for Monaco. Now, perhaps, it did not seem so extravagant, although the United manager was keen to play down the significance of it all.

He pointed out that Liverpool had been at full stretch when he brought Martial on and that he had managed other teenagers who had scored in their first game: "Patrick Kluivert, for example."

Kluivert's debut for Van Gaal's Ajax had been against a traditional rival - Feyenoord - and nine months later he would score the winner in the European Cup final. As United prepare to fly to Eindhoven to begin their Champions League campaign, Van Gaal might dream of history repeating itself.



RUNNING OUT OF TIME; Rodgers has signed 17 players in a year but his teams look lost and now patience is wearing thin

IT was a famous Barrymore (no, not Michael, come on now) who once suggested there were "so many beautiful women, so little time".

For Brendan Rodgers that quote from American actor John can be adapted to the less sexist, but rather more stark message of "so many players, so little time".

Time is indeed running out for a Liverpool manager who has signed 17 players over the last two summers. Somehow, he must mould them - or at least those who have not already been RODGERS' 17 dispatched from Anfield within those 12 months - into a team capable of finishing in the top four.

At Old Trafford, that prospect looked a distant, almost forlorn hope.

And more depressingly for him, many Liverpool fans are already beginning to say less a hope, more a pipe dream.

Against Manchester United, the Irishman's side looked exactly what they are, a collection of new faces in search of an identity.

And given the painful struggles of his incoherent, puzzled team against frankly average opponents, it seems that desperate search for an identity extends to Rodgers himself.

He was the first to admit it afterwards. His managerial career at Anfield has been far from a celebratory procession, or even an easy ride, but with him there was always a clear philosophy and identity. His side kept possession, passed the ball, were creative and relied on their ability to outscore opponents, no matter their defensive failings.

That philosophy seemed temporarily abandoned last season, but was rediscovered for a sufficiently long period - after defeat at Old Trafford - to at least save his job and give him one more season to try to confirm Liverpool's topfour credentials.

Yet here they looked a million miles away from a Rodgers side. They lacked ambition, lacked creativity, and lacked the ball - 27 per cent possession a third of the way through the first half told an embarrassing story.

It left them lumping aimless long balls in the vague direction of Christian Benteke.

That is not something you would ever say of a Rodgers side - or indeed, of a team which has Gary McAllister or Sean O'Driscoll among the coaching staff.

It appeared to trouble the manager greatly afterwards. "We have to be technically better, much better, in order to create the attacking momentum we want," said Rodgers, with almost a sigh.

"We need to keep possession for longer periods.

"We need to be much better in terms of showing the ball and wanting the ball. I like players to take initiative and be proactive in the game, and we didn't do that.

"You just get rid of the ball and it goes up to Christian and he's on his own.

"I thought he was excellent given the service he had, but unless you can keep the ball to connect and play much higher up the pitch, he becomes isolated."

Rodgers spoke about creativity returning with players such as Markovic Daniel Sturridge and Jordan Henderson coming back. Yet he has so little time, because next up is Norwich at home, and a contest Liverpool simply must win with games at Everton, Spurs, Chelsea and Manchester City on the horizon.

It is time for him to back himself and his beliefs. If there is a criticism of Rodgers, it is that he does not do that enough - as Lucas' continuing presence in the team when he was being edged out of the door all summer rather suggests.

At Old Trafford it is a pertinent point to make. It is impossible to imagine Sir Alex Ferguson deciding a player was not good enough any more and still playing him.

In management, you have to be ruthless in backing your judgement. Brendan Rodgers must now do that... if there is still time.

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No hope, no promise, no passion leaves clock ticking on Rodgers

For Brendan Rodgers, there was a painful sense of déjà vu.

There he was cutting a lonely figure on the Old Trafford touchline as the merciless chants of Manchester United fans rained down on him.

There was his Liverpool team on the wrong end of another chastening defeat at the hands of their arch rivals. However, there was one major difference between this setback and the Reds' previous failure down the East Lincs Road last December – the absence of hope. This time there were no crumbs of comfort for Kopites to cling to. There were no signs of promise amidst the wreckage of a damaging defeat. There was also nowhere for Rodgers to hide.

Liverpool got exactly what they deserved after serving up an error-strewn and largely passionless performance which defied belief considering the occasion.

So much for seeing a spirited response following the debacle against West Ham. All the travelling Kop got was more of the same.

Empty away end a damning verdict on passionless performance

When Rodgers embarked on the lonely walk down the touchline after the final whistle, he stopped to tell his players to go and applaud the away end.

He needn't have bothered considering just a few hundred of the 3,000 remained. Most had long since given up and headed for home cursing the Reds' glaring failings. The optimism generated by Liverpool's haul of seven points from the opening three games has long since evaporated and Rodgers already finds himself in the eye of a storm. It's unthinkable that the owners will reach for the panic button in mid-September. Having given him £80million to invest in the squad this summer and granted permission for him to overhaul his backroom staff, Fenway Sports Group aren't going to give him the bullet after two defeats.

But there is doubt that support for the manager among the club's fanbase is waning fast. That growing sense of unrest is not simply based on recent weeks but also the slide Rodgers oversaw in the spring.

Personnel may have changed but the buck stops with the manager

Many wanted him sacked back in May and nothing so far this term has changed their minds. Going back to when the rot set in at home to Manchester United in March, Liverpool have won just five out of 16 games in all competitions.

The personnel may have changed greatly with six new signings starting at Old Trafford, but worryingly results haven't and the buck stops with the manager. In pre-season Rodgers spoke about taking the club in a "new technical direction" but if this is the future then it's bleak.

A more conservative approach has resulted in Liverpool scoring just three goals in seven and a half hours of Premier League football this season and one of them should have been ruled out for offside.

Defensively, they look vulnerable and they are failing to function as an attacking unit. That's a recipe for disaster. Liverpool only flickered into life after Daley Blind had fired United in front early in the second half. Following Ander Herrera's penalty, Christian Benteke's spectacular strike halved the deficit but debutant Anthony Martial wrapped up the points for the hosts late on.

Rightly lauded for his tactical nous in transforming the Reds' fortunes last term, Rodgers will rightly be pilloried for his approach against Louis van Gaal's side.

It was a big day for Danny Ings on his full debut for the club. The former Burnley striker got the nod to replace the suspended Philippe Coutinho but rather than playing with Benteke through the middle he bizarrely found himself stuck out on the left flank. Benteke left isolated by formation of square pegs in round holes. Why Ings wasn't partnered with Benteke will remain a mystery. Instead there was a square peg in a round hole. With Ings and Roberto Firmino playing so deep, Rodgers' 4-3-3 was effectively 4-5-1 with Benteke horribly isolated.

The opening 45 minutes were woeful. Rarely has a contest between English football's two heavyweights been so insipid. There was barely a tackle, let alone any goalmouth entertainment.

Rather than being "re-energised" as Rodgers had predicted, Liverpool looked wracked by nerves and devoid of confidence.

They created problems for themselves by repeatedly giving the ball away cheaply. Simon Mignolet didn't help matters as his carelessness nearly gifted United the lead inside seven minutes. After completing a simple catch, the Belgian keeper inexplicably rolled the ball out against Juan Mata.

It dropped kindly into the path of Marouane Fellaini but with Mignolet stranded his lofted shot sailed over the bar. That error set the tone for the Reds' first-half performance as they handed United the initiative. The mistakes kept coming with Lucas Leiva particularly wasteful but he wasn't the only one with James Milner and Emre Can also struggling to stamp their authority on proceedings.

There was no composure, no leadership.

Liverpool failed to get any support to big frontman who battled tirelessly

Before the break, United weren't good enough to take advantage.

As an attacking force, Liverpool rarely threatened. Clyne stabbed a shot wide from the edge of the box but the recalled David de Gea remained untested.

No accusing fingers could be pointed in the direction of Benteke, who worked tirelessly to hold the ball up and bring team-mates into play.

But the big frontman was always heavily outnumbered and Liverpool failed to provide him with sufficient support.

Time after time, the ball was lumped long in his direction but Benteke was left to feed off scraps and it inevitably kept coming back.

The game had to improve and it was United who grabbed it by the scruff of the neck and broke the deadlock four minutes into the second half.

Ashley Young, who replaced Memphis Depay at the interval, was upended by Clyne and from the ensuing free-kick Liverpool were caught napping.

With the Reds expecting the ball to be swung into the six-yard box, Mata played it across the face of the penalty area to Blind, who struck an unstoppable left-footer beyond Mignolet. Finally, Liverpool awoke from their slumber and showed some ambition and urgency.

Chris Smalling denied Benteke before Ings' scuffed volley was clawed behind by De Gea. Momentum was briefly with the Reds. Blind hacked Ings' effort off the line and then somehow Firmino fluffed his lines at the back post.

Jordon Ibe replaced the ineffective Firmino but with 20 minutes to go Liverpool shot themselves in the foot. Young Joe Gomez showed his naivety as he rashly slid in on Herrera, who converted the resulting penalty.

Divock Origi made his debut in place of Ings and there was a glimmer of hope in the 84th minute when Benteke unleashed a stunning overhead kick into the top corner. But it was soon snuffed out as Martial embarrassed Skrtel and slotted home. The away end emptied. They had seen enough.

The number of empty seats by the time Michael Oliver put Liverpool out of their misery was damning. The damage can still be repaired but for Rodgers the clock is ticking.

MATCH FACTS

Manchester United: De Gea, Darmian, Smalling, Blind, Shaw, Carrick (Schneiderlin 72), Schweinsteiger, Mata (Martial 65), Herrera, Memphis (Young 45), Fellaini
 Subs: Romero, McNair, Rojo, Valencia.

Liverpool: Mignolet, Clyne, Skrtel, Lovren, Gomez, Lucas (Moreno 87), Can, Milner, Firmino (Ibe 65), Ings (Origi 72), Benteke.

Subs: Bogdan, Toure, Sakho, Rossiter

Referee: Michael Oliver Attendance: 75,347

Goals: Blind 49, Herrera 70, Benteke 84, Martial 86.

Bookings: Clyne, Lovren, Darmian, Milner,

Man of the match: Christian Benteke. Worked tirelessly and scored a spectacular consolation.

MANCHESTER EVENING NEWS

Analysis

Louis van Gaal responded to another stagnant half of football decisively. Ashley Young brought thrust and threat to United's attack, drew the foul from Nathaniel Clyne and Juan Mata provided the assist for Daley Blind's majestically struck opener.

Memphis received plenty of the ball against Clyne in the first-half and had the pace to bypass him but was, once more, erratic and a liability in possession. Van Gaal is particularly perturbed by 'unnecessary ball losses' and Memphis was culpable time and again. Experience trumped youth for United for the first, if not the third. Reds will argue Anthony Martial's £36m fee was justified just to leave Scousers crestfallen.

United were, generally, much more positive in the second-half and deliberately targeted Clyne. Mata, often overlooked by teammates in the first-half, was hardly involved again, as Michael Carrick and Bastian Schweinsteiger began to pass forwards, rather than sideways.

Key moment

Blind's clearance off the line was significant, but twice David de Gea dependably denied an opponent, and his stop from Danny Ings at 1-0 was especially crucial. Liverpool responded positively to Blind's opener and De Gea had to claw away Ings' goalbound effort to preserve United's lead.

Good day

Young. Van Gaal has an ambivalent record with interval changes, however Young has now improved United from the bench on three separate occasions.

Game at Arsenal, productive at Preston and instant against Liverpool, Young has often looked bright as a substitute and regained his place last season through energising United from the bench.

Bad day

Memphis. The Dutchman appears to be suffering from Naniitis, in that he starts as he means to go on. Memphis has begun five Premier League games badly and should now expect a demotion, at the expense of Young.

Bigger picture

The season is already in danger of becoming a one-horse race and United simply had to win to breach the chasm between City and the rest of the Premier League. They faced the worst Liverpool team to play at Old Trafford in five years and the stale first-half display was unacceptable. United, the team who fluttered their eyelashes at Muller, Benzema, Bale and Ronaldo in the summer, were dependent on the seasoned Ashley Young to offer impetus.

Date: 12 September 2015
 Opposition: Manchester United
 Competition: League

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12 September
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36m Martial is quick to repay United

The mood in the Manchester United dressing room was no longer flat - the word that Wayne Rooney and Michael Carrick had used to describe it to Louis van Gaal in the run-up to the nearest thing English football has to el clasico. The dark, wood-paneled walls would have reverberated to the easy talk and laughter that comes with decisive victory and a fabulous debut.

It was said of Van Gaal at Bayern Munich that it only mattered that nobody liked him when he stopped winning. There are several things that mark him out from his predecessor, David Moyes, and not least of it is the ability to win the big games - something Moyes never did.

Nevertheless, even in the final delirious few minutes when Anthony Martial's astonishing goal ensured Liverpool would not be rising from the canvas, nobody appeared to be singing "Louis van Gaal's red-and-white army", the tune he belted out during a bizarre, confessional pre-match press conference.

The one he gave in the aftermath of his third straight victory over Liverpool was infinitely more relaxed, although he confirmed that Rooney, who missed this game, would not be travelling to PSV Eindhoven for the start of the Champions League.

Had Martial not skipped through Liverpool's defence to settle this game with a goal that had more than a hint of Thierry Henry about it, this might have mattered. If you wanted an indictment of Manchester United's transfer policy since the departure of David Gill as chief executive, the team sheet would be exhibit A. The vast flow of money in and out of Old Trafford had produced Marouane Fellaini as centre forward.

Faced with the sight of Fellaini's vast mop of hair lumbering towards them, rather than the crewcut of Rooney, Liverpool's defence might have been expected to control the game. Instead, still carrying the scars from their capitulation to West Ham, they were, to use some Harry Redknapp terminology, bang average.

Matteo Darmian, fed beautifully by Michael Carrick, muscled past Joe Gomez on the Liverpool left and his low cross found Fellaini, whose first two touches carried the weight of a lorry. Not for the first time in a stultifying first half, you wondered what Rooney might have done.

Better defences than Liverpool's will have to worry about Martial, who had come to Old Trafford via the same expensive formula that had given United Radamel Falcao - selling club: Monaco, agent: Jorge Mendes. He seems better value.

His manager pointed out that he had come on at a good time. Liverpool had to press forward to drag the game back and there would be space to exploit. "It shall give him a boost but you cannot expect consistency from him," said Van Gaal. "You can expect it from Schweinsteiger or Michael Carrick but not from 19 or 20-year-olds."

Van Gaal liked United's first goal best because it was something perfected on the training pitches at Carrington during sessions that have drawn criticism from his players.

The shot from the edge of the area that finished in the top corner of the net beneath the Stretford End was perfect. It came from a very cleverly taken free-kick, played across the 18-yard line to Daley Blind.

With the Netherlands, managed by his father Danny, making a dreadful hash of reaching the European Championship, this has not been a good couple of weeks for the Blind family. This would have raised their spirits. Defensively, Blind was superb, clearing off the line as Liverpool rallied and containing Christian Benteke.

It was coincidence that it was Blind's half-clearance that Benteke met with a bicycle kick that produced one of the most spectacular goals Old Trafford has seen since Rooney did something similar in the Manchester derby.

However, by then Liverpool were two down after Joe Gomez had tripped Ander Herrera who drove his penalty past Simon Mignolet as emphatically as Blind had. It was only in the final 20 minutes when Benteke struck and David De Gea, on his long-anticipated return, was stretched as much as he had been when Liverpool lost here in December.

Van Gaal had refused to select him while Real Madrid were making their clumsy attempt to bring him back to Spain because his mind was not "properly focused". His mind could have been anywhere for an opening 45 minutes in which Liverpool contrived to give the ball away at virtually every opportunity.

Until a one-handed save from Danny Ings just short of the hour mark, he could have been selecting his 10 favourite Beatles tracks or wondering why nobody makes a decent musical these days. For the first hour, the football was the least of his concerns.

Manchester United: (4-2-3-1) De Gea; Darmian, Smalling, Blind, Shaw; Schweinsteiger, Carrick (Schneiderlin, 72); Depay (Young, h-t), Herrera, Mata (Martial, 65); Fellaini.

Liverpool: (4-3-3) Mignolet; Clyne, Skrtel, Lovren, Gomez; Can, Lucas Leiva, Milner; Benteke, Firmino (Ibe, 65), Ings (Origi, 74).

Referee: Michael Oliver

Man of the match: Blind (Manchester United)

Match rating: 6/10

The Sunday Telegraph

Martial lands at Old Trafford with a bang; Sport Barclays Premier League

Manchester United 3 Blind 49, Herrera 70 pen, Martial 86
 Liverpool 1 Benteke 84 Att: 75,347

Louis van Gaal pleaded for Anthony Martial to be given time to justify his PS36 million fee - the French teenager needed only 20 minutes of his Manchester United debut. Martial put the seal on United's victory over Liverpool with a virtuoso solo goal. Van Gaal's red army are not yet convincing they are on the march, but it was a sweet victory in the battle of the Premier League's fallen giants. Daley Blind and Ander Herrera had earlier put distance between United and a Liverpool team for whom an encouraging start to the season is now a distant memory, although Christian Benteke's volley - which momentarily offered hope - was the goal of the game. This was a contest that began in first gear and ended in fifth. In a much improved second half performance United upped the tempo. Blind struck a brilliant first on 49 minutes after a well-worked set-piece, before Herrera's 69th minute penalty seemed to make the game safe ahead of a frantic finale. Brendan Rodgers could point to opportunities in the second half, but the defects were plentiful in his team's performance. There may have been more disheartening times for these clubs to meet during the rich history of this fixture, but it is hard to recall one. Usually one is on the rise, or consolidating years of dominance, while the other is plotting a way back. This was more about both offering evidence of which is best equipped to escape mediocrity. For long periods of this turgid game, the more it seemed both were destined to remain in the mire. Both Van Gaal and Rodgers remarked on the weight of the past upon taking these jobs, and those loads have become heavier recently with the shadows of Ryan Giggs and Steven Gerrard's long-term managerial ambitions previewing the game. They were also missing their most creative players as they sought to wake their respective footballing beast from its slumber. Van Gaal's preparations were hindered by an injury to Wayne Rooney, offering Marouane Fellaini the chance to repeat the bullying of Martin Skrtel he engaged in at Anfield last season. Liverpool were without the suspended Philippe Coutinho - "the catalyst" as he has been christened by Rodgers. How Rooney and Coutinho were missed as the game searched for a pulse. Danny Ings made his first start for the Merseyside club since his summer move from Burnley. The absentees suggested the reintroduction of the swashbuckling style both sets of supporters craved would be delayed. As the first half played out amid wave after wave of ponderous insipidness, the temptation was to check if this really was a Manchester United versus Liverpool game. Only the names on the match ticket offered much of a reminder. There wasn't even a feisty tackle to get the supporters shouting at each other. The only rousing before half-time came when it was confirmed pre-match United could call upon their number one again, David De Gea's "mental issues" disappearing as soon as he was offered a PS60,000-a-week pay rise. Who needs club psychologists when the accountants can offer an instant cure? De Gea was given the kind of welcome that would have made the Prodigal Son blush, Old Trafford shaking when the Spaniard's name was read out over the tannoy.

It was the lack of a striker that was more prominent in the early stages, however, Fellaini's tendency to drop deep offering little outlet upfront for United. He joined in the five-a-sides in the centre-circle with Juan Mata and Ander Herrera, enabling Liverpool's centre-halves to mark thin air.

Simon Mignolet must have been feeling sorry for his compatriot's isolation on six minutes when he gifted the first sight of goal. The Belgian's throw bounced off Mata's heel straight to Fellaini, who chipped tamely over. It was a sign of the visitors' nervousness, but this would be the only threat in the first 45 minutes. Liverpool were just as lousy, the link between midfield and Benteke severed. On those occasions Rodgers's side had the chance to break, Emre Can and Roberto Firmino displayed the turn of pace of a crab. At that stage, De Gea must have been thinking he could have taken another day off. It was becoming the battle of the long ball to the big Belgians. Van Gaal had to act to find some penetration and opted to send on Ashley Young at half-time, withdrawing Memphis Depay. The impact was instant. Young immediately tested Nathaniel Clyne, the right back booked for checking the winger's run into the penalty area. From the free-kick, Mata found Blind unmarked on the edge of the Liverpool penalty area and he picked his spot into the top corner. United had finally started to play. Rodgers, who'd promised it was only a matter of time before his new look side acquainted itself with some kind of identity, was seeing nothing but familiar flaws.

But Liverpool should have been celebrating an equaliser on 56 minutes after hesitation between De Gea and Blind only for Firmino's cross to be intercepted before Benteke could tap-in. The Spaniard was then forced to save from Ings' volley, an awkward bounce compensating for the striker's lack of power in the strike. Firmino then somehow failed to convert from two yards when Blind's goalline clearance provoked a scramble. This was the Brazilian's last contribution after a poor performance. Jordan Ibe replaced him on 65 minutes, but Old Trafford also rose at the first sight of Martial. United doubted the lead after Gomez's lunge on Herrera, the mid-fielder picking himself up to convert the penalty, before Benteke's stunning volley on 84 minutes ensured a finale out of character to how the game had started. Martial had the last word with another striking individual goal, evading Clyne and Skrtel's challenges and picking his spot clinically past Mignolet.

Date: 12 September 2015
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THE SUNDAY TIMES

Martial's debut goal silences the critics

Though football is a team game, it is a little different for strikers, no matter what they tell you. This was horrible for Liverpool, dire for Brendan Rodgers, but Christian Benteke might just hang on to a DVD of the game.

Benteke scored perhaps the most stunning goal at Old Trafford since Wayne Rooney versus Manchester City in 2001, in similar fashion with a balletic overhead kick. But anything he could do, so could the kid. Winning any derby is not just a collective but cultural triumph, and yet United fans left talking about an individual: 19-year-old, PS36m, Anthony Martial.

After a first half so sterile you wondered if these old enemies had signed a ceasefire, the second period exploded in incident and goals, and when Benteke leapt and scissor-volleyed the ball home, Liverpool were back in the game at 2-1 with six minutes remaining.

Yet Martial needed just 115 further seconds to trump Benteke and quell any hope Rodgers, inset -- beleaguered, now -- had of escaping trouble. Off the bench for his debut, the young Frenchman collected Ashley Young's pass and ran at Martin Skrtel, his pace and control moving the Slovakian this way and that. Suddenly Martial was beyond his disorientated victim and sidefooting the calmest, Thierry Henry-esque finish beyond Simon Mignolet. A 3-1 result had seemed impossible after 45 opening minutes featuring just three shots on goal.

A half-time substitution changed things. Young replaced the subdued Memphis Depay and woke United out of their sloth. Within three minutes Young had won a free kick, which Juan Mata rolled across the face of the 18 yard box. Daley Blind, with a lovely left-footed shot, curled home for 1-0. Liverpool responded briefly but soon fell back to the mediocrity that defined their performance, Benteke's moment apart. Ander Herrera ran into the area and young Joe Gomez dived in, catching the Spaniard with his trailing leg. Herrera smashed the penalty in.

Amid it all, David de Gea returned to United's starting line-up to perform, mostly, with his usual excellence. With a new contract signed, the fans forgave him for thinking about leaving for Real Madrid, even applauding rapturously when he made a routine catch.

Derbies are a test in nearly every way and examined were not just of the selections and tactics of two under-pressure managers, but their ability to build and marshal a squad.

Wayne Rooney's hamstring injury exposed United's personnel flaw -- or so it seemed. Marouane Fellaini played as an ersatz No 9 and Martial, newly arrived and already labelled one for the future, was on the bench for Louis van Gaal.

But what of Rodgers' husbandry? With Philippe Coutinho suspended and Daniel Sturridge still unready, Liverpool were deeply mediocre in attacking and creative departments. Danny Ings made his first league start for the club as the most earnest but laboured left-winger in memory. Looking at those starting line-ups fans would have been forgiven for longing for the days when this fixture was about players such as Cristiano Ronaldo, Luis Suarez, Robin van Persie, Fernando Torres and Carlos Tevez.

In a grisly first half. United, when not playing aerially to Fellaini, tried to build the play with painstaking care -- a slow, plodding, possession. Normally it is the visiting side in a derby that endeavours to take the sting out of the game but the hosts did the job for them. Liverpool, arriving on the back of a 3-0 home defeat by West Ham, were given breathing space and an opportunity to ease themselves into the occasion. But their football proved worse. Sitting deep, with Lucas almost on top of his centre backs, and Ings and Roberto Firmino withdrawn, they looked to defend, play up to Benteke then pick up second balls: hardly the Liverpool -- or, we thought, Rodgers -- way.

Fellaini's shortcomings as a striker were soon evident. After six minutes Mignolet made a mistake, his throw-out striking Mata and arriving at his fellow Belgian's feet, but Fellaini's attempt to lob his compatriot was risible. Ings scurried, harried, hurried but, when subtlety was called for, passed straight to Chris Smalling and a rare good attacking position was lost.

After taking that earlier ovation for his catch, rustiness suddenly struck De Gea, who kicked out straight to Emre Can. He fed Nathaniel Clyne, who slid a pass to Firmino. The Brazilian squared for Benteke but Smalling -- superb for United again -- cleared.

De Gea recovered to tip away, with stunning agility, when Ings' volley bounced awkwardly and threatened to go in. Liverpool had responded well to going behind but discovered Blind was on his game at both ends. From a corner, Skrtel's header skimmed against Bastian Schweinsteiger and Blind hooked off the line before getting across to cover the far post and prevent Firmino from tapping in.

Benteke headed Milner's cut-back pass over the bar before briefly threatening to rescue this game for Liverpool with his moment of magic.

Manchester United: De Gea 7, Darmian 7, Smalling 8, Blind 8, Shaw 7, Carrick 6 (Schneiderlin 72min, 5), Schweinsteiger 7, Mata 5 (Martial 65min, 7), Herrera 7, Depay 4 (Young h-t, 7), Fellaini 5.

Liverpool: Mignolet 6, Clyne 6, Skrtel 5, Lovren 6, Gomez 5, Can 6, Lucas (Moreno 87min, 4), Milner 5, Ings 5 (Origi 74min, 6), Benteke 7, Firmino 5 (Ibe 65min, 6)

The Observer

Date: 12 September 2015
 Opposition: Manchester United
 Competition: League

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Manchester United's £36m teenager Anthony Martial marked his debut in sensational fashion with a stunning goal as Liverpool were beaten at Old Trafford. Christian Benteke's equally stunning overhead kick had thrown Liverpool a lifeline after Daley Blind's crisp finish and Ander Herrera's penalty had put Louis van Gaal's side in control. It was the signal for Martial, the 19-year-old signed from Monaco on deadline day, to make himself an instant hero after coming on as a second-half substitute, slaloming between Nathaniel Clyne and Martin Skrtel before a composed finish in front of the Stretford End. United keeper David de Gea, making his first appearance of the season after signing a new four-year contract following the breakdown of his move to Real Madrid, demonstrated his worth with fine saves from Danny Ings and Jordan Ibe. Liverpool, however, were uncharacteristically tame for a fixture against their fierce rivals and the win lifts United into second place in the Premier League table behind Manchester City.

An Old Trafford hero is born
 Old Trafford gave a rousing welcome to the world's most expensive teenager when Martial replaced Juan Mata after 65 minutes - and he electrified the "Theatre Of Dreams" 21 minutes later with a moment of sheer brilliance.

Martial had barely touched the ball but came alive with a run that took him between Clyne and Skrtel, the latter left twisting and turning hopelessly in the youngster's wake as he tucked a composed low finish past Liverpool keeper Simon Mignolet.

It was the impetuosity of youth but also the sign of quality. The comparisons have been made with fellow countryman Thierry Henry - and it was a goal the great man would have been happy to claim as his own.

Pressure mounting on Rodgers?

It seems ludicrous to talk in such terms after only five league games but Liverpool's promising start has been overshadowed by two poor performances in defeat against West Ham United and now Manchester United.

Even in times of struggle under manager Brendan Rodgers, his teams have been characterised by a boldness and determination to attack and be creative.

Here Liverpool effectively stood behind the door, timid and barely making a tackle of any meaning, until Blind put United ahead early in the second half.

It was all a far cry from March 2014 when Liverpool came here with Luis Suarez, Raheem Sterling, Daniel Sturridge and Steven Gerrard in their line-up and blew United away 3-0, before almost winning the title.

Tough start hurting Liverpool

Rodgers knew he had to make a fast start after being handed the backing of owners Fenway Sports Group this summer following such a poor season last time out - and in his defence, the fixture list has not been his friend by handing Liverpool a tough early schedule. He was also without influential figures here, such as captain Jordan Henderson and the suspended Philippe Coutinho, while also attempting to bed new signings into his team.

Christian Benteke showed his quality at £32.5m but Roberto Firmino, a £29m capture from Hoffenheim, has yet to come anywhere near the pace of the Premier League.

Sadly for Rodgers, he was always going to be under close scrutiny and a glance at social media throughout the game saw plenty of Liverpool fans making reference to the currently unemployed former Borussia Dortmund coach Jurgen Klopp.

Surely five league games in is too soon for owners to start thinking about pulling the plug on a manager they supported heavily in the transfer market this summer - but the pressure to get results is clear with the Anfield club without a victory in three, having won their opening two games.

David de Gea shows his class

Manchester United goalkeeper David de Gea got a predictably rapturous reception as he made his first appearance of the season after signing a new four-year contract following the breakdown of his proposed move to Real Madrid.

And he showed his class with crucial saves from Danny Ings and Jordan Ibe, although one piece of misplaced footwork almost caused problems for United. De Gea gives United real presence, quality and a formidable barrier in goal.

This has been a good end to the week for United and Van Gaal. They have one of the world's best keepers back and a victory over Liverpool is never bad for Old Trafford morale.

Man of the match: Daley Blind

Blind was effective at both ends, showing composure on the ball in defence and then, with the game needing a spark, flashed in a superb finish from a well worked free-kick routine with Juan Mata to set Manchester United on the path to victory.

Post match reaction

Manchester United boss Louis Van Gaal: When you make a goal like Anthony you cannot wish for more, I think. A lot of players have made a debut and scored with me so it's a good signal.

"We played better in the first half. We had far more control, but we didn't create much, that is why I changed Memphis - to improve that last pass."

Liverpool manager Brendan Rodgers: "I thought in the first half we defended well but had nowhere near enough quality and composure on the ball.

"We were disappointed with a couple of the goals. I never thought the free kick was a free kick. Penalty, I think Herrera has done well, young Joe Gomez will learn he has to stay on his feet."

The stats you need to know

Manchester United have lost just one of their previous 11 leagues games at Old Trafford. Liverpool have only won one of their last eight away games in the Premier League.

De Gea has not kept a clean sheet in any of his last eight full 90-minute appearances in the Premier League.

Mata has scored or assisted three of the four normal Premier League goals United have scored this season.

Martial scored with his first ever shot in the Premier League.

Benteke has scored in his last three Premier League appearances against Manchester United, but has lost two and drawn one of those three games.

Liverpool and Manchester United are the only Premier League sides to play today and not to hit a shot on target in the first half.

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Full time Match ends, Manchester United 3, Liverpool 1.
 90:00+4:03 Full time Second Half ends, Manchester United 3, Liverpool 1.
 87:47 Foul by Marouane Fellaini (Manchester United).
 87:47 Dejan Lovren (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 87:42 Substitution, Liverpool. Alberto Moreno replaces Lucas Leiva.
 85:43 Goal scored Goal! Goal! Manchester United 3, Liverpool 1. Anthony Martial (Manchester United right footed shot from the centre of the box to the bottom right corner. Assisted by Ashley Young.
 83:48 Goal scored Goal! Goal! Manchester United 2, Liverpool 1. Christian Benteke (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box to the centre of the goal following a corner.
 82:59 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by David de Gea.
 82:57 Attempt saved. Jordan Ibe (Liverpool left footed shot from the right side of the box is saved in the top left corner. Assisted by Divock Origi.
 81:50 Anthony Martial (Manchester United wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 81:50 Foul by Dejan Lovren (Liverpool).
 78:44 Attempt blocked. Marouane Fellaini (Manchester United left footed shot from outside the box is blocked.
 75:19 Attempt missed. Christian Benteke (Liverpool header from the centre of the box is too high. Assisted by James Milner with a cross.
 74:17 Booking James Milner (Liverpool is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.
 74:11 Ashley Young (Manchester United wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 74:11 Foul by James Milner (Liverpool).
 73:31 Substitution, Liverpool. Divock Origi replaces Danny Ings.
 72:50 Attempt missed. James Milner (Liverpool right footed shot from long range on the left is high and wide to the left from a direct free kick.
 72:11 Booking Matteo Darmian (Manchester United is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.
 72:06 Foul by Matteo Darmian (Manchester United).
 72:06 Danny Ings (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing.
 71:51 Substitution, Manchester United. Morgan Schneiderlin replaces Michael Carrick.
 69:46 Goal scored Goal! Goal! Manchester United 2, Liverpool 0. Ander Herrera (Manchester United converts the penalty with a right footed shot to the high centre of the goal.
 69:00 Penalty Manchester United. Ander Herrera draws a foul in the penalty area.
 69:00 Penalty conceded by Joseph Gomez (Liverpool after a foul in the penalty area.
 66:19 Delay in match Ashley Young (Manchester United because of an injury.
 66:19 Delay over. They are ready to continue.
 64:58 Substitution, Manchester United. Anthony Martial replaces Juan Mata.
 64:55 Substitution, Liverpool. Jordan Ibe replaces Roberto Firmino.
 63:54 Attempt blocked. Danny Ings (Liverpool header from very close range is blocked. Assisted by Martin Skrtel.
 63:52 Attempt blocked. Martin Skrtel (Liverpool header from very close range is blocked. Assisted by James Milner with a cross.
 63:19 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Matteo Darmian.
 60:58 Attempt missed. Ashley Young (Manchester United right footed shot from outside the box is too high from a direct free kick.
 59:54 Marouane Fellaini (Manchester United wins a free kick in the attacking half.
 59:54 Foul by Dejan Lovren (Liverpool).
 56:24 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by David de Gea.
 56:22 Attempt saved. Danny Ings (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the top left corner. Assisted by Dejan Lovren with a headed pass.
 55:44 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Michael Carrick.
 53:12 Offside, Manchester United. Ashley Young tries a through ball, but Juan Mata is caught offside.
 50:10 Corner, Manchester United. Conceded by Martin Skrtel.
 49:32 Attempt blocked. Ashley Young (Manchester United right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Matteo Darmian.
 48:19 Goal scored Goal! Goal! Manchester United 1, Liverpool 0. Daley Blind (Manchester United left footed shot from the centre of the box to the top left corner. Assisted by Juan Mata following a set piece situation.
 47:38 Booking Nathaniel Clyne (Liverpool is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.
 47:27 Ashley Young (Manchester United wins a free kick on the left wing.
 47:27 Foul by Nathaniel Clyne (Liverpool).
 45:35 Attempt blocked. Ashley Young (Manchester United right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Marouane Fellaini.
 45:00 Second Half begins Manchester United 0, Liverpool 0.
 45:00 Substitution, Manchester United. Ashley Young replaces Memphis Depay.
 45:00+1:01 Half time First Half ends, Manchester United 0, Liverpool 0.
 43:49 Ander Herrera (Manchester United wins a free kick in the attacking half.
 43:49 Foul by Lucas Leiva (Liverpool).
 34:40 Offside, Liverpool. Emre Can tries a through ball, but Christian Benteke is caught offside.
 33:33 Bastian Schweinsteiger (Manchester United wins a free kick on the left wing.
 33:33 Foul by Christian Benteke (Liverpool).
 31:04 Offside, Liverpool. Nathaniel Clyne tries a through ball, but Danny Ings is caught offside.
 27:52 Ander Herrera (Manchester United wins a free kick on the right wing.
 27:52 Foul by Lucas Leiva (Liverpool).
 24:16 Attempt missed. Memphis Depay (Manchester United right footed shot from outside the box misses to the right. Assisted by Michael Carrick following a set piece situation.
 24:04 Memphis Depay (Manchester United wins a free kick on the left wing.
 24:04 Foul by Lucas Leiva (Liverpool).
 22:55 Matteo Darmian (Manchester United wins a free kick in the defensive half.

22:55 Foul by Christian Benteke (Liverpool).
 21:33 Corner, Manchester United. Conceded by Martin Skrtel.
 20:34 Offside, Manchester United. Luke Shaw tries a through ball, but Marouane Fellaini is caught offside.
 18:48 Attempt missed. Nathaniel Clyne (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box misses to the right.
 15:34 Corner, Manchester United. Conceded by Dejan Lovren.
 14:49 Corner, Manchester United. Conceded by Nathaniel Clyne.
 13:59 Foul by Daley Blind (Manchester United).
 13:59 Christian Benteke (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 13:13 Michael Carrick (Manchester United wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 13:13 Foul by Danny Ings (Liverpool).
 11:46 Foul by Matteo Darmian (Manchester United).
 11:46 Danny Ings (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 8:43 Foul by Marouane Fellaini (Manchester United).
 8:43 Dejan Lovren (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 6:43 Attempt missed. Marouane Fellaini (Manchester United right footed shot from outside the box is too high. Assisted by Juan Mata.
 3:53 Foul by Chris Smalling (Manchester United).
 3:53 Christian Benteke (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing.
 0:00 First Half begins.
 0:00 Lineups are announced and players are warming up.