

Date: 20 December 2015

Opposition: Watford

Competition: League

Times	Telegraph	Watford Observer
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20 December
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THE TIMES

Klopp flops crushed by Watford's wonders

Watford 3 Ake 3, Ighalo 15, 85 Liverpool 0 Referee: M Clattenburg

In a season of surreal sights, the Barclays Premier League table now shows promoted Watford a point off the Champions League places. The outstanding Odion Ighalo departed to a standing ovation after scoring twice against a Liverpool side who -- with the honourable exceptions of Emre Can and Jordan Henderson -- forgot the basics of the game, like concentration and application. The revolution in the first half of the Premier League this season is being led by the hard-working classes: industrious, fearless sides such as Leicester City, who top the table with all their 4-4-2 energy and honesty, and Watford, who sit seventh, remarkably giddy heights for a newly promoted side. They defy gravity and the moneyed classes. This victory was thoroughly deserved. A first win in 16 years over opposition the Watford website proudly described as "five-times European champions Liverpool" was rooted in the ideas and actions of Quique Flores, their head coach. The Spaniard has hardly relied on radical tactics: like Claudio Ranieri's Leicester, Flores's team are basically 4-4-2 with one of the centre forwards, Troy Deeney or Ighalo, dropping off when the opposition have possession. Ben Watson and Etienne Capoue sit slightly deep in midfield, but it is effectively 4-4-2. Prominent parts of the Premier League are going all retro.

Teams such as Watford and Leicester exude a boldness embodied by Deeney and Jamie Vardy respectively. They have a go, and get rewarded. Modest in public, they talk of securing their Premier League survival when their diligence gives them every right to dream. Old values are back in fashion.

What the astute Flores has done is get into the hearts and minds of his players, making even newcomers feel personally responsible for the Watford cause. Flores takes a creative player such as Almen Abdi and fills him full of belief in his up-and-back wide role, turning a butterfly into a real hornet. Flores takes a 20-year-old such as Nathan Ake, puts him at left back and is rewarded with increasingly mature displays, particularly here where the on-loan Chelsea player scored his first professional goal. Flores could use the more experienced Jose Holebas, the Greek international, at left back, but clearly prefers Ake's enthusiasm and willingness to absorb commands. Flores is helped by having professionals such as Heurelho Gomes, Watson and Deeney constantly reminding the players of their duties, and the required commitment levels. With eight minutes remaining, Watson led Ikechi Anya and Ake in hunting down Henderson, pressing the Liverpool captain so much that he not only surrendered possession but almost fell off the pitch. Deeney, Watford's captain, absolutely sets the mood of men on a mission with his workrate. Other teams boast more technical talent than Watford's but few can rival their desire to turn their head coach's plans into reality. Three hours before kick-off, Deeney posted a photograph of Flores talking animatedly to him with the tweeted words "work time instructions received now let's try and execute". It was Deeney who came flying in on a Watson corner after three minutes that led to Watford's opener. Possibly distracted, Adam Bogdan dropped the ball. The Liverpool goalkeeper, who was making his Premier League debut for the club in the absence of Simon Mignolet with a tight hamstring, sought to claim the ball a second time, pulling it into his midriff. Ake challenged, flicking the ball clear with his right foot and poking it over the line with his left. Bogdan looked at Mark Clattenburg as if hoping the referee would decree that it was a foul, that he had the ball under control. Clattenburg did not hesitate, signalling a goal and running back to the halfway line as Watford celebrated. Liverpool should have responded but there is a slightly flighty nature to their character, winning 4-1 away to Manchester City yet losing 3-0 here.

Their highly intelligent manager, Jurgen Klopp, will surely strengthen in the window, starting with a centre half. The position has been occupied down the years at Liverpool by individuals of the calibre and commitment levels of Ron Yeats, Tommy Smith, Emlyn Hughes, Phil Thompson, Alan Hansen, Mark Lawrenson, Sami Hyypia and Jamie Carragher, among others.

Here Mamadou Sakho was a slip waiting to happen. Martin Skrtel was embarrassed by Watford's attack before limping away with a bruised back and pride. Lucas dropped back and laboured. The home fans had been waving yellow and black flags, as if the Westfalenstadion had come to Hertfordshire but Klopp certainly did not feel at home. The former Borussia Dortmund coach stood on the edge of his technical area, growing increasingly exasperated by his side's anaemic response. Watford's second arrived when Deeney, dropping deep, was far too powerful for Lucas. Deeney just wanted an aerial ball more, winning it and then lifting it down the insiderright channel for Ighalo to chase. It should have been a routine situation for Skrtel to deal with, just ushering Ighalo wide but the Slovakian centre half was a bag of nerves. Ighalo brushed past Skrtel and stroked the ball from right to left past Bogdan. During a pause in play, an angry Bogdan inquired of Clattenburg why the first goal had been given. The referee firmly explained that he felt the Hungarian keeper did not have the ball under full control. If Liverpool's backline was riddled with doubt, the attack was unconvincing. Henderson had a shot tipped over by Gomes, who then repelled an effort from Can. Klopp kept trying to energise his attack, sending on Divock Origi, finally Christian Benteke and Jordan Ibe but Liverpool lacked the organisation of Watford. Flores's side were always a threat on the break. With five minutes remaining, Ighalo added his second, running on to meet Valon Behrami's cross with an angled header past Bogdan, leaving Flores smiling and Klopp itching to get back on the training ground.

the guardian

Watford accept gift of Adam Bogdan blunder in thumping win over Liverpool

Odion Ighalo helped Watford to fire their Champions League charge with a comprehensive victory over a Liverpool team that lags in mid-table. It is not a sentence that might plausibly have been conceived at the beginning of the season but this is no ordinary season and Watford are riding the wave of this unpredictability.

Quique Sánchez Flores's team registered a fourth consecutive victory to lift themselves to within a point of the top four and this was their first major scalp of what is becoming an unforgettable season for them.

The manager had made Premier League survival the priority and even in the heady aftermath of possibly the best result for the club since the Graham Taylor years, he repeated the call to "stick to the plan". Getting carried away, he warned, would "be a very, very bad thing".

But this was a day of celebration for the Watford support, of rip-roaring enjoyment and if their top-four prospects should not be exaggerated then the possibilities have been made to feel rather greater than simply retaining their top-flight status.

Ighalo added to Nathan Aké's opener with his 11th and 12th goals of the league campaign and, when he was substituted late on, he departed to thunderous acclaim. The home crowd, who must be pinching themselves, had unfurled a banner beforehand that paid tribute to the club's owners, the Pozzo family.

"So here's to you, Pozzo family. Watford loves you more than you would know," it read, riffing on the old Simon and Garfunkel lyric. Love is most assuredly in the air in this part of Hertfordshire.

For Liverpool it was an afternoon to forget and it compounded the recent disappointments against Newcastle United and West Bromwich Albion, from which they had taken only one point. Watford swarmed all over them at the outset, hustling them into errors, and when they had finished their early burst they were two goals up and in control.

The tone was set by Ighalo and Troy Deeney up front, both muscular, harrying presences, and it was clear Martin Skrtel and Mamadou Sakho would have an uncomfortable afternoon. Skrtel lasted until the 41st minute when he was forced off with a muscular injury. Watford won so many of the one-against-one duels.

The opening goal was a present and it came gift-wrapped by Adam Bogdan, the Liverpool goalkeeper, who made his Premier League debut for the club in place of the injured Simon Mignolet. Bogdan dropped Ben Watson's corner and, when it bounced back up for him, Aké nicked it off him and forced home. It was the on-loan Chelsea defender's first goal for the club.

Bogdan claimed he had two hands on the ball before Aké robbed him and, when there was a break in play on the half hour, he could be seen in discussion with the referee, Mark Clattenburg. Jürgen Klopp, the Liverpool manager, later insisted it had been a foul. But Bogdan lacked conviction and it was not certain he had the ball under his control.

Aké had won the corner on the left through sheer persistence and Watford's performance was embossed with the virtue. The second goal was loaded with it, too, with the non-stop Deeney winning the ball off Lucas Leiva and sending it over the top for Ighalo to chase.

In a straight fight with Skrtel the Liverpool defender, initially, looked the favourite. But Ighalo muscled in and, when the ball broke wide, he reacted the quickest, getting his body shape right before hooking a low shot into the far corner.

Klopp felt the swirling wind had distracted Skrtel but he had bigger complaints, chiefly his team's collective reaction to the concession of the opening goal. To his annoyance Liverpool failed to play the simple game he wanted and they were second best, particularly in the first half, when Watford might have scored more. Bogdan had a couple more nervy moments while he made a low save to deny José Manuel Jurado.

The home crowd roared their approval for every block and challenge and there was a standing ovation when Almen Abdi slid in to nick the ball away from Adam Lallana in the 33rd minute, which reflected the bond between the team and the stands that Flores has worked to establish.

Klopp had started with Roberto Firmino at the tip of a 4-3-3 formation but he switched things after Skrtel's injury, sending on Divock Origi to play up front. It was interesting Klopp introduced Origi ahead of Christian Benteke, who had been dropped from the starting line-up. Benteke eventually came on, together with Jordan Ibe, in the 74th minute but it was not a day for any of Liverpool's strikers.

The visitors created little in the first half but they had clearer chances after the interval. There were flickers for Alberto Moreno and Origi straight away, Lallana looped a header off target and Jordan Henderson got the better of Aké before seeing Heurelho Gomes tip over his shot.

But Watford had more of their own with Bogdan denying Ighalo one-on-one. Ighalo deserved to have the last word and he got it when Valon Behrami, the substitute, crossed from the right. Watford's man of the moment buried his header from close range.

Man of the match Odion Ighalo (Watford)

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The Mail

MIND THE GAP; Klopp back in the pack as Watford hit heights

WATFORD 3

Ake 3, Ighalo 15, 85

LIVERPOOL 0

ONE day, the shocks of this incredible season will cease to shock. Until then, savour the thrill of a new order as the unfashionable clubs march on the traditional elite -- as defined by this demolition job on Liverpool by Watford. It was a fourth successive victory for Quique Sanchez Flores and his team, who have climbed to within a point of the Champions League places. Crystal Palace are above them and Leicester are running away at the top.

Liverpool trundle along in mid-table and no sooner does Jurgen Klopp detect something resembling progress than he is left to digest a ragged display like this. Klopp's team were two down inside 15 error-strewn minutes, never recovered and might have conceded more long before the third went in, as they took risks chasing an unlikely comeback.

'Today was bad -- the result is very bad,' the Liverpool manager admitted. 'We lost our minds after the first goal, we lost our compact formation, we didn't play easy when we should have.' Nathan Ake pounced to score Watford's opener in the third minute after goalkeeper Adam Bogdan had fumbled a corner and Odion Ighalo added the others, taking his goal tally for the season to 12.

The last time Watford were this good, Liverpool were better, but Klopp must realise the size of the task if he is to restore the glory days.

Bogdan was not the only Liverpool player who started badly, but his mistake set the tone. A simple catch spilled from his grasp. Perhaps he was distracted by Troy Deeney running across his eye-line but he should not have dropped it. Under pressure, the goalkeeper claimed the ball was kicked from his hands as he scrambled to recover. He might have had a point, but no foul was given.

On loan from Chelsea, it was his first goal for Watford and the 20-year-old went on to perform with aggression and awareness in a well-drilled defensive unit.

For Bogdan, making his Premier League debut for Liverpool after some fabulous form in the Capital One Cup, it was a dreadful start on a day when he was desperate to impress. Simon Mignolet was out injured and this was a big chance. Bogdan was soon picking the ball out of his net a second time, courtesy of a precise finish by Ighalo.

Deeney lifted a long pass behind Liverpool's defence and Ighalo proved too strong for Martin Skrtel. He took the shot early, squeezing it in from a tight angle off the base of the far post.

Liverpool improved after the break and forced a cluster of chances. Watford were firm and dangerous on the counter-attack.

Klopp threw on more attackers and Watford's resilience was tested, but they preserved an eighth clean sheet of the campaign.

Liverpool hopes were finally crushed when Ighalo buried a fine cross by Valon Behrami with a close-range header.

MATCH FACTS

WATFORD (4-4-2): Gomes; Nyom, Cathcart, Britos, Ake; Abdi (Behrami 80), Watson, Capoue, Jurado (Anyu 76); Ighalo (Guedioura 88), Deeney. Subs not used: Oulare, Holebas, Diamanti, Arlauskis. Booked: Britos.

LIVERPOOL (4-3-3): Bogdan; Clyne, Skrtel (Origi 41), Sakho, Moreno; Henderson, Lucas, Can; Lallana (Ibe 74), Firmino (Benteke 74), Coutinho. Subs not used: Toure, Allen, Fulton, Randall.

Referee: Mark Clattenburg. Man of the match: Etienne Capoue. Attendance: 20,707.

The Daily Telegraph

Watford pounce on Liverpool's frailties to close on top four

Watford 3 Ake 3, Ighalo 15, 85 Liverpool 0 Att: 20,707

Dreamland for Watford; the nightmare before Christmas for a shellshocked Liverpool, emphatically so for Adam Bogdan on his Premier League debut, although Mamadou Sakho ran the goalkeeper close in the calamity stakes.

First, though - and rightly, gloriously, so - Watford. Fifteen new players this season, a brilliantly charismatic and competent new manager in Quique Sanchez

Flores, but the same belief and - that buzzword - philosophy that has propelled Watford out of the Championship to within a point of the Champions League places. That latter fact was trumpeted over the tannoy at the final whistle, and understandably so. With Leicester City the feel-good story of this topsy-turvy season Watford are certainly running them close, along with Crystal Palace. All three sides sit proudly in the top seven. It is different, deserved, refreshing. There were outstanding performances from Watford all over this windswept pitch, and none more so than up front, where Troy Deeney, the captain, simply bullied the Liverpool defence with his power and determination; his desire and touch. He was irrepresible, as was his strike partner, Odion Ighalo, who scored twice and now has 12 league goals this season and 28 in 2015. No player in England has more. A throwback also in that this is an old-fashioned strike partnership, two up-front in a 4-4-2, an echo of the Eighties - the last time, in fact, that Watford beat Liverpool at home, when a certain John Barnes was among the scorers in 1986, before his feted career at Anfield, Watford won 2-0 then and went one better here. There could have been even more goals, with Jurgen Klopp's team beaten by a team who played like a Klopp team. Watford pressed and harried and were positive in possession, which was summed up by their third goal, when Etienne Capoue, another superb performer, won the ball back twice as the revitalised midfielder drove his team up the pitch.

Capoue then used possession so skilfully and creatively, leading to Deeney sending a pass wide to substitute Valon Behrami, who crossed for Ighalo to run in and direct a stooping header past the stranded Bogdan from close-range.

All of this occurred as Liverpool struggled to cope. Emre Can was outmuscled and outrun for that goal and it happened all afternoon, although he was not alone.

It was a bad day for Jordan Henderson, and for Lucas Leiva also, while there was mistake after mistake by Sakho. Martin Skrtel limped off injured in the first half and it appeared a case of wounded pride as much as any physical damage to the centre-back. The way in which Liverpool reacted to the goals was far more hurtful to Klopp than the concessions themselves, as the manager struggles with trying to determine how a team can destroy Manchester City and Southampton, scoring 10 goals in the process, and yet still be so fragile on occasions. They badly miss Daniel Sturridge, but there were precious few other absentees. The consignment of Christian Benteke to the substitutes' bench - Klopp first turned to Divock Origi as he, interestingly, then pushed Lucas to centre-half - spoke volumes of the PS32 million striker's current standing.

Klopp, though, is not deluded. He knew, when he arrived, that there would probably be a reaction and then a reaction to the reaction from a squad who have obvious weaknesses, although the way in which they folded was alarming.

Liverpool cried foul over Watford's opening goal and replays may show there was a case that Bogdan, who started the match with Simon Mignolet ruled out through a hamstring injury, got both hands on the ball after spilling Ben Watson's corner, but in real time it did not look like he was impeded.

The referee, Mark Clattenburg, gave the goal, which was turned in from close range by Nathan Ake, and after less than three minutes Liverpool already found themselves up against it.

Their response was a mix of feeling sorry for themselves and feeling unable to deal with the spirit, physicality and purpose of Watford, while Bogdan appeared shell-shocked - as was Skrtel with the way he was overwhelmed by Ighalo for the second goal. That came as Deeney won possession and lofted a clever pass forward. Ighalo was too strong, too full of desire to get there, for Skrtel, who ran with him but did little more before the striker hit a low cross-shot that too easily beat Bogdan. There were other errors. Bogdan punched the ball straight into Lucas's face, he scooped another corner off the goal-line but he also saved superbly from Jose Manuel Jurado with a first-time shot and denied Ighalo when he was sent clear on goal. But the damage was already done and it was not until half-time that Klopp, who then sent his players back out early, managed to provoke a response. But there were half-chances - although Adam Lallana should have done better with a looping header back across goal - before Henderson finely forced a sharp finger-tip save from Heuresho Gomes with a halfvolley that was pushed over the crossbar.

Liverpool, though, never really looked like they believed, and that will concern Klopp also. In this most unpredictable of seasons it can turn again and he knows that. Liverpool's season is in the balance, however.

Watford's also - but only because it is now a question of how far up the table they can finish rather than can they avoid relegation.

It's happened before... Watford closing in on the top

This is not the first season that Watford have been near the top of the top flight. In 1982/83, Graham Taylor's side were in fourth place at Christmas, in their first season back among the elite after winning promotion. Nottingham Forest, Coventry and West Brom were all in contention, as Liverpooled. Luther Blissett and Ross Jenkins were the strike partnership on everybody's lips, and Watford eventually finished second, with a win over Liverpool at home being just one memorable result.

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THE INDEPENDENT

Wonderful Watford flying as Ighalo double sinks Liverpool

Just before kick-off here, just before they played "Z Cars", the fans in the Rookery End unveiled their banner: "Here's to you Pozzo family, Watford loves you more than you would know." Everything that happened afterwards proved why.

Watford produced the best performance of their season, of the Pozzo era, and maybe of a generation. This was their fourth straight league win, their eighth so far, and against by far the best opposition they have beaten. Jurgen Klopp's Liverpool barely got a foothold in the game all afternoon.

Quique Sanchez Flores' side are now secure in seventh place, four points clear of Liverpool, just one point behind Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur. After the final whistle, Sanchez Flores took the applause of the whole stadium, arms around Nathan Ake and the brilliant Odion Ighalo. The announcer pointed out how close the team is to the Champions League places. And in a season in which Leicester City are top just shy of the halfway point, why shouldn't Watford think like that? This is a good team, not just a good run.

Certainly, any notions about Watford being the new Queen's Park Rangers, destabilised by their turnover of coaches and players, have been utterly confounded. The Pozzo family know what they are doing. The decision to bring in Sanchez Flores ahead of Slavisa Jokanovic now looks far-sighted and astute. From their promoted core and their new batch of imports, he has moulded a powerful team. This Watford performance was a lesson in unified, industrious, efficient football. Sanchez Flores plays 4-4-2 and his players run hard enough to make it work. Every 50-50 was won by a player in a yellow shirt. Liverpool barely threatened and could have conceded more.

Watford took the lead after just three minutes and from that point on the result was not in doubt. Ake burst down the left to win a corner. Ben Watson curled it in, to Adam Bogdan, deputising for the injured Simon Mignolet in the Liverpool goal. Bogdan, under pressure from the swinging leg of Miguel Britos, dropped the ball. Ake gleefully stabbed it into the net. It was a goalkeeping mistake, and not the only one. Klopp said afterwards that he was more upset by the reaction, or rather the lack of it, than the mistake itself. Liverpool never looked like they believed they could recover, even with 87 minutes left against a team who were in the Championship last season.

Watford, though, were brimming with belief and positive intent. They were led from the front by Ighalo and Troy Deeney, the best old-fashioned strike pairing in the country right now. Not many teams play with two up now, but those two work so hard out of possession that Watford never get outnumbered in midfield. Deeney was relentless, forcing an early mistake from Mamadou Sakho, unsettling him for the rest of the game. Ighalo does more than his fair share of running too but what really stands out, even ahead of their work rate, is the instinctive understanding the two strikers have. When one comes short the other goes long and each man can always find the other's run with a pass. That is how the second goal came about, 15 minutes in. Deeney won the ball from Jordan Henderson in midfield and then held off Emre Can, which is not easy to do. Sensing the movement in front of him, Deeney hooked the ball forward to Ighalo, running outside Martin Skrtel. Ighalo held off the challenge but the ball was knocked slightly wide by the defender before the forward struck it precisely into the far bottom corner. Ighalo should have scored another soon after, but could not connect after Bogdan's punch had deflected his way via Lucas Leiva. In the end, it did not matter. Watford continued to out-run their stunned opponents. From Miguel Britos to Ake to the imperious Etienne Capoue, they won every loose ball. One tackle from Almen Abdi on Adam Lallana, just before the break, earned a standing ovation from the whole crowd.

Liverpool needed to start the second half strongly and with Divock Origi on they did at least have presence up front. Heurleho Gomes had to make an easy save from Origi, and an athletic save from Henderson, but that was as dangerous as Liverpool got. Philippe Coutinho was not at his sharpest, producing some clever flicks but little more. Roberto Firmino never looked in sync with his team-mates. By the time Klopp threw on Christian Benteke and Jordan Ibe, with 16 minutes left, the game was gone. Happy to sit back and play on the break, Watford were the more dangerous side in the second half. Liverpool could never live with Ighalo's running. When he put Sakho on the floor and crossed to Jose Manuel Jurado, the little Spaniard nearly squeezed his shot in at the near post. Jurado tried to return the favour, sliding in Ighalo, who ran through after another Sakho slip. One-on-one with Bogdan, he should have scored, only for the Hungarian goalkeeper to stick out a strong hand and deny him.

Watford fans might have worried that they had not killed the game, but they need not have. The team were very well set up, with few gaps between or within their two banks of four. When the wingers Jurado and Abdi started to tire, Sanchez Flores introduced fresh legs in Valon Behrami and Ikechi Anya.

Behrami is not a natural winger but he slotted in perfectly, and Watford scored the third which ended the game. Ighalo passed to Deeney, who sprayed the ball to Behrami out wide. He measured his cross perfectly to Ighalo, charging into the box after an exhausting piece of work, and he headed the ball past Bogdan and in. It was the second goal that he had deserved for his work, and the third goal that reflected Watford's dominance. When the players and staff were applauded by the whole ground at the end, it felt like celebrations at the end of a successful season. In reality, the story of the Pozzo era at Watford is still just beginning.

DAILY MIRROR

Toothless Liverpool are licked big time.

WOULD you like wafers with your scoop from the ice cream van, Herr Klopp? When 12-goal ice cream man Odion Ighalo (top, with boss Quique Sanchez Flores) came calling, Liverpool were crumblier and flakier than the chocolate chimney in a 99 corner.

Watford sensation Ighalo's 'scoop' turn has left a trail of destruction on the Hornets' unlikely rampage up the Premier League table, just one point from the Champions League places.

There is even a Twitter handle, @IghaloScoop, dedicated to the most prolific scorer across all four divisions in 2015.

And Jurgen Klopp is the latest customer to get his cornet sprayed with toppings in every shade of yellow, black and red.

In 2015, luminaries including Jonathan Woodgate, Fabricio Coloccini, John Stones and John O'Shea have all been sold down the river by Ighalo's party trick.

You can add the hapless Mamadou Sakho to that list after Ighalo's latest see-you-later in Watford's first home win against Liverpool in 30 years. We can deal with Klopp's flops summarily. They were awful.

Without a recognised out-and-out striker as the focal point of their attack, Adam Lallana and Philippe Coutinho couldn't have blown a sprinkling of nuts off an ice cream sundae. But Watford deserve all the plaudits going.

Flores and his happy hombres have flown under the radar at supersonic speed. Please do not adjust your sets.

That really is Watford knocking on the door of Europe after their fourth consecutive win in the top flight for the first time since April 1987.

They won't make it to Calais, of course, because sooner or later the big guns will wake up and realise Ighalo and Troy Deeney (inset) are lethal.

And not merely a couple of makeweights who have come up from the Championship for the ride.

"Four wins back-to-back is massive in the Premier League," said skipper Deeney, whose bulwark frame and prodigious appetite for hard graft never gave Liverpool a moment's peace.

"It shows we've got a lot of confidence and we've shown no fear. This man Ighalo is on fire - as long as he remains on fire, and the team keeps performing the way they are, we'll be all right."

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Honeymoon period over as Red 'turkeys' force swift changes to Klopp's festive wish-list

This was akin to turkeys voting for Christmas. Liverpool produced a performance so lacking in any redeeming features that Jurgen Klopp simply has to make some late changes to his festive wish-list. The Reds weren't just beaten at Vicarage Road, they were embarrassed by newly promoted Watford.

Liverpool were abject in all departments. This wasn't just the worst display of Klopp's reign, the Reds haven't plumbed these kind of depths since the debacle at Stoke on the final day of last term. Klopp has been adamant that he wouldn't splash the cash in January. The German wanted to give the current crop an extended opportunity to prove they should be part of his Anfield revolution.

But now he has to reassess. Some are too young to be relied upon to deliver on a regular basis at this stage, others don't look as if they will ever look the part. Recent setbacks have laid bare the weaknesses in the squad he inherited and it's difficult to believe Liverpool will salvage anything tangible from this rollercoaster campaign unless they strengthen in January.

Vulnerable defensively, lightweight in midfield and toothless up front, they were second best from start to finish at Vicarage Road. Even the basics proved beyond them as the Hornets celebrated their first home win over Liverpool for 29 years.

On this occasion fatigue couldn't be cited as an excuse considering the Reds had enjoyed the rare luxury of a full week to prepare. Worryingly, they were outguffed as well as being outplayed. Those stunning away triumphs Klopp masterminded at Stamford Bridge and the Etihad suddenly seem a long time ago.

The 'bounce effect' which accompanied his appointment has worn off. The honeymoon period is officially over. Liverpool had 12 points from eight games when Brendan Rodgers was sacked, they have only picked up a further 12 from the following nine league matches under Klopp. Having initially proved a master at getting more out of someone else's players, the manager has seen old habits return. Standards have slipped alarmingly. Klopp's eyes have now been opened to the size of the task he took on when he answered Fenway Sports Group's SOS call in October. You could make a strong case for him needing to buy a new keeper, a right-sided centre-back, a creative and dynamic midfielder and a goalscorer.

It's highly unlikely all those areas could be addressed in one window but that process has to start in January.

Investment in Firmino and Benteke has failed to deliver

The fact is that once again this season Liverpool's hopes of progress have been undermined by mistakes in the transfer market. It's a painfully familiar scenario. They have made a habit of buying badly for most of the past 25 years.

The title challenge in 2013/14 was achieved in spite of rather than because of the talent brought in after the cash wasted on the likes of Iago Aspas and Luis Alberto. Twelve months later Mario Balotelli and Lazar Markovic were among those who failed to give the Reds a return on their investment. Rather than sack Rodgers back in May, FSG backed him to the tune of £80million before quickly losing faith. More than £60million of that kitty went on Roberto Firmino and Christian Benteke but neither has come anywhere close to living up to the hype. Given the chance to lead the line against Watford, Firmino was a passenger. He only thing he did consistently was get caught offside. Benteke, the second most expensive signing in the club's history, now finds himself behind Divock Origi in the pecking order as doubts over his ability to fit Klopp's style continue to grow.

There are bargains out there if you look hard enough – just ask Watford fans.

Ighalo's goals tally matches Benteke, Coutinho, Origi and Sturridge combined
They paid a combined total of £1.5million for strike duo Odion Ighalo and Troy Deeney, who both ensured it was a torrid afternoon for Liverpool's porous backline. They bullied Martin Skrtel and Mamadou Sakho into submission. Ighalo's tally of 12 Premier League goals this season is the same as Benteke, Philippe Coutinho, Daniel Sturridge and Origi combined. In this most unpredictable of Premier League seasons, a Champions League spot is there to be taken. Yet unless Klopp secures a much needed injection of quality, Liverpool look ill equipped to take advantage. What looked on paper to be a kind run of fixtures perfectly designed to propel the Reds towards the top four has in fact turned into the Nightmare before Christmas. Trips to Newcastle and Watford – sandwiched by the home game with West Brom – have yielded just a single point.

The tone for the afternoon was set inside three minutes when Adam Bogdan dropped Ben Watson's corner and Nathan Ake bundled it home.

Bogdan appeared to have two hands on the ball as he tried to atone for his blunder but the goal stood. Simon Mignolet, who expects to overcome a hamstring problem in time for the visit of Leicester on Boxing Day, will sleep easy. Bogdan looked a bag of nerves on his league debut for the Reds.

The second goal was equally shambolic. Lucas Leiva came off second best to Deeney, who picked out the run of Ighalo. Skrtel was then brushed aside as the Nigerian striker found the bottom corner. There was mediocrity across the field as those dressed in red continued to dish out gifts. Every 50-50 was lost as Klopp issued a steady succession of rollickings from the touchline. Emre Can and Lucas each got both barrels. When Skrtel limped off before the break, Origi came on with Lucas used as a makeshift centre-back.

Liverpool improved marginally in the second half but they could hardly have got

any worse. Alberto Moreno, Origi, Jordan Henderson and Can went close but it was never convincing. Bogdan did well to thwart Ighalo but by then the damage was done. Ighalo had the final word when he nodded home Valon Behrami's cross late on. There was no hand holding in front of the supporters this week. The mass of empty seats in the away end at the final whistle was a damning indictment.

The January sales can't come soon enough.

MATCH FACTS

Watford : Gomes, Nyom, Britos, Cathcart, Ake, Capoue, Watson, Abdi (Behrami 79), Deeney, Jurado (Anyá 76), Ighalo (Guedioura 88).

Not used : Arlauskis, Oulare, Holebas, Diamanti.

Liverpool : Bogdan, Clyne, Skrtel (Origi 41), Sakho, Moreno, Henderson, Can, Lucas, Lallana (Ibe 74), Coutinho, Firmino (Benteke 74).

Not used : Fulton, Toure, Randall, Allen.

Referee : Mark Clattenburg **Attendance** : 20, 707 **Goals** : Ake 3, Ighalo 15, Ighalo 85 **Bookings** : Britos.

Man of the match : Jordan Henderson. Best of a very bad bunch.

Watford Observer

Nathan Ake and Odion Ighalo score as Watford secure stunning Premier League win over Liverpool

Watford have recorded some great victories at [Vicarage Road](#) over the years. The win secured on Sunday, December 20, 2015 can now be added to the list after the Hornets produced a stunning performance to topple Liverpool 3-0 to move within a point of the Champions League.

After three successive wins, conventional wisdom had it that this game was meant to be the start of a Premier League reality check for the Hornets as they embarked on a sequence of festive fixtures that will also take in Chelsea, Tottenham Hotspur and Manchester City. Conventional wisdom, what conventional wisdom? Quique Sanchez Flores' men never looked back from the moment they took an early lead and proceeded to produce a display that was of the highest quality in every department to leave their supposedly more illustrious opponents shell-shocked. Watford were handed the perfect start after two minutes when Adam Bogdan dropped a Ben Watson corner and Nathan Ake pounced to make it 1-0. That would have raised eyebrows in the wider football world but by the 16th minute the shockwaves had intensified as Troy Deeney played in Odion Ighalo, who demonstrated superb strength to out-muscle Martin Skrtel before doubling his side's lead.

A reaction from Liverpool would have been expected after that. They tried to mount one but were simply second best in every department for the remainder of the first half as the hosts went into the break in command and with a degree of relative comfort. The visitors had more of the play after the break but they were unable to fashion too many opportunities as the Hornets remained resolute en route to securing yet another top-flight clean sheet.

And the counter-attack always looked like it would reap rewards for Flores' side and so it proved in the closing stages when Ighalo nodded home his second from close range after being set up by Valon Behrami.

Flores was able to name an unchanged side from the team that made it three successive wins at Sunderland last weekend after Almen Abdi recovered from illness. Jurgen Klopp was always going to have to make two changes from the starting XI that drew 2-2 at home to West Bromwich Albion last time out due to injuries to Dejan Lovren and James Milner but ultimately he made four.

Goalkeeper Simon Mignolet also missed out due to a tight hamstring so Bogdan started in between the uprights, while Christian Benteke was dropped to the bench. The three outfield players to come in were the fit-again Mamadou Sakho, Lucas and Roberto Firmino. Watford started positively, winning their first corner inside two minutes after Ake had used his pace to almost get round the back of Nathaniel Clyne. And from that set piece, the hosts got off to a dream start courtesy of a bad Bogdan blunder. Ben Watson took the corner from the left, Troy Deeney went up to challenge Bogdan but didn't make contact as the keeper caught the ball but then dropped it and as he gathered it again Ake managed to knock it from his grasp and put it into the net to make it 1-0 with his first goal for the Hornets. The visitors had a case for claiming a free-kick should have been awarded but Mark Clattenburg allowed the goal to stand, much to the delight of a jubilant Vicarage Road. The home side almost created another opening when Deeney dispossessed a nervous-looking Sakho but his attempted pass from right to left across the face of the 18-yard box was cut out by a stretching Martin Skrtel. The Reds won two corners as they looked to get back on terms as early as possible and Heurelho Gomes had to drop to his left to hold onto Philippe Coutinho's attempted right-footed curler. The Hornets withstood that spell of pressure though, and in the 15th minute took the game by the scruff of the neck thanks to the latest spell of superb inter-play from their terrific front pairing. As Lucas tried to lift the ball upfield, Deeney had come short and intercepted to lob it into the path of the run of Ighalo. Skrtel would have been favourite to win that contest but Watford's top scorer simply showed greater strength and desire to win the ball and knock out to his right before hitting a low finish across and beyond Bogdan to make it 2-0 with his 11th goal of the campaign. Alberto Moreno was perhaps fortunate to escape a yellow card for an over-zealous challenge on Allan Nyom in which the Liverpool left-back came off worse. But their opponents were playing the better football, looking comfortable and in command and in the 33rd minute came very close to making it 3-0.

Date: 20 December 2015

Opposition: Watford

Competition: League

Times	Telegraph	Watford Observer
Guardian	Mirror	BBC
Independent	Mail	Echo

20 December
2015

Deeney started the business end of a move when he chested a delivery from the right into the path of Jose Manuel Jurado. Bogdan beat him to the ball but his punch hit the back of a teammate and Ighalo was unable to get sufficient contact to force it over the line before Skrtel was able to clear.

The home side kept play alive though, and the ball was played back in from the right to Jurado, who hit a right-footed snap shot which Bogdan managed to push around his near post.

The visitors suffered a further blow three minutes before the interval when Skrtel, who had been struggling with an injury he received earlier in the half, was forced off and replaced by Divock Origi as Lucas dropped back into defence.

Klopp's men were preparing to defend a corner at that stage and Watson's in-swinging delivery from the left posed more problems, bouncing in the six-yard box at the near post before a stretching Bogdan managed to scramble it away.

That was the Hornets' last opening of the half at the end of which they were rightly given a standing ovation after a performance better in every department than their opponents.

Liverpool, as would be expected, started the second period on the front foot and Miguel Britos had to make a good block to thwart an Adam Lallana inside the opening minute. Moreno then fired into the side netting when he should have crossed before Origi held off Britos but Gomes was equal to his shot.

The Hornets though, continued to stand firm at the back with the counter-attack increasingly looking a potential avenue to exploit with Deeney and Ighalo's pressing and movement stretching the visitors' depleted rearguard on more than one occasion.

But Flores' men did come very close to netting a third on the hour-mark when Sakho was latest defender to be left looking foolish by the Ighalo scoop but Jurado was not quite alive to the opportunity when the ball was played to him in the six-yard box.

But it was the Spaniard, who was having a very effective game, who was to set up his side's next opportunity three minutes later when he put Ighalo clean through with an incisive pass. The striker looked odds-on to make it 3-0 but Bogdan read his intentions and saved well.

Gomes had not been particularly extended but he was forced into a good save in the 66th minute, tipping over Jordan Henderson's dipping half-volley after the England midfielder had got the better of Ake.

The Brazilian also had to get down to push away a drive from Emre Can following a rare poor clearance from Britos before Klopp played his final hand in the 74th minute, bringing on Benteke and Jordan Ibe for Lallana and Firmino. Flores also chose to make a change shortly after as Anya came on for Jurado.

Britos picked up the game's first yellow card for hauling back Benteke, who nodded wide from the resultant free-kick.

Behrami then made his return to action as a 79th-minute replacement for Abdi and six minutes later came the icing on a wonderful Hornets cake.

The home side sprung the counter as Ighalo fed Deeney and he played the ball out to Behrami, who had sprinted up in support and into space on the right side of the penalty area. The Swiss substitute didn't bother taking a touch but played in a first-time cross to an unmarked Ighalo, who calmly planted a header past Bogdan to make it 12 for the season and 3-0.

The scorer was afforded his own personal standing ovation as he was replaced by Adlene Guedioura for the closing stages as Watford wrapped up another win that deserves to take its place up with the greatest in the club's history.

Watford: Gomes; Nyom, Cathcart, Britos, Ake; Capoue, Watson; Abdi (Behrami 79), Deeney, Jurado (Anya 76); Ighalo (Guedioura 88). Not used: Arlauskis, Oulare, olebas, Diamanti.

Liverpool: Bogdan; Clyne, Skrtel (Origi 42), Sakho, Moreno; Lucas, Henderson, Can; Lallana (Benteke 74), Firmino (Ibe 74), Coutinho. Not used: Fulton, Toure, Randall, Allen.

Bookings: Britos for a foul on Benteke (78).

Referee: Mark Clattenburg.



Watford profited from Liverpool's calamitous opening at Vicarage Road to continue their remarkable rise with a fourth consecutive Premier League win.

Adam Bogdan dropped a corner with the very first touch of his league debut, allowing Nathan Ake to stab the home side ahead after just three minutes.

Odion Ighalo doubled the lead, firing in off the post from a tight angle.

And the Nigerian sealed a deserved victory with his 12th of the season, nodding in from Valon Behrami's cross.

The Hornets, promoted from the Championship last term, move to within a point of the Champions League places.

Defeat for Jurgen Klopp's Liverpool, who are now without a win in their last three league games, leaves them ninth - four points behind Quique Flores' side in seventh.

Were Liverpool really that bad?

With regular goalkeeper Simon Mignolet absent from the squad with a hamstring injury, 28-year-old Bogdan - who had previously only played in the League Cup since his summer arrival - was called in.

Just over two minutes into the match, he bounced Ben Watson's corner at his own feet rather than making what looked like an easy catch. Replays suggested he might have had two hands on the ball when Ake pounced, but nonetheless it was a poor error.

Bogdan said: "I had both hands on the ball but we are talking about a split-second. It's not easy for the referee to see. If I catch the first ball, there is no second one."

"Something went wrong, I have to think about it again. It was a mistake and I will learn from it."

Hungarian Bogdan didn't cover himself in glory when punching a through ball into Lucas' face either though, and his nervousness seemed to spread through the Reds defence.

Martin Skrtel, who came off injured before half-time, was arguably too weak when trying to steer Ighalo away from goal for Watford's second and his fellow centre-back Mamadou Sakho was dangerously ponderous in possession.

Sakho, returning after six weeks out, also fell over under no pressure to allow Ighalo in on goal in the second half, with Bogdan making partial amends via a fine reflex save.

Watford more than Deeney and Ighalo combined

Troy Deeney and Ighalo have created more goalscoring chances for one another than any other pairing this season. They were at it again for Watford's second as simple Deeney ball over the top put Ighalo through with only Skrtel for company. The 26-year-old brushed off the Liverpool defender's weak challenge and fired in off the post from a tight angle, before adding his second with a simple header to bring his tally for 2015 to 28 goals - the best return in England's professional leagues.

If Watford were surprised to have gone ahead so early and so comfortably, the rest of their performance showed no sign of it. The Hornets were composed and committed as they outplayed a disappointing Liverpool side.

There was none of the high-intensity, slick interplay that has characterised the best performances of Klopp's time at Anfield so far, and instead it was Watford who claimed a deserved victory.

Man of the match - Odion Ighalo

What the managers said

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp: "If you watch the TV, you see Bogdan had the ball under control and both hands were on the ball."

"It should not be allowed but first of all he should not drop the ball. That is the mistake of the referee but the biggest mistake was our reaction."

"It was a deserved win for Watford. Not because of our faults, but more because of the reaction to our faults."

Watford manager Quique Flores: "Of course we want to dream but we want to remain humble. This is our one advantage, because the Premier League is very tough."

"We have a lot of matches and we never underestimate the teams we play. We are completely happy with the performance. It was an amazing victory against an amazing team."

The stats you need to know

Watford have won four consecutive top-flight games for the first time since April 1987; their joint-longest winning run (also achieved in November 1982, January 1984 and December 1984)

With 28 points, they have equalled their tally from their last season in the Premier League (2006-07). It is their joint-highest tally in a Premier League campaign Liverpool conceded as many goals against Watford in this match as they had in their previous four Premier League meetings combined

Watford's 3-0 win was the biggest margin of victory they have enjoyed against Liverpool

What next?

Watford play Chelsea, Tottenham and Manchester City in their next three fixtures

over Christmas and New Year, while Liverpool host leaders Leicester on Boxing

Day before away games against Sunderland and West Ham.

Date: 20 December 2015

Opposition: Watford

Competition: League

Times	Telegraph	Watford Observer
Guardian	Mirror	BBC
Independent	Mail	Echo

20 December
2015



Full time Match ends, Watford 3, Liverpool 0.

90:00+3:14 Full time Second Half ends, Watford 3, Liverpool 0.

90:00+2:45 Attempt missed. Jordan Ibe (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box misses to the right. Assisted by Alberto Moreno.

90:00+1:59 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Ikechi Anya.

90:00+1:34 Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.

90:00+1:34 Foul by Nyom (Watford.

89:35 Offside, Liverpool. Alberto Moreno tries a through ball, but Christian Benteke is caught offside.

88:06 Substitution Substitution Substitution, Watford. Adlène Guédioura replaces Odion Ighalo.

88:01 Delay over. They are ready to continue.

86:39 Delay in match Miguel Britos (Watford because of an injury.

85:54 Foul by Jordan Henderson (Liverpool.

85:54 Valon Behrami (Watford wins a free kick in the defensive half.

84:27 Goal scored Goal! Goal! Watford 3, Liverpool 0. Odion Ighalo (Watford header from the centre of the box to the centre of the goal. Assisted by Valon Behrami with a cross.

83:07 Offside, Liverpool. Philippe Coutinho tries a through ball, but Christian Benteke is caught offside.

81:45 Foul by Mamadou Sakho (Liverpool.

81:45 Odion Ighalo (Watford wins a free kick in the attacking half.

79:48 Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing.

79:48 Foul by Nyom (Watford.

79:18 Substitution Substitution Substitution, Watford. Valon Behrami replaces Almen Abdi.

78:31 Attempt missed. Christian Benteke (Liverpool header from the centre of the box misses to the left. Assisted by Jordan Henderson following a set piece situation.

77:50 Booking Miguel Britos (Watford is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.

77:43 Christian Benteke (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.

77:43 Foul by Miguel Britos (Watford.

76:57 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Nyom.

76:23 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Miguel Britos.

76:21 Attempt blocked. Jordan Henderson (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked.

75:29 Delay over. They are ready to continue.

75:20 Substitution Substitution Substitution, Watford. Ikechi Anya replaces Jurado.

74:56 Delay in match Emre Can (Liverpool because of an injury.

73:49 Attempt blocked. Jordan Ibe (Liverpool right footed shot from the right side of the box is blocked.

73:37 Substitution Substitution Substitution, Liverpool. Christian Benteke replaces Roberto Firmino.

73:23 Substitution Substitution Substitution, Liverpool. Jordan Ibe replaces Adam Lallana.

71:37 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Heurelho Gomes.

71:35 Attempt saved. Emre Can (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom right corner.

69:55 Foul by Lucas Leiva (Liverpool.

69:55 Odion Ighalo (Watford wins a free kick on the left wing.

65:41 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Heurelho Gomes.

65:38 Attempt saved. Jordan Henderson (Liverpool right footed shot from the right side of the box is saved in the top centre of the goal. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.

62:46 Corner, Watford. Conceded by Adam Bogdan.

62:44 Attempt saved. Odion Ighalo (Watford right footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Jurado with a through ball.

60:18 Attempt missed. Adam Lallana (Liverpool header from the centre of the box is close, but misses to the right. Assisted by Jordan Henderson.

59:41 Divock Origi (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.

59:41 Foul by Nyom (Watford.

58:31 Corner, Watford. Conceded by Adam Lallana.

56:46 Offside, Liverpool. Divock Origi tries a through ball, but Jordan Henderson is caught offside.

55:34 Corner, Watford. Conceded by Jordan Henderson.

53:07 Offside, Liverpool. Adam Bogdan tries a through ball, but Roberto Firmino is caught offside.

50:23 Offside, Liverpool. Philippe Coutinho tries a through ball, but Roberto Firmino is caught offside.

49:19 Foul by Adam Lallana (Liverpool.

49:19 Nyom (Watford wins a free kick in the defensive half.

48:33 Offside, Liverpool. Lucas Leiva tries a through ball, but Divock Origi is caught offside.

47:15 Attempt saved. Divock Origi (Liverpool right footed shot from the right side of the box is saved in the bottom right corner. Assisted by Emre Can.

46:28 Attempt missed. Alberto Moreno (Liverpool left footed shot from a difficult angle on the left is close, but misses to the left.

45:47 Attempt blocked. Adam Lallana (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Divock Origi with a headed pass.

45:30 Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.

45:30 Foul by Etienne Capoue (Watford.

45:00 Second Half begins Watford 2, Liverpool 0.

45:00+3:07 Half time First Half ends, Watford 2, Liverpool 0.

45:00+2:45 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Craig Cathcart.

44:21 Corner, Watford. Conceded by Alberto Moreno.

43:27 Offside, Liverpool. Philippe Coutinho tries a through ball, but Jordan Henderson is caught offside.

42:41 Offside, Watford. Craig Cathcart tries a through ball, but Troy Deeney is caught offside.

41:59 Offside, Liverpool. Roberto Firmino tries a through ball, but Philippe Coutinho is caught offside.

40:50 Delay over. They are ready to continue.

40:45 Substitution Substitution Substitution, Liverpool. Divock Origi replaces Martin Skrtel because of an injury.

39:14 Delay in match Martin Skrtel (Liverpool because of an injury.

38:47 Corner, Watford. Conceded by Martin Skrtel.

38:13 Offside, Liverpool. Martin Skrtel tries a through ball, but Philippe Coutinho is caught offside.

36:43 Foul by Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool.

36:43 Ben Watson (Watford wins a free kick in the defensive half.

32:59 Corner, Watford. Conceded by Adam Bogdan.

32:57 Attempt saved. Jurado (Watford right footed shot from the right side of the box is saved in the bottom right corner. Assisted by Valon Behrami with a cross.

32:19 Attempt blocked. Etienne Capoue (Watford right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Almen Abdi.

31:02 Delay over. They are ready to continue.

28:58 Delay in match Martin Skrtel (Liverpool because of an injury.

27:40 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Nyom.

21:54 Foul by Alberto Moreno (Liverpool.

21:54 Nyom (Watford wins a free kick in the defensive half.

20:23 Foul by Emre Can (Liverpool.

20:23 Etienne Capoue (Watford wins a free kick in the defensive half.

19:30 Foul by Martin Skrtel (Liverpool.

19:30 Troy Deeney (Watford wins a free kick in the defensive half.

18:25 Emre Can (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.

18:25 Foul by Almen Abdi (Watford.

14:51 Goal scored Goal! Goal! Watford 2, Liverpool 0. Odion Ighalo (Watford right footed shot from the right side of the box to the bottom left corner.

13:26 Foul by Emre Can (Liverpool.

13:26 Etienne Capoue (Watford wins a free kick in the defensive half.

12:28 Offside, Liverpool. Jordan Henderson tries a through ball, but Roberto Firmino is caught offside.

10:20 Attempt saved. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Jordan Henderson.

9:20 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Etienne Capoue.

8:56 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Craig Cathcart.

8:03 Attempt blocked. Nathaniel Clyne (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked.

2:05 Goal scored Goal! Goal! Watford 1, Liverpool 0. Nathan Aké (Watford left footed shot from very close range to the bottom left corner following a corner.

1:33 Corner, Watford. Conceded by Nathaniel Clyne.

0:00 First Half begins.

0:00 Lineups are announced and players are warming up.