Date: 26 September 2015
Opposition: Aston Villa
Competition: League

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

26 September 2015

THE TIMES

Rodgers vexed by exit 'frenzy'

Liverpool 3
Milner 2, Sturridge 59, 67
Aston Villa 2
Gestede 66, 71 2
Referee: J Moss Att: 44,228

Short of replacing You'll Never Walk Alone with Queen's Under Pressure, it is hard to think of another way that the mood at Anfield could have been portrayed than the dark post-match mutterings of Brendan Rodgers. The Liverpool manager, not one predisposed to conspiracy theories, can suddenly sense a plot to unseat him. Not only are there shadows in the darkness, there is a feeding "frenzy" that he does not expect to end without his removal.

There are several ways of looking at this. The first is that Rodgers is showing the kind of strain that consumed some of his predecessors. Despairing cries of "Infamy, infamy", a la Kenneth Williams in Carry On Cleo, do little but highlight the pressure that he is under. Not all who claim conspiracies are wrong, though. Without being willing to name those who he believes are plotting against him, Rodgers left his claims hanging. All we know for certain is that there is an increasing number of people drawn from various quarters -- Liverpool supporters, former players, the traditional media, social media -- who now feel sufficiently empowered by Liverpool's poor form since last March to speak of their belief that managerial change is needed.

But as James Milner and Tim Sherwood pointed out after Liverpool had stopped the rot with a 3-2 win over Aston Villa, this is the modern world. "Every manager is under pressure; that's the nature of the job now," Sherwood said. "It's not the same job as it was ten or 12 years ago.

"Everyone's got their own opinions, faceless people out there, you've got social media, you've got more pundits than players and they've all got their opinions so as a manager you know that you're going to be under pressure. You just get on with it."

"You have to stick together and that is the way football is now -- social media and Sky Sports apps, and everything like that. There is so much scrutiny," Milner agreed. "There are a lot of things being said. When things are going well it gets blown out of context and the same when it is bad.

But it is important that we stick together."

Rodgers believes that the scrutiny has taken a sinister turn. "There has been a frenzy to get me out of here. There is no question about that," he said. "Whether that's a Liverpool hysteria or big-club hysteria I am not so sure. The scrutiny here is obviously greater, for me, than any club. But it is a huge club and as a manager you know that and deal with it."

On Saturday, he dealt with it in the best way -- by overseeing a win. It may not have been convincing, as Liverpool yielded two goals to Rudy Gestede despite coming under minimal pressure in a game they should have won at a canter, but it was a step in the right direction and it afforded Rodgers some respite from the undue scrutiny that he feels he is coming under.

More important, from his point of view, the game witnessed the return of the kind of intricate attacking play that has been a feature of Rodgers's teams since he became manager.

Despite still shaking off ring rust caused by a five-month absence, Daniel Sturridge's performance vindicated Rodgers's claim that Liverpool would be galvanised by his return. It was no coincidence that Liverpool's first three-goal haul since February occurred with Sturridge back in the team and, in terms of finishing, showing signs of getting back to his best. The forward's two goals, a left-footed volley and a precise right-footed shot into the bottom corner after a clever one-two with Philippe Coutinho, demonstrated what Rodgers and Liverpool have been missing.

Of almost equal importance was the return of something that had been lost in an increasingly desperate and haphazard search for a winning formula -- Rodgers's ability to affect things in the final third through tactical adjustments. During Liverpool's title challenge of 2013-14, that was one of the most eye-catching features, but it had been conspicuous by its absence over the past 12 months. Against Villa, he dropped Coutinho deeper to control play and deployed James Milner in a more advanced position. The latter scored his first Liverpool goal after 66 seconds and the pair contributed to a much-improved performance.

"It's not about proving people wrong," Rodgers said. "I think I have shown in the early stages of my management -- without being arrogant -- that with a talented group of players I can compete at the top end of the league. There are very short memories in football. It seems the focus has not been on what's gone on and what we've been missing, but more about getting me out of the club. That's sad. I am the same man who nearly won us the league, but better. If you give me the tools I'll do the work."

RATINGS Liverpool (3-4-1-2): S Mignolet 5 -- E Can 6, M Skrtel 6, M Sakho 5 -- N Clyne 6, L Leiva 8, J Milner 7, P Coutinho 7, A Moreno 6 -- D Sturridge 8 (sub: J Allen, 90min), D Ings 7. Substitutes not used: A Bogdan, K Toure, J Gomez, A Lallana, D Origi, J Ibe. Aston Villa (4-5-1): B Guzan 6 -- A Hutton 6, M Richards 6, J Lescott 6, J Amavi 7 -- S Sinclair 5, A Westwood 6, C Sanchez 5 (sub: J Veretout, 59 5), I Gana 6, J Grealish 5 (sub: A Traore, 69) -- R Gestede 7. Substitutes not used: M Bunn, C Clark, L Bacuna, J Ayew, C Gil.

theguardian

Liverpool's Brendan Rodgers convinced of his style of management

Brendan Rodgers is the same but different. As his team have got worse, he has got better. There were contradictions in the Northern Irishman's arguments but conviction to his sentiments. The man who won the Manager of the Year award 16 months ago believes it would be an injustice if he secures an unwanted victory in the sack race now. "I am the same guy who nearly won us the league, but better," he said.

It is not so much Rodgers Mk2 as new improved Brendan, he suggested. Certainly his self-belief remains intact. A first win in seven games prompted Rodgers, in the manner of his best team, to launch a swift counterattack. Undaunted by a recent record showing seven defeats and only 16 goals in Liverpool's last 16 league games, he presented his case for continued employment with idiosyncratic eloquence.

"I think I have shown in the early stages of my management – without being arrogant – that with a talented group of players I can compete at the top end of the league. I know how to manage top players. If you give me the tools, I'll do the work." The inference, for the majority of the Liverpool side who were at Anfield during last season's slump to sixth place, was damning, but Rodgers has a capacity to produce inadvertently revealing comments.

In any case, a performance of two halves, featuring attacking flair and defensive frailties, highlighted recurring themes in his reign. High-class teams are constructed on solid foundations; Rodgers' sides seem to be built on sand. Further evidence of Simon Mignolet's inadequacies was compounded by confusion and individual errors among his back three. This was old, unimproved Liverpool but at least they could savour a throwback to happier days.

The sight of Daniel Sturridge scoring twice for the first time since the 4-3 win over Swansea that ignited 2014's title charge prompted thoughts of a surge characterised by high-octane, high-risk encounters. "There are very short memories in football," Rodgers said. "The team was eighth when I got here. We built a team to excite people throughout European football, that should have won the league."

Yet it remains a moot point if Rodgers or Luis Suárez was the catalyst. If Liverpool are yet to recover from the striker's sale, at least Danny Ings shares the Uruguayan's energetic ethos, although not his talent. Sturridge enjoyed the presence of an irrepressible sidekick, who was ever willing to exhaust defenders. Sturridge, like the classy Philippe Coutinho, meets Rodgers' definition of a "top player" who has benefited from his tutelage. Yet with Jordan Henderson injured and Steven Gerrard, Raheem Sterling and Suárez gone, they are the sole survivors of the forward-thinking six who almost swept Liverpool to glory.

"All the good work gets forgotten," said Rodgers. "That's how it works. It seems the focus has not been on what's gone on and what we've been missing, but more about getting me out of the club. That's sad." His contention is that he is not paranoid, but that unspecified people are out to get him. "There has been a frenzy, there is no doubt about that, to get me out of here," he added. "Whether that's a Liverpool hysteria or big-club hysteria, I am not so sure."

His Aston Villa counterpart, Tim Sherwood, could sympathise. "Every manager is under pressure; that's the nature of the job now," he said and, after only procuring one point from his last six games, he should be able to testify to the difficulties. "It's not the same job as it was 10 or 12 years ago. Everyone's got their own opinions: faceless people out there, you've got social media, you've got more pundits than players." Sherwood has experience of being both.

The greater problem for Rodgers is not outsiders' opinions but the availability of outstanding managers. Carlo Ancelotti was touted as a possible successor. The normally loquacious Rodgers has not felt the need to talk to a triple Champions League-winning manager. "No. If I spoke to every manager we're linked with, I'd speak to 13 managers," he said. "I'd be busy ringing."

He has enough other issues to occupy his time. A manager who has spent £205m on new players in the past two summers has bought himself a little more time but Sunday's Merseyside derby, more than the availability of Ancelotti and Jürgen Klopp, looms large. Rather than the managerial giants, Rodgers' immediate concern should be his defenders' enduring inability to cope with sizeable strikers. Everton's Romelu Lukaku ought to be buoyed by the way Rudy Gestede terrorised Liverpool's timid defence. "We've got one of the biggest threats in the air in the Premier League and that's our best avenue to score goals," said Sherwood after Gestede struck twice. When he captained Blackburn, Sherwood's team-mates included the division's record scorer, Alan Shearer. It has not prompted him to ask his summer signing to study DVDs of Shearer. "They're all too young to remember him," he said.

Man of the match James Milner (Liverpool)

Compiled by Graeme Riley

Date: 26 September 2015
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26 September 2015

The Mail

Rodgers: It's been a frenzy to get me out

LIVERPOOL 3
ASTON VILLA 2

BRENDAN Rodgers would not name names but that did not dilute his point. Rather than slipping away quietly at the end of a difficult week, his message was clear.

Having been pilloried for much of the past month, with his work being dissected on a daily basis, Liverpool's manager felt the time was right to remind people of his abilities and, more than anything, highlight the campaign he feels is being waged against him.

'There has been a frenzy, there is no doubt about it, to get me out of here,' said Rodgers. 'There is no question about that. Whether that's a Liverpool hysteria or big club hysteria I am not so sure. The scrutiny here is obviously greater, for me, than any club.

'But it is a huge club. As a manager you know that and deal with it. It's not about proving people wrong. I think I've shown in the early stages of my management -- without being arrogant -- that with a talented group of players I can compete at the top end.

'There are very short memories in football. The team was eighth when I got here. We built a team to excite people throughout European football that should have won the league. Then all the good work gets forgotten. The focus has not been on what we have missed but to get me out of the club.'

It was some claim, and, given he has had to contend with frequent stories about Jurgen Klopp and Carlo Ancelotti being linked with his position, he was well within his rights to make it. But a frenzy? There have been no banners on the Kop asking for his removal, no chants asking for him to go. Yes, some former players -- notably Mark Lawrenson -- have said a change should be made but others, like John Barnes, have lent their support.

Rodgers' point about being deprived of key players is also valid, particularly when you see the difference a fit Daniel Sturridge, scorer of two wonderful goals, made here. He is wrong, though, if he thinks the criticism has come in isolation. There have been a number of results over the past 12 months that have ensured his future has been the subject of much discussion and it will take a sequence of sustained improvement to make the noise subside.

With a trip to Goodison Park next, the focus on Rodgers and Liverpool will not go away but if this outpouring is a sign that he has the bit between the teeth, then it will have served a purpose.

'I'm fine,' he insisted. 'You know what comes from leadership and being a manager and the scrutiny. I've never got too carried away when we've won, and not too disappointed when we lost. I have a hunger to succeed. There have been a lot of things going against us, but we stick together.'

After James Milner opened the scoring with just over a minute gone it should have been a cruise but Liverpool's brittle state allowed Villa to get back into the game with two goals from Rudy Gestede, the second a fine header.

'Collectively we're not gelling,' said Villa manager Tim Sherwood. 'We're doing it in spasms and it's not good enough.'

LIVERPOOL (3-4-1-2): Mignolet 5; Can 6.5, Skrtel 6, Sakho 6; Clyne 7, Lucas 7.5, Milner 7, Moreno 7; Coutinho 6.5; Ings 7.5, Sturridge 8 (Allen 90min). Subs not used: Bogdan, Toure, Gomez, Lallana, Origi, Ibe. Scorers: Milner 2, Sturridge 58, 66.

ASTON VILLA (4-5-1): Guzan 5; Hutton 6, Richards 5, Lescott 6, Amavi 7; Sinclair 5, Sanchez 7 (Vertout 60, 6), Grealish 5 (Traore 69, 6), Westwood 5, Gana 5; Gestede 7.5. Subs not used: Bunn, Clark, Bacuna, Ayew, Gil. Scorer: Gestede 65, 70. Man of the match: Daniel Sturridge. Referee: Jon Moss 7.

The Daily Telegraph

Sturridge shines brightly as manager's saviour

Liverpool 3
Milner 2, Sturridge 59, 67
Aston Villa 2
Gestede 66, 71
Att: 44,228

There are times when you wonder if Stephen King's novel The Shining was inspired by an Anfield trip. A caretaker is handed the keys to a grand institute and succumbs to neurosis and paranoia after seeing ghosts in every corridor. It sounds like the timeline of the past five Liverpool managers.

Following this 3-2 win, Brendan Rodgers suggested that he was the victim of a campaign to oust him - a conspiracy overseen by unnamed, shadowy forces. This script is written with a quill and has been recited almost word for word by some of his predecessors. One wonders if Rodgers found it hidden in a cobwebbed box buried under the floorboards of his office.

The remarks evoked images of Gerard Houllier compiling lists of former Liverpool players in the media who, he felt, were not empathising with the peculiar demands upon him.

Rodgers will be mocked by some and have the sympathy of others given the pressure he is under. Whatever the merits or otherwise of his observations, the evidence is compelling that the idiosyncrasies of this particular job temporarily deprive intelligent, lucid managers of perspective.

The Northern Irishman is entitled to feel besieged by his perceived lack of support - and he is right that plenty did not like the cut of his jib when he was winning so they were never going to tolerate a poor run - but it makes no dif-ference to his job security. No Liverpool manager has been sacked for anything other than results. Never. This club hate sacking managers.

Plenty like to say they were persecuted - over-exaggerating the impact of negative commentary - but that is just background noise, even if it is often screeching. The 'hysteria' is fed by deterioration. Play well, win and no crowd deifies its boss like the Kop. Lose and the effigy is in danger of being burnt.

We should not be distracted by claims of 'unrealistic expectations' at Anfield and instead focus on the real source of the critiques. The ultimate ambition of Liverpool to win the Premier League and add to those five European Cups is extreme given the competition, but with the greatest respect the primary causes of disillusionment were a 1-0 defeat by a rancid Hull City team; 3-1 home defeat against Crystal Palace; 6-1 defeat at Stoke City; 3-0 home defeat against West Ham United; and the most limp FA Cup semi-final display in the club's history.

If John W Henry makes a change it will have nothing to do with the yahoos stalking him and his wife on Twitter, nor will he care for the thoughts of any ex-player or journalist. The Liverpool owner, like the FSG president Michael Gordon, is a stats man. It is the numbers game that will decide Rodgers's short-term and long-term fate.

Far more pertinent in Rodgers's quest for safety is the return of the player capable of giving the data a polish. In Daniel Sturridge, Liverpool possess a world-class footballer. His two goals were a joy: clinical, beautiful and so reassuring for a team that cannot score more than once in a game without him.

For the last 45 minutes on Saturday, this was the Liverpool of two seasons ago - marvellous in attack and hopeless at the back, buckling under the mildest pressure. Aston Villa are terrible but scored twice, and because of that - if he really wanted to get this off his chest - it might have been wiser for Rodgers to pause until after next weekend's Merseyside derby before picking up the axe and swinging at those spooking him.

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THE INDEPENDENT

'Frenzy' to remove Rodgers fuelled by former players

Speaking in a room containing portraits of his predecessors as Liverpool manager, Brendan Rodgers claimed the pressures at Anfield surpassed that of any other Premier League club.

Had Liverpool not beaten Aston Villa, the demands for his removal after more than three years at the helm might have become unanswerable. Saturday's 3-2 victory has given Rodgers a breathing space before Sunday's Merseyside derby but he acknowledged there are some at the club who want him removed.

He refused to name names, but it is widely understood that he is referring to media pundits Graeme Souness, Jamie Carragher and Mark Lawrenson, who have all openly questioned his tactics.

"There has been a frenzy to get me out of here," moaned Rodgers. "There is no question about that. Whether that is Liverpool hysteria or a big-club hysteria, I am not so sure. The scrutiny here is, to me, greater than any other club. As a manager you know that and have to deal with it."

In the room were portraits of Bob Paisley, Joe Fagan and Kenny Dalglish, for whom pressure was taking Liverpool to league titles and European Cups.

There was also a portrait of G[c]rard Houllier, who also resented the influence former Liverpoolplayers had in the media.

Rodgers claimed that his achievement in taking Liverpool to within touching distance of the Premier League title last year has been forgotten amid the scramble to get him out. "I have shown in the early stages of my management that - without being arrogant - with a talented group of players I can compete at the top end of the league.

"There are some very short memories in football and we built and produced a team to excite people throughout Europe and that should have won the league. It didn't, but nobody expected us to be anywhere near the top four."

The fact remains that, under Rodgers, Liverpool who carry the fifth-highest wage bill in the Premier League, have underperformed in two of his three seasons, and far from "exciting Europe" in the Champions League, Liverpool disappeared without trace. However, Rodgers argued that, from Luis Suarez to Raheem Sterling and Steven Gerrard, he has consistently lost leading players.

"I know how to manage top players but when those players are not available and you have to piece it all back together, that takes time. Then, all the good work gets forgotten.

"That is sad. I am the same man who nearly won us the league but better. If you give me the tools, I will do the work."

DAILY Mirror

Milner sums up the Kop player power.. protecting their under-fire boss

LIVERPOOL 3
Milner 2 Sturridge 59, 67
ASTON VILLA 2
Gestede 66, 71

DAVID ANDERSON heard Anfield skipper James Milner back his boss, appeal for calm and tip his team to fight for the title again

JAMES MILNER did a lot of carrying on Saturday.

After helping lift Liverpool to a welcome victory, he cradled his 13-month old daughter in his arms as he left Anfield.

She was wearing a Liverpool shirt, an indicator of how seriously Milner takes his job as acting captain.

And in another sign of his new responsibility, he stopped to defend the team and under-fire boss Brendan Rodgers, joking he couldn't stand for long because "she's heavy!" The England midfielder called for perspective, pointing out his previous club have lost more matches and the Reds are just five points off top spot.

"There are people giving us criticism from outside the club, but I think Manchester City have lost more games than us this season," he said.

"When things are going well, it gets blown out of context and the same when it's bad. Someone has told us that we are five points off the top.

"I've been really impressed with the manager. Preparation is second to none. We go into every game with a game plan. Training is very good and any problems as a player you can see on the pitch, he has seen them as well.

"A lot of things that have been said are disappointing and frustrating really because you saw how close they went to winning the league a couple of years ago and then with the players that have left the club, it's going to take time to get back to that point.

"With patience he has shown he's a top-class manager and with the players we have, we can get to where we want to be."

Daniel Sturridge's clinical finishes for his first goals since March have restored Liverpool's cutting edge and Milner says their diverse striking options are a big positive.

"Him and Danny Ings make great runs," he said. "We have some great options. Christian Benteke is injured unfortunately, but I think the mix of strikers we've got is very good."

However, putting the glass halfempty argument, it was another patchy display and Liverpool almost snatched a draw from the jaws of victory.

Yes, Milner scored and produced his best performance in a red shirt, while Sturridge is back and Lucas was dominant, but there are still areas of concern. Liverpool remain suspect in defence, particularly under aerial balls, despite Rodgers switching to three at the back.

Still, Rodgers felt sufficiently emboldened to take a swipe at his critics among Liverpool's former players, accusing them of trying to get him the sack.

"There has been a frenzy to get me out of here," he said. "There's no question about that."

LIVERPOOL: Mignolet 6, Can 6, Skrtel 6, Sakho 6, Clyne 7, Lucas 8, Milner 8, Moreno 7, Coutinho 7, Sturridge 8 (Allen 90), Ings 6.

ASTON VILLA: Guzan 8, Hutton 6, Richards 5, Lescott 5, Amavi 7, Sinclair 6, Sanchez 5 (Veretout 60, 6), Westwood 6, Gana 5, Grealish 4 (Traore 69, 5), Gestede 8. REF: Jon Moss ATT: 44,228

MOTM DANIEL STURRIDGE

Compiled by Graeme Riley

Date: 26 September 2015
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26 September 2015

LIVERPOOL ECHO

Daniel Sturridge turns back the clock to earn Brendan Rodgers respite
In Brendan Rodgers' hour of need, Daniel Sturridge turned back the clock to give theLiverpool FC manager some cherished breathing space.
After an injury plagued 12 months, the Reds striker signalled his intention to make up for lost time in style with a classy second-half double to secure a morale-boosting victory over Aston Villa. When Sturridge was substituted deep into stoppage time, all four sides of Anfield arose to salute Liverpool's match-winner.
There was a warm handshake and a pat on the back from Rodgers, who knew he was indebted to the contribution of the England international as the immense pressure on his shoulders eased slightly. Sturridge provided the injection of class in the final third that Liverpool have been so sadly lacking as he put Tim Sherwood's side to the sword. This was the marksman who tormented top-flight defences during the title challenging campaign of 2013/14 before his body repeatedly failed him. Liverpool believe the hip operation he underwent back in May has solved his catalogue of ailments and there's no doubt that he needs to be wrapped in cotton wool. His importance to the club is huge.
Just as his absence last term was one of the key reasons behind Liverpool's alarming decline, so his presence this term has the potential to transform the club's season and rescue Rodgers' Anfield reign.
Crisis? What crisis? Was the bullish response from the manager after a first league victory in five attempts lifted Liverpool up to seventh place and within two points of the Champions League spot they covet.
Vastly improved display This was certainly a vastly improved display as the Reds functioned so much better as an attacking force and the goals finally flowed. Not since Tottenham were beaten at Anfield back in Febuary have Liverpool scored three in a game. James Milner gave the hosts the perfect start early on and when Sturridge volleyed home just before the hour mark the hosts were cruising.
Yet hopes of a rare straightforward triumph were dashed when Rudy Gestede punished some slack defending. The Benin international repeated the trick with a towering header after Sturridge had made it 3-1 to send the nerves jangling on the Kop. However, to their credit, Liverpool dug deep and deservedly held on with Milner and Lucas Leiva leading the way.
It was the perfect boost to flagging confidence levels ahead of next weekend's Merseyside derby at Goodison.
However, with trips to White Hart Lane and Stamford Bridge also on the horizon the bar must be raised with October throwing up much tougher tests than toppling struggling Villa. With his back firmly against the wall after a week when Carlo Ancelotti and Jurgen Klopp were both linked with his job, Rodgers needed to provoke a response from his players following the embarrassment of being taken to penalties by Carlisle in the Capital One Cup in midweek and he achieved that impressively.
With Christian Benteke, Roberto Firmino and Dejan Lovren joining skipper Jordan Henderson on the injury list, he needed his senior pros to take responsibility to calm the storm and they didn't disappoint him.
Vice-captain Milner leads by example
Stand-in captain Milner produced his best performance in a Liverpool shirt as he led by example throughout. Milner flourished playing further up the field, snapping into tackles and keeping the Reds on the front foot with his range of passing. The England international gave the Reds the perfect start when he grabbed his first goal for the club after just 66 seconds.
Philippe Coutinho's pass found him in space on the edge of the box and Milner took a touch to steady himself before unleashing a left-footer into the bottom corner. Anfield erupted and buoyed by the breakthrough the Reds poured forward in search of greater reward.
Coutinho was a hive of activity as he pressed relentlessly and the supporters fed off that kind of work rate.
Liverpool dominated possession with Villa simply content to sit back and soak up the pressure.
Playing with a genuine front two of Sturridge and Danny Ings enabled the Reds to really stretch the visitors' backline as they played with ambition rather than fear.
Brad Guzan denied Ings and then tipped over Coutinho's deflected shot.
Defensive problems remain for the Reds Liverpool's only problems at the other end were of their own making. Emre Can's careless mistake presented Gestede with a golden chance but the big frontman's finish was wayward.
Simon Mignolet then endured the wrath of the Kop after he unconvincingly flapped at Alan Hutton's cross. The keeper was relieved to see Ashley Westwood's shot flash wide. In the second half Liverpool stepped up a gear with Milner, Nathaniel Clyne and Coutinho all going close before Sturridge took centre stage.
This was only his second appearance after five months out following surgery and up to that point he had been predictably rusty.
But in the 59 minute he discovered his lethal touch with aplomb. Milner's return pass was inch perfect and Sturridge dispatched an unstoppable volley past Guzan.
Relief engulfed Anfield but it didn't last. Seven minutes later Gestede converted from close range and Villa were back in contention.
Sturridge took matters into own hands and within seconds he had delivered once again.
His one-two with Coutinho was breathtaking and he kept a cool head to slot past Guzan.
It was the first time Sturridge had scored more than once in a game since the 4-3 win over Swansea in February 2014.
With 19 minutes to go the anxiety levels were cranked up once again.
Liverpool struggled to contain Gestede when he played against them for Blackburn last season and this time around they fared no better.
Sakho found wanting - but Lucas exceptional
Mamadou Sakho was found wanting against his aerial prowess and the big frontman soared highest to power Jordan Amavi's cross past Mignolet.
Would the Reds sink or swim? The answer was emphatic as Rodgers' side rallied.
Lucas was exceptional as he bossed proceedings alongside Milner.
How crucial it was that Liverpool jettisoned the long-serving Brazilian midfielder's proposed move to Besiktas prior to the transfer deadline.
He cares deeply about the club he has served for the past eight years and his gutsy performance underlined that.
Coutinho and Sturridge could have made the margin of victory greater late on but it mattered little.
Liverpool have stopped the rot. Rodgers can sleep easy and with Sturridge in this kind of form hope springs eternal.

Birmingham Mail

Villa's winless run in the Premier League stretched to six games as they were unable to take advantage of an out-of-sorts Liverpool at Anfield.
Rudy Gestede's double threatened to earn the claret and blues at least a share of the spoils but they were unable to claw back the deficit after goals from Danny Sturridge (two) and James Milner.
The former Villa man opened the scoring with less than a minute on the clock and Sturridge added a second after the break.
Gestede pulled one back but a minute later Sturridge doubled his tally which made Gestede's second worthless.
The away side got off to the worst possible start when Milner latched onto Philippe Coutinho's pass to break the deadlock.
Emre Can and Danny Ings both went close soon after as Liverpool dominated possession in the first half but it was Villa who had the better chances despite seeing little of the ball.
Gestede thundered a header wide from Jordan Amavi's cross and the striker should have taken advantage of sloppy Liverpool defending by smashing in a half-volley soon after but he screwed wide.
Defender, Can then deflected Ashley Westwood's effort away from goal as the Reds survived another scare before the break.
After the interval Guzan saved superbly to deny Milner a second and then Amavi heroically blocked the rebound to thwart Nathaniel Clyne from five yards out as he looked certain to slam it in.
A second was never far away though.
On 58 minutes man-of-the-match Milner's flick found its way to Sturridge on the edge of the box and with the outside of his boot he sublimely slotted past Guzan to double the hosts' advantage.
Gestede made up for his earlier misses by pulling one back on 65 minutes when he converted Alan Hutton's cross at the back post.
But from the re-start Villa conceded immediately as Sturridge met Coutinho's back-flick before side-footing in his second of the day.
That looked to be the visitors down and out but Sherwood's men were not finished yet.
Amavi swung in a perfect cross for Gestede who leaped high into the air and thundered a towering header past Simon Mignolet.
Villa pushed and probed but couldn't find an equaliser and it was Guzan who had to keep to scores down by denying Sturridge a hat-trick late on.
TEAMS
Liverpool: (4-4-2) Mignolet, Clyne, Sakho, Can Skrtel, Moreno, Lucas, Milner, Coutinho, Ings, Sturridge (Allen, 90+2). Subs: Bogdan, Toure, Gomez, Lallana, Origi, Ibe.
Villa: (4-3-3) Guzan, Hutton, Richards, Lescott, Amavi, Sanchez (Veretout, 59), Westwood, Gana, Grealish (Adama, 68), Sinclair, Gestede. Subs: Bunn, Clark, Bacuna, Ayew, Gil.

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THE INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

Relief for Rodgers as Sturridge returns with a double

For Brendan Rodgers, this may have been a stay of execution or a turning point but, whatever it was, this was far and away Liverpool's best performance of a fraught start to the season. The journey towards the gallows so many had erected for him had begun with an insipid defeat by Aston Villa in the FA Cup semi-final last season and it might have been appropriate if it had ended here.

Whether this win, full of fine forward play and dreadful defending, puts an end to the crisis, time will tell. Liverpool's next game is the Merseyside derby and Rodgers is under no illusions.

"I am pretty clear that there is a group of people who don't want me here," said Rodgers, who is not the first Liverpool manager to be discomforted by former players voicing strong opinions in the media.

He did not name them, referring instead to: "people outside of here". He added: "In all competitions we have lost fewer games than Manchester City, Chelsea and Arsenal. The hysteria surrounding ourselves is interesting to note.

"Sometimes we have not lost games and the hysteria has been pretty clear. Maybe there is something going on from behind. We got the victory today and now we are five points off the top."

It might not be a coincidence that it marked the return of Daniel Sturridge (pictured) to full fitness.Liverpool had not scored three since beating Tottenham 3-2 in February, which was the last game the striker started before suffering a hip injury.

He found the net twice and left the field to a standing ovation. The first was a volley from a flick by James Milner, who captained Liverpool superbly in what was a pressure moment. The second was a drive from just inside the area and, but for Brad Guzan's full-stretch save, he might have had a hat-trick.

He was not even the biggest threat to Villa - Philippe Coutinho loosed off no fewer than seven shots and Jordan Amavi blocked brilliantly and instinctively when it appeared Nathaniel Clyne had to score. The Liverpool defender responded by pounding the grass in front of the Kop with his fist.

As Villa's manager, Tim Sherwood noted, this was the second successive away game in which his team had scored twice and returned home with nothing. They have not won since beating Bournemouth on the opening day of the season and their only other point has come against the piece of wreckage trading under the name of Sunderland.

Sherwood might soon be experiencing some of the hysteria doing the rounds in the Premier League. Almost his last words to his team before they went out was that, given the nerves surroundingLiverpool, Villa should keep it tight and wait for anxiety to grip Anfield. They were a goal down in 66 seconds when Milner drove home from the edge of the area.

Only after the interval, when Villa began injecting width into their play and aiming balls towards the tall Rudy Gestede did they start to exploit what is still Liverpool's great weakness - a fragile defence, protecting a goalkeeper no defender seems to trust.

It was perhaps typical of Villa that once Gestede had slid in to ram home Alan Hutton's cross,Liverpool scored their third within a minute. Another cross, this time from Amavi, brought hope as Gestede scored again but Liverpool clung on for a first home win over Villa in five years. The lastLiverpool manager to beat them at Anfield was Roy Hodgson - who was gone within a month.

Liverpool: (3-4-3) Mignolet; Can, Skrtel, Sakho; Clyne, Lucas Leiva, Milner, Moreno; Sturridge (Allen, 90), Coutinho, Ings.

Aston Villa: (4-3-2-1) Guzan; Hutton, Richards, Lescott, Amavi; Sanchez (Veretout, 60), Westwood, Gueye, Sinclair; Grealish (Traore, 69); Gestede.

Referee: Jon Moss

Man of the match: Milner (Liverpool)

Match rating: 7/10

The Sunday Telegraph

Sturridge return rescues under-pressure Rodgers

Liverpool 3 Milner 2, Sturridge 59, 67

Aston Villa 2 Gestede 66, 71 Att: 44,228

This was a desperately-needed victory for Brendan Rodgers to take some of the edge off Liverpool's increasingly tense season, and the growing sense of expectancy that he could be sacked.

But there was plenty of edge from Rodgers afterwards as he came out fighting by claiming there was "a group" who are trying to force him out of Anfield and are behind the rising "hysteria" over his future.

"There is a group that don't want me here to be the manager," Rodgers said. "In all competitions we have lost less games than Manchester City and Arsenal. Obviously the hysteria around ourselves is interesting to know."

Asked to explain who the "group" were, Rodgers clarified they were "outside the club" - implying it was the heightened media debate, particularly among former Liverpool players on television - and added: "It's pretty clear. Sometimes we have not lost games and not performed well but I think the hysteria around it is pretty clear that maybe there is something else going on behind it. We are five points off the top."

Indeed, Liverpool are up to seventh in the Premier League, are just five points behind leaders Manchester United - and have, also indeed, lost only two matches compared to City and Arsenal's three (which includes the Champions League) so Rodgers's frustrations are understandable, even if it is undeniable that the pressure was, and is, there. And not just from the media.

Failing to beat a limited Aston Villa side would have led to the feeling of an enveloping crisis with a midweek Europa League tie followed by the Merseyside derby at Everton and then the international break, which can often be a period of reckoning for managers under scrutiny in the unforgiving environment of the Premier League. Instead, that focus will also be shifted, a little, towards Tim Sherwood as Villa slid into the bottom three, having collected just one point from their last six league matches. Afterwards the Villa manager argued his mitigation - young players, many foreign, taking time to gel - but his negative approach in the first-half did not help his team.

Rodgers' - and Liverpool's cause - were aided by that but, far more signifi-cantly, there is the return of Daniel Sturridge who started his second successive league game since recovering from his hip problem and claimed his first goals since March.

This was also the first time Liverpool had scored more than one goal in a game since May - and the first time they had struck three since Sturridge launched a comeback in February and Tottenham Hotspur were defeated. "It's not rocket science," Rodgers said. "If we are going to compete at the top we need quality. Daniel has shown he's a really top talent. He was outstanding."

Sturridge certainly is outstanding and if he can remain fit and with him showing signs of developing a strike partnership with Danny Ings then there are firm foundations for hope for Liverpool. It remains a big 'if ' for the 26-year-old - it has to be, given his injury record - but his presence can be transformative.

Sturridge took responsibility - he probably should have had a hat-trick - but so did stand-in captain James Milner who claimed his first Liverpool goal and did so after just 66 seconds (therefore the fastest goal so far in the Premier League this season) as he collected Philippe Coutinho's square pass, steadied himself and fired low past Brad Guzan.

Milner also chipped in by claiming it was "ridiculous what's gone on" with the focus on Rodgers. Fellow midfielder Lucas Leiva added: "We wanted to win for the manager. We know what has been said about him and think we showed we are a group of players behind him and trying to make everything right. We know the pressure is on him."

There was no faulting Liverpool's commitment - maybe their confidence, though, can be questioned, especially with goalkeeper Simon Mignolet and in defence - and they struggled to press home their advantage before doing so with the best passage of play in the game. Sturridge started it, feeding the ball to Milner who superbly flicked it back into the striker's path. The finish was instinctive as Sturridge volleyed back across Guzan and into the net.

Surely that was it? But, no. In Rudy Gestede, Villa have a towering, imposing striker and his presence led to a mix-up between Mignolet and Mamadou Sakho which allowed him to bundle the ball home. Liverpool found an immediate reply, however, with Coutinho again the provider as he delivered to Sturridge who calmly sidefooted his second goal.

It was loose and open and Gestede struck once more - powering in with a header from Alan Hutton's cross. Guzan saved well from Coutinho's freekick. And Rodgers bristled.

Liverpool (3-4-1-2) Mignolet 4; Can 6, Sktrel 6, Sakho 4; Clyne 6, Milner 7, Lucas 7, Moreno 6; Coutinho 7; Ings 6, Sturridge 8 (Allen 90). Subs Bogdan (g), Toure, Gomez, Lallana, Origi, Ibe.

Aston Villa (4-1-4-1) Guzan 5; Hutton 5, Richards 6, Lescott 6, Amavi 6; Sanchez 6 (Veretout 60); Sinclair 6, Westwood 6, Gana 5, Grealish 5 (Adama 69); Gestede 7. Subs Bunn (g), Clark, Bacuna, Ayew, Gil.

Referee J Moss (West Yorkshire).

189 days The Liverpool striker has endured a string of injuries - it is in fact only 188 minutes since his last league goal. Goal-drought breaker #3: Daniel Sturridge

Compiled by Graeme Riley

Date: 26 September 2015
Opposition: Aston Villa
Competition: League

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

26 September 2015

THE SUNDAY TIMES

Sturridge bounces back

If this represents a "crisis" at Anfield -- the England centre-forward Daniel Sturridge rediscovering his goalscoring touch with two vital second-half efforts and Liverpool moving to within two points of the Champions League places -- then Brendan Rodgers may yet survive to see out the three years remaining on his contract as manager.

Four goals -- two each for Sturridge and the impressive Rudy Gestede -- inside 12 second-half minutes were the highlights of an intriguing game that probably posed more questions than it answered about Liverpool, their current problems and potential.

After losing two of Europe's leading forwards in Luis Suarez and Raheem Sterling in each of the past two summers without yet finding adequate replacements, the return and continued fitness of Sturridge could be more important than any single piece of transfer business Rodgers could carry out.

It has not helped Rodgers' position within the Kop empire that former captains such as Graeme Souness, Jamie Carragher and Jamie Redknapp have been critical of him, while the fact that Carlo Ancelotti and Jurgen Klopp are currently in "play" forced the increasingly beleaguered manager to talk about his own job security on Friday.

"Of course there is a lot of hysteria and that continues," said Rodgers after the game. "I'm pretty confident that there is a group of people who don't want me to be manager here. But I look at it and in all competitions we have lost less games than Manchester City, Chelsea and Arsenal. We have lost two games, but obviously the hysteria around ourselves is interesting to note for me and the players. We stay very calm, work very hard every day and we'll get the rewards.

"But I think it is clear. Sometimes we haven't lost a game but we haven't performed well and, from the hysteria around it, it is pretty clear there is maybe something else going on from behind. I'm talking about people outside of here."

Sturridge, goalless since a March hip injury, slotted into a forward line that had scored just four times in their opening six games and, even with Christian Benteke absent through injury, his pairing with Danny Ings instantly represented an upgrade on what had come before.

Just before the hour, Sturridge exchanged passes with James Milner before burying an immaculate 16-yard volley past the dive of Brad Guzan and, seven minutes later, he repeated the feat, this time playing off Philippe Coutinho, receiving a neat return and taking his time before displaying enviable composure in placing the ball into the corner.

Unfortunately for Liverpool nerves, what Sturridge could do, Gestede could do also, albeit in a different manner. Sturridge's first goal had brought Liverpool a two-goal cushion for all of six minutes before the home defence went missing, both in closing down Alan Hutton's right-wing cross and in defending Gestede, who was left alone to scramble the ball in from close range.

Again, after Sturridge's second, his defensive teammates ensured anxiety would reign for the closing 20 minutes as Jordan Amavi centred from the left and Gestede rose athletically, steering an unstoppable header past Simon Mignolet who was, once again here, less than convincing as a last line of defence.

The Villa manager, Tim Sherwood, sent out his players with the instruction to keep the contest tight to increase the anxiety around Anfield although, sadly for him, the policy lasted 66 seconds, by which time Villa's midfield and defence had stood back as Coutinho picked out Milner, positioned centrally 20 yards from goal, and the England international -- who alongside Lucas was outstanding in midfield -- beat Brad Guzan with a precise strike.

Liverpool failed to capitalise and not until Villa opened up their approach on the restart did more chances appear. At least the more positive Villa approach saw more balls fly into the home area for Gestede to show his prowess. "People questioned whether he would score in the Premier League, he's answered that already," said Sherwood. "This was something I expected," he added of his team's worrying league position. "It was a young group of players we acquired and that comes with ups and downs."

Liverpool have shaken off their worst goalscoring start to a season since 2005-06, which ended with Rafa Benitez's team finishing third. How Rodgers would settle for such an outcome this time.

Liverpool: Mignolet 5, Can 5, Skrtel 7, Sakho 6, Clyne 8, Milner 8, Lucas 9, Moreno 7, Coutinho 6, Sturridge 8 (Allen 90+4min, 5), Ings 6 Aston Villa: Guzan 6, Hutton 7, Richards 5, Lescott 5, Amavi 6, Sanchez 6 (Veretout 60min, 6), Westwood 7, Gana 7, Grealish 4 (Traore 69min, 8), Sinclair 5, Gestede 8 STURRIDGE BACK ON VILLA TRAIL ? Daniel Sturridge, who scored his first two goals since March, has scored in four league matches in a row against Aston Villa ? Since August 2013, Rudy Gestede, who Aston Villa signed from Blackburn, has scored 21 headed goals in the league, six more than any other player in the English top four tiers ? James Milner's first goal for Liverpoolwas, at 66 seconds, the quickest Premier League strike this season.

The Observer

Compiled by Graeme Riley

Date: 26 September 2015
Opposition: Aston Villa
Competition: League

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

26 September 2015

BBC

Daniel Sturridge scored his first two goals since March as Liverpool beat Aston Villa in an entertaining game.
Reds midfielder James Milner opened the scoring after 66 seconds against his former club from 20 yards.
Striker Sturridge doubled their lead after the break with a volley following a one-two with Milner, but Rudy Gestede pulled one back from close range.
Sturridge scored his second from Philippe Coutinho's pass, but Gestede gave Villa hope with a fine header.
Liverpool boss Brendan Rodgers had been under pressure after six games without a win, other than Wednesday's League Cup penalty shootout victory over Carlisle. Has this relieved the pressure on Rodgers?
Slightly, but probably not that much.
There were plans for Liverpool fans to dress up as Jurgen Klopp, the former Borussia Dortmund coach who some would like to see replace Rodgers, though there was little evidence this came to fruition.
Liverpool will be happy to have ended such a poor run and move up to seventh in the Premier League - but they were made to work for victory against one of the worst sides in the division.
The Reds played some decent football for their goals, but they were caught out by Villa twice. Their next Premier League games - against Everton, Tottenham and Southampton - could go a long way to deciding Rodgers's future.
The huge boost from this game for Liverpool was the return of Sturridge's name to the scoresheet. The England international was making his second appearance since recovering from hip surgery.
While he still has some fitness to gain before reproducing the form that saw him score 24 goals in 2013-14, he was the reason Liverpool won this game.
His first strike was a brilliant volley with the outside of his foot, and the second a calm finish after a one-two with Coutinho, who backheeled the ball to him.
The 26-year-old had two chances to complete his hat-trick in the final 10 minutes. First he failed to beat Micah Richards on the edge of the box, something a fully fit Sturridge might have been able to do. Then he forced a good low save from Brad Guzan who tipped his effort past the post.
Rodgers said: "Sturridge showed what we missed for over a year - he makes the difference and helps you compete. His finishes were brilliant.
"He's nowhere near 100% fit yet. There was a couple of moments when he'd be away at his best but wasn't today. His two goals were the difference."
Gestede, who replaced the injured Gabriel Agbonlahor in the line-up, was the only reason Villa - who played quite defensively - ran Liverpool so close at Anfield.
The Birmingham side, who were unbeaten on their last four trips to Anfield, have now picked up four points from seven games and drop into the relegation zone.
They had only four shots on target against the Reds, with Gestede, a summer signing from Blackburn, scoring both of his - to take him up to four for the season.
His first was a close-range scramble and his second a brilliant towering header as he beat centre-back Mamadou Sakho to a Jordan Amavi cross.
Liverpool midfielder Lucas Leiva: "We wanted to win for the manager. We know what has been said about him and I think we showed we are a group of players behind him and trying to make everything right. The pressure is on him but we wanted to play the way he wanted us to play and I think we did that."
Aston Villa boss Tim Sherwood: "We can't score two away from home and lose - it happened against Leicester as well. You score twice at Anfield and you expect to leave with something. I've told the boys the goals were avoidable and we have to tighten up - Liverpool did not have to work too hard to get them, and we have to put that right.
"Our performances have merited better than one win in seven games but I said from the start it would be an uphill struggle. We need to stay in the division and if we do we will be stronger next year."
The stats you need to know
Milner's first goal for Liverpool was the quickest Premier League strike this season.
There were 70 seconds between Rudy Gestede's first goal of the game and Daniel Sturridge's second.
Sturridge has now scored in four consecutive Premier League games against Aston Villa.
Since August 2013, Gestede has scored 21 headed goals in the league, six more than any other player in the English top four tiers.
What's up next?
Villa host Stoke in the Premier League next Saturday, while Liverpool are at home to Sion in the Europa League on Thursday - before Sunday's Merseyside derby at Everton.

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26 September 2015

BBC

Full time Match ends, Liverpool 3, Aston Villa 2.
90:00+5:19Full time Second Half ends, Liverpool 3, Aston Villa 2.
90:00+4:19 James Milner (Liverpool wins a free kick on the right wing.
90:00+4:19 Foul by Idrissa Gueye (Aston Villa.
90:00+3:08Substitution SubstitutionSubstitution, Liverpool. Joe Allen replaces Daniel Sturridge.
90:00+2:24 Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
90:00+2:24 Foul by Jordan Veretout (Aston Villa.
87:42 James Milner (Liverpool wins a free kick on the right wing.
87:42 Foul by Rudy Gestede (Aston Villa.
85:23 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Brad Guzan.
85:19 Attempt saved. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the bottom right corner. Assisted by Danny Ings with a through ball.
84:21 Attempt blocked. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked.
83:47 Attempt blocked. Danny Ings (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Daniel Sturridge.
82:32 Foul by Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool.
82:32 Alan Hutton (Aston Villa wins a free kick on the right wing.
81:33 Lucas Leiva (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
81:33 Foul by Adama Traoré (Aston Villa.
80:39 Attempt saved. Idrissa Gueye (Aston Villa left footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom right corner.
77:59 Attempt missed. Micah Richards (Aston Villa header from the centre of the box is just a bit too high. Assisted by Jordan Veretout with a cross following a set piece situation.
77:27 Foul by James Milner (Liverpool.
77:27 Adama Traoré (Aston Villa wins a free kick on the right wing.
76:43 Attempt saved. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the top left corner. Assisted by Nathaniel Clyne.
73:44 Foul by Danny Ings (Liverpool.
73:44 Jordan Amavi (Aston Villa wins a free kick in the defensive half.
73:04 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Brad Guzan.
73:02 Attempt saved. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the top left corner.
72:17 Lucas Leiva (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
72:17 Foul by Jordan Veretout (Aston Villa.
70:01Goal scored Goal!Goal! Liverpool 3, Aston Villa 2. Rudy Gestede (Aston Villa header from the centre of the box to the high centre of the goal. Assisted by Jordan Amavi with a cross.
68:29Substitution SubstitutionSubstitution, Aston Villa. Adama Traoré replaces Jack Grealish.
68:08 Foul by Mamadou Sakho (Liverpool.
68:08 Scott Sinclair (Aston Villa wins a free kick in the defensive half.
66:21Goal scored Goal!Goal! Liverpool 3, Aston Villa 1. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box to the bottom right corner. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.
65:11Goal scored Goal!Goal! Liverpool 2, Aston Villa 1. Rudy Gestede (Aston Villa right footed shot from very close range to the bottom left corner. Assisted by Alan Hutton with a cross.
64:15 Offside, Liverpool. Danny Ings tries a through ball, but Daniel Sturridge is caught offside.
63:07 Attempt saved. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the top left corner. Assisted by Nathaniel Clyne.
61:29 Attempt blocked. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked.
59:14Substitution SubstitutionSubstitution, Aston Villa. Jordan Veretout replaces Carlos Sánchez.
58:01Goal scored Goal!Goal! Liverpool 2, Aston Villa 0. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool left footed shot from the left side of the box to the bottom right corner. Assisted by James Milner with a through ball.
54:02 Foul by Lucas Leiva (Liverpool.
54:02 Jack Grealish (Aston Villa wins a free kick in the defensive half.
53:27 Attempt saved. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the centre of the goal.
52:36 Hand ball by Scott Sinclair (Aston Villa.
52:06 Offside, Aston Villa. Micah Richards tries a through ball, but Scott Sinclair is caught offside.
51:59 Attempt blocked. Martin Skrtel (Liverpool header from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by James Milner with a cross.
51:29 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Jordan Amavi.
51:28 Attempt blocked. Nathaniel Clyne (Liverpool right footed shot from the right side of the six yard box is blocked.
51:24 Attempt saved. James Milner (Liverpool left footed shot from the left side of the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.
50:33 Attempt missed. Scott Sinclair (Aston Villa header from the centre of the box misses to the left. Assisted by Alan Hutton with a cross.
49:44 Offside, Liverpool. Philippe Coutinho tries a through ball, but Danny Ings is caught offside.
49:11 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Alan Hutton.
48:53 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Micah Richards.
48:51 Attempt blocked. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Danny Ings.
47:31 Martin Skrtel (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
47:31 Foul by Rudy Gestede (Aston Villa.
45:00 Second Half begins Liverpool 1, Aston Villa 0.
45:00+1:07Half time First Half ends, Liverpool 1, Aston Villa 0.
45:00+0:11 Delay over. They are ready to continue.
43:55 Delay in match Carlos Sánchez (Aston Villa because of an injury.
42:33 Attempt saved. Scott Sinclair (Aston Villa right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the top centre of the goal.
41:03 Attempt missed. Micah Richards (Aston Villa header from the centre of the box misses to the right. Assisted by Ashley Westwood with a cross following a corner.
40:25 Corner, Aston Villa. Conceded by Martin Skrtel.
40:19 Attempt blocked. Ashley Westwood (Aston Villa right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Scott Sinclair.
39:11 Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
39:11 Foul by Carlos Sánchez (Aston Villa.
37:12 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Rudy Gestede.
36:46 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Brad Guzan.
36:39 Attempt blocked. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Alberto Moreno.
35:08 Foul by Lucas Leiva (Liverpool.
35:08 Idrissa Gueye (Aston Villa wins a free kick on the left wing.
33:24 James Milner (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
33:24 Foul by Jordan Amavi (Aston Villa.
32:47 Foul by James Milner (Liverpool.
32:47 Jack Grealish (Aston Villa wins a free kick in the defensive half.
31:19 Foul by Danny Ings (Liverpool.
31:19 Alan Hutton (Aston Villa wins a free kick in the defensive half.
29:35 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Joleon Lescott.
26:50 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Carlos Sánchez.
21:27 Attempt missed. Rudy Gestede (Aston Villa right footed shot from the centre of the box is close, but misses to the right.
21:11 Alberto Moreno (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
21:11 Foul by Rudy Gestede (Aston Villa.
19:56 Attempt missed. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from a difficult angle and long range on the left is high and wide to the right. Assisted by Alberto Moreno.
15:46 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Ashley Westwood.
14:29 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Jordan Amavi.
13:10 Offside, Liverpool. James Milner tries a through ball, but Alberto Moreno is caught offside.
12:13 Attempt saved. Alberto Moreno (Liverpool left footed shot from the left side of the box is saved in the bottom right corner.
8:35 Attempt missed. Danny Ings (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is too high. Assisted by James Milner.
7:57 Attempt saved. Danny Ings (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Emre Can.
7:13 Danny Ings (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
7:13 Foul by Carlos Sánchez (Aston Villa.
6:16 Attempt missed. Rudy Gestede (Aston Villa header from the centre of the box is close, but misses to the left. Assisted by Jordan Amavi with a cross.
4:00 Attempt saved. Emre Can (Liverpool header from a difficult angle on the right is saved in the top centre of the goal. Assisted by Alberto Moreno with a cross.
3:08 James Milner (Liverpool wins a free kick on the right wing.
3:08 Foul by Jordan Amavi (Aston Villa.
2:14 Mamadou Sakho (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
2:14 Foul by Rudy Gestede (Aston Villa.
1:06Goal scored Goal!Goal! Liverpool 1, Aston Villa 0. James Milner (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box to the bottom right corner. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.
0:00 First Half begins.
0:00 Lineups are announced and players are warming up.

Compiled by Graeme Riley