

Competition: League

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Allen brings happy end to Mignolet's horror show

Jürgen Klopp had to cancel his skiing holiday when taking the Liverpool job, but he would never have enjoyed as much fun in the Austrian resort of Ischgl as in the snow of Anfield. As the white stuff tumbled from the heavens, the Liverpool manager celebrated Joe Allen's late equaliser from Christian Benteke's knock-down by running along the touchline, beating his chest, screaming and punching the air. It was a celebration befitting a manic match. Klopp's dance of joy was so wild he made David Pleat look like Fred Astaire and Bob Stokoe resemble Gene Kelly. Klopp's outpouring of emotion was understandable. His introduction of Ben-teke and Allen had paid off while the third substitute, Steven Caulker, coming on for his debut in attack, added to the confusion in the Arsenal area. Liverpool's persistence was rewarded. They deserved a point from a breathless game for their irrepressible attacking, especially in the first half when they led twice but were let down by Simon Mignolet's hesitant goalkeeping. It would have been a travesty if Roberto Firmino, the Brazilian who scored two exquisite goals, had ended up on the losing side. Klopp's reaction is one of many reasons why the Kop has so taken to his German manager. He responded to the late goal as a fan. He proves that the game is about the heart as well as the head, about passion. He is a fascinating mix of the emotional and the cerebral.

As Klopp took off from the technical area, Arsene Wenger looked downcast. His decision to remove the influential Joel Campbell for Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain with 15 minutes left, and Arsenal leading 3-2, simply invited Liverpool on even more. Campbell might have been tiring but he was contributing defensively as well as attacking and was missed.

It was deeply frustrating for Arsenal as they had shown resilience in twice coming from behind, and then taking the lead. It was particularly frustrating for Olivier Giroud who took a battering, suffered a cut head, and scored two fine goals, which he thought had brought Arsenal victory. While Arsenal would usually celebrate news of defeat for Tottenham Hotspur it meant Leicester City had won, so moving back alongside Arsenal at the top of a weird Barclays Premier League that nobody seems prepared to take a grip of.

At least the season is producing some firecrackers of games. This was classic Premier League fare: fast and furious and riddled with flaws. It was also great entertainment, unless you were a member of Mignolet's dwindling fanclub. How the Belgium goalkeeper has been offered a five-year contract is a mystery on this evidence. Liverpool had torn into Arsenal from Mike Jones's opening whistle. They pressed relentlessly in keeping with the Klopp creed, pouring forward, urged on by the Kop. Their early determination was embodied by Emre Can, whisking the ball away from Mesut Ozil, closing down Hector Bellerin, and then putting in a step-over to move away from Aaron Ramsey. Can then released Adam Lallana through the middle but he delayed his shot and stumbled.

The ubiquitous Can helped to force the breakthrough after ten minutes. The Germany player unleashed a powerful shot that Petr Cech pushed away. Unfortunately, the Arsenal goalkeeper did not push it far enough wide and Firmino seized on the ball, turning and driving an unstoppable left-footed shot between Laurent Koscielny's legs and in past Cech: 1-0. Klopp punched the air. Firmino sprinted away, ripping off his shirt, throwing it to the heavens. One of the pettiest laws in the book meant that Firmino was cautioned. Arsenal's resilience soon showed within four minutes. Giroud leapt with Mamadou Sakho to contest Cech's long clearance, taking a nasty knock to the back of his head. Kolo Toure headed out but Ramsey was lurking, sweeping the ball to Campbell and then darting on an angled run into the box. Campbell turned and placed a perfect reverse pass behind Liverpool's defence for the onrushing Ramsey. Nobody in red had followed him, allowing Ramsey to direct a low shot that beat Mignolet at the near-post: 1-1. Liverpool stormed back, reclaiming the lead five minutes later. Jordan Henderson's persistence kept a Liverpool move alive before working the ball to James Milner, who found Firmino on the edge of the Arsenal area. His finish was sensational, flying in over Cech: 2-1. This was end to end football. Arsenal fought back. Ramsey lifted the ball over Mignolet but Sakho covered back to clear. Arsenal came again, Ramsey's corner curled in at the near post, clearing the jumping Theo Walcott. Giroud was hungriest, getting ahead of Sakho to get the faintest of flicks. Mignolet should have gathered but allowed the ball to hit him and bounce over the line: 2-2. Arsenal had heard all the talk of this being their year, of rivals struggling, and they went for it after the break. Campbell was giving one of his best performances of the season. When Bellerin powered forward, brushing aside the tiring Milner, the ball was worked to Campbell. He turned and stroked the ball to Giroud, whose response was a combination of poise and power. Turning Toure effortlessly, Giroud drove the ball past Mignolet: 2-3. But then came Allen: 3-3. Klopp was off and running.

Liverpool (4-3-3): S Mignolet 3 -- N Clyne 5, K Toure 4, M Sakho 4, A Moreno 5 -- J Henderson 6, E Can 7 (sub: J Allen, 82min), J Milner 6 (sub: C Benteke, 66 6) -- J Ibe 5, R Firmino 8, A Lallana 6 (sub: S Caulker, 88). Substitutes not used: L Leiva, B Smith, D Ward, J Teixeira. Booked: Clyne, Firmino.

Arsenal (4-2-3-1): P Cech 5 -- H Bellerin 6, P Mertesacker 5, L Koscielny 6, N Monreal 5 -- M Flamini 5, A Ramsey 7 -- J Campbell 7 (sub: A Oxlade, Chamberlain, 75), M Ozil 8 (sub: M Arteta 87), T Walcott 7 (sub: K Gibbs, 76) -- O Giroud 8.

Substitutes not used: Gabriel, C Chambers, A Iwobi, M Macey.

Referee: M Jones.

Liverpool and Arsenal draw thriller after Firmino and Giroud doubles

Every year, there are certain matches when the team who go on to win the Premier League can look back and identify key moments in the title race, when everything falls into place and they show all the qualities that champions need. For Arsenal, it had been tantalisingly close to being one of those games, taking control under the Anfield floodlights, in front of a baying crowd, and heading towards a victory that would have represented a compelling statement of their ambitions. The disappointment for Arsène Wenger's team was considerable given there was still one late, dramatic twist to a wild and enthralling night of attacking football. Arsenal had fought back from going behind on two separate occasions during that blitz of four goals in a pulsating 15-minute period of the first half. Roberto Firmino scored both of them for Liverpool and Wenger's men had to show all their competitive courage before Olivier Giroud's second goal gave them the lead for the first time. Aaron Ramsey had fired in the first equaliser and Giroud, playing as well as at any time in his Arsenal career, ran the line with great expertise, skill and courage.

Yet Liverpool had played with a wonderful sense of adventure, too. The two sides have now accumulated 41 goals between them in their last 10 encounters but, for Arsenal, the last of them was a grievous setback, coming off the right boot of Joe Allen just as the electronic scoreboard in the corner of the Kop was ticking towards stoppage time. Allen's volley was taken with control, running on to a header from another substitute, Christian Benteke, and firing his shot into the bottom corner to spare Liverpool a home defeat.

It was a breathless, raucous night and, by the end, it felt like a trick of the mind that Liverpool had gone into this match having never scored fewer goals at the corresponding stage of a league season. Klopp's men were quick to the ball, moving it with speed and confidence and, finally, Firmino has shown Anfield the qualities that persuaded the club to spend £29m on him last summer.

Advertisement

Firmino had scored only once in his first 24 appearances since joining from Hoffenheim but this was the night when the Brazilian introduced himself properly. His second goal, in particular, was a beauty. Twenty-five yards out, Firmino went for a curler and delivered his shot with just the right amount of bend to put the ball into the top corner of Petr Cech's net.

Liverpool had taken the lead in the 10th minute when Theo Walcott committed the cardinal sin of trying to dribble the ball out of his own penalty area rather than attempting to clear his lines. Walcott was suddenly surrounded by players in red, lost the ball and Arsenal were immediately vulnerable. Emre Can had the first shot and, though Cech parried it away, Firmino seized on the rebound, turned the ball on to his left foot and scored with a low shot that went through Laurent Koscielny's legs to wrong-foot Arsenal's goalkeeper.

Klopp's team pinned their opponents back throughout the opening exchanges but their problem was in defence where they looked susceptible far too often. Joel Campbell was a difficult opponent for Alberto Moreno. Walcott seemed determined to make amends for his earlier mistake and Mesut Özil was prominently involved without being at his most exhilarating.

More than anyone, Giroud took the game to Liverpool. He needed his head to be stapled after taking a bang from Mamadou Sakho in the first half but it was typical of how he played that, in winning that aerial challenge, he had helped to set up Ramsey's goal. Giroud made it 2-2 with an improvisational flick to deceive Simon Mignolet from a corner to the near post and his next goal, 10 minutes into the second half, was another mix of high skill and confidence.

The French striker had his back to goal when he latched on to Campbell's pass but he spun expertly, despite the close proximity of a couple of defenders, and swept a swivelling left-foot shot into the far corner.

The disappointment for Liverpool at half-time was the way they had been pegged back so quickly after Firmino's goals. Campbell's beautifully weighted pass set up Ramsey four minutes after they had gone behind, and it was another quick response from Wenger's team when Firmino curled in Liverpool's second. Wenger cannot have been satisfied with the number of chances Liverpool created but this was a night that told us something about Arsenal's spirit. Unfortunately for them, they were facing a team forbidden from accepting defeat lightly.

The rain and sleet was so heavy at the end that leaks started to appear in the roof of the old Main Stand and so much water began to cascade down that various suites had to be closed off afterwards. Liverpool roused themselves on a greasy surface and perhaps Arsenal were guilty of defending too deeply as the home team started to aim long balls into the penalty area and Klopp brought on his new loan signing, Steven Caulker, as an emergency striker. Allen applied the final flourish and Arsenal, so close to a crucial victory, will have to hope that moment does not have lasting ramifications come the end of the season.

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The Mail

ALLEN'S LATE night hit; Klopp loves it fast and furious as Joe saves him in thriller

LIVERPOOL 3 Firmino 10, 19 Allen 90 ARSENAL 3 Ramsey 14, Giroud 25, 55

CHRISTIAN Benteke rose high, a chest higher than any other player in the box. The header looped as Arsenal scrambled to clear. Joe Allen arrived first and Jurgen Klopp was off. Down the touchline, as is his style when Liverpool keep going to the bitter end. It is really all he has to cling to right now, but it kept him warm on a snowy night. Twice Liverpool took the lead through Roberto Firmino in the first half, twice they surrendered that advantage from as good as the next attack. Then, in the 55th minute, Arsenal moved ahead and it seemed as if they had closed the game out. Klopp introduced Benteke from the bench on 66 minutes but it seemed to make little impression. Liverpool attacked in front of The Kop. They used to say they could suck the ball into the net at that end. This season, too often, they have seemed out of puff. But not this time. This was a big point for Liverpool, bigger in terms of the title race. Olivier Giroud's smartly taken goal should have won it for Arsenal. At one stage they were four points clear, with Leicester drawing at Tottenham. Giroud deserved more at least. He wore a small dressing on the back of his head, a wound from an earlier clash in the build-up to Arsenal's first goal, and it was his flick that led to the mistake that forced Arsenal's second. The third, though, was his. Hector Bellerin fed the ball to Joel Campbell, who slipped it to Giroud. In one deft movement he sent Kolo Toure the wrong way -- he may still be trying to gain re-entry to the ground to finish his shift in fact -- and tucked the ball away into the corner past Simon Mignolet.

'A silent song' was Klopp's description of the football Arsenal played under Wenger. He said he preferred heavy metal. 'I like it loud,' he concluded. In which case, he would have loved this, in particular a first-half that might as well have been orchestrated from upstairs by Lemmy of Motorhead.

It was headbanging, migraine-inducing stuff, complete with four goals in the space of 15 minutes, some frantic rifling and a couple of mesmerising solos. Wenger stood on the touchline as if trying to make sense of it all; Klopp went nuts. It is pointless making predictions about the Premier League this season -- not the table, not the individual matches. What Arsenal team would turn up at Anfield? The one vanquished 4-0 by Southampton, or that which swept aside both Manchester clubs in imperious fashion. And would we be treated to the Liverpool team that demolished Manchester City, or the one that can't seem to get a handle on West Ham? In the end, it was a bit of both. We saw the best of Liverpool, in the performance of the season so far from Roberto Firmino, and the worst in the way they failed to hang on to a lead for more than a matter of minutes and struggled consistently against set pieces. We saw the worst of Arsenal in sloppy defensive errors that led to goals, but the best, too, in the wit with which they got back into the game. At times, it wasn't even heavy metal. It was punk. The game was ten minutes old when Theo Walcott made the error that led to Liverpool's first goal. He lost control of the ball overrunning it into the path of Emre Can, who cut inside and shot through a crowd.

Petr Cech saw it late, but reacted magnificently, parrying the ball with both hands. It was his misfortune that it fell to Firmino and that he should have reacted with such quickness of thought. He altered his angle swiftly and shot through the legs of Laurent Koscielny, giving Cech no chance. This time he genuinely was blindsided. It was a beautiful finish, exactly what Liverpool hoped they were getting for PS29million last summer. And it lasted all of four minutes.

The ball was played upfield and Giroud got the better of Mamadou Sakho in the air, although the pair clashed heads and the Arsenal man required treatment. That's no matter short-term, though, because Liverpool failed to clear the loose ball which was picked up by Campbell. He played the sweetest reverse pass into Aaron Ramsey which so flummoxed the Liverpool defence that the Welshman as good as passed the ball in at the near post past Mignolet.

Liverpool's goalkeeper could have done better, mind you -- although it may not be the last time you read that sentence this season.

So back up the pitch we went where, five minutes later, Arsenal spurned several attempts to clear the danger in midfield -- including two ricochets off the hapless Campbell -- before James Milner finally fed the ball to Firmino on the edge of area again. This was another pearl -- a curling, teasing shot that fooled Cech into thinking he had a chance, before moving tantalisingly out of his reach. This was the Firmino Klopp hoped to have inherited.

Marked as an overpriced flop before Liverpool changed manager, Klopp said he was pleased to be working with him -- announcing he had wanted to take him to Borussia Dortmund, from Hoffenheim, but couldn't afford the fee. Now we know why. A pity that he never really got the chance to enjoy such a splendid performance. Just six minutes after giving Liverpool the lead a second time, Firmino was reined in again. This really was a calamity for Mignolet. If he can be questioned for the first goal, the second was hell on toast.

Ramsey benefitted from a lovely, clipped pass over the top of Liverpool's back line and lobbed Mignolet, before Sakho headed over with the ball goalbound. From the resulting corner, however, a flick by Giroud struck the inside of his standing leg and diverted the ball into the goal. Giroud claimed it, Mignolet didn't, but the dubious goals panel is likely to make his contribution plain.

His luck improved in the 28th minute, however, when Walcott got round the back and crossed for Giroud. The Frenchman had an open goal but half cleared with his finish. The ball rebounding to a grateful Mignolet still trying to recover.

The Daily Telegraph

Liverpool late show thwarts Arsenal in Anfield thriller

Liverpool 3 Firmino 10, 19, Allen 90 Arsenal 3 Ramsey 14, Giroud 25, 55 Att: 44,109

There is something completely bonkers about this Premier League. There are thrills, there are spills and there have been plenty of bellyaches in this most compelling of competitions which was summed up on a crazy evening of chaos at a rain-swept, sleet-drenched Anfield. The grand old stadium was as leaky as the defences. The way in which Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp tore down the touchline, his face etched in a fierce, typically intense celebration after Joe Allen's late, late equaliser, summed it all up and no one can rebuke him this time for then leading his players towards The Kop to give their thanks afterwards.

There should be no rebuke either for Arsenal who, this morning, will stand accused of failing to see out this contest which would have strengthened their position at the top of the table and their gathering claim to be crowned champions. But they showed deep wells of belief, ability and resilience, even if they now only lead Leicester City on goal difference.

It will have felt bitterly disappointing for them at the end, as articulated by their striker Olivier Giroud, who scored twice and was outstanding, but occasionally there are matches of such compelling entertainment that the actual scoreline almost appears to fade. Twenty-four hours after the Uniteds of Newcastle and Manchester played out a hugely entertaining 3-3 draw here was a game with the same scoreline to top it. Such is the Premier League. Liverpool did not deserve to lose. Neither did Arsenal. Liverpool were driven on with a relentless frenzy. Arsenal threw their bodies on the line and played with an iron belief that saw them twice come from behind, with Roberto Firmino also claiming two fine goals. Inevitably there were grievances. Any analysis will show that Liverpool have a continuing problem with goalkeeper Simon Mignolet, who was at fault for one goal, possibly two, while the sight of the hulking on-loan central defender Steven Caulker - on his debut - being pushed on as an auxiliary centre-forward was slightly surreal for a club of this stature. Mignolet was not the only one making mistakes. Yes, this was brilliant boxoffice, exciting, exhilarating but also error-strewn. At times, the defending was lamentable, although there was mitigation with the intense pace and commitment of the encounter. As Arsene Wenger said - both teams gave absolutely everything. By the final whistle they were rinsed as well as drenched. Both were bruised; neither were battered.

Occasionally this sport can be just wild fun. Liverpool set the tone for that - and Arsenal responded superbly. Wenger conceded that there had been a curious apprehension to his team in those opening minutes, in which they were simply forced back by the ferocity of Liverpool's approach. Emre Can was the catalyst and he hounded down Theo Walcott, hustling him into losing possession as he foolishly tried to run the ball out of defence. It was quickly turned back to Can by Alberto Moreno and the German's shot was pushed away weakly by Petr Cech to Firmino, who adjusted quickly to send the ball back past the unsighted goalkeeper. The atmosphere crackled.

Liverpool pushed on and it seemed that Arsenal would struggle to contain them - just as they had been overwhelmed in that astonishing title charge under Brendan Rodgers two seasons ago - but if this is a different Liverpool then it is also a different Arsenal. They hit back. Giroud won a header - and took a whack from Mamadou Sakho - with the ball dropping to Kolo Toure whose clearance was cut out by Aaron Ramsey, rebounding to Joel Campbell. The impressive Costa Rican slid the ball through to Ramsey who had continued his run. Played onside by Toure, the midfielder - too easily - beat Mignolet with a low shot inside the near post. The handbrake was off. The play rebounded end to end. Defences were unpicked. This was heavy metal football with the decibels cranked up. Crazy, crazy Premier League and, then, Liverpool reclaimed the lead. It came as Jordan Henderson snapped into two chal-lenges, James Milner fed Firmino and the Brazilian, playing as the 'false nine' with Christian Benteke again relegated to the bench, took a touch before bending a wonderful right-footed shot up and over Cech from the edge of the penalty area. It was full throttle football. Walcott lifted the ball over the defence and Ramsey ran on, beating Mignolet, only for Sakho to scramble back and head the ball off the line. Ramsey's corner was whipped in and Giroud got the deffest of touches to send it past Mignolet who, again, was beaten at his near post. The work rate and commitment remained. Mistakes had been made, there had been vivid moments of brilliance and a relentless desire to attack right up to half-time, when Firmino turned sharply and shot - with the ball clipping the crossbar. The break made little difference. Still the chances came. Campbell fired over, as did Moreno, Walcott dragged a shot wide and, then, Arsenal were in front. Liverpool were once more too loose in possession and Hector Bellerin stole in before Milner, sprinted forward and found Campbell, with the ball eventually breaking to Giroud, whose turn was as razor-sharp as his finish.

In a blink the ball was in the net. What did Liverpool have left? Opportunities came and went, Arsenal dug in and Klopp turned to Benteke - and Caulker - and the tactics were clear. As the fourth-of-ficial prepared to signal the minutes of added time, there was that one last chance. Henderson swung the ball in, Benteke rose and headed back across goal and into the danger area and there was the third substitute, Allen, of all people, to calmly volley beyond Cech. A great game, Klopp later said, a game that would not be easily forgotten.

Gloriously, he was right.

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LIVERPOOL

ECHO

Late flourishes are becoming a thing, Reds must look forward and other things we learned

Top four is still on - and late flourishes becoming a thing With stoppage time approaching, this was not the start Liverpool wanted to a massive double-header. The euphoria of leading the league leaders twice soon died down as reality, and a 3-2 lead for Arsenal, sunk in. Up popped Joe Allen to send the Kop into rapture. In reality, this is not the best result for Liverpool. On 89 minutes, they sat six points away from the top four. A minute later, still five. The difference is minimal, though it could also prove crucial come the end of the season. Yet this was more than a point. This was Liverpool, yet again, playing until the final whistle. Just like against West Brom, they rescued something with a late goal. It is a nice habit to pick up. Klopp's time at Dortmund was permeated with such late shows. He alluded to it himself in the aftermath of the Crystal Palace defeat. This was a world away from that.

When the German arrived, he was keen to downplay expectations. Now, in mid-January, in the midst of a hellish run of fixtures, perhaps it has become apparent why. With 21 games of the season gone, Liverpool are ninth. They sit five points away from Champions League qualification. But that doesn't seem so insurmountable when Liverpool can produce late shows like that.

For all the talk of Gegenpressing, it is pressing until the final moments that is proving the biggest positive of Klopp's reign so far. Klopp must plug leaks before building elsewhere

Anfield was still tingling after Roberto Firmino put Liverpool in front. The seats had barely stopped clattering. Twice.

And twice, those sounds, so sparse in this stadium this season, were soon followed by the thud of the Kop net being hit. For the first two goals, Liverpool held the lead for no more than 10 minutes.

For a team that has not been finding the net with much regularity in this campaign, that is a sin. It was a poor display of both in-game intelligence and defensively quality. No real nous to take the sting out a frantic game, no real needle to ensure the Gunners could fire blanks and no more.

Jurgen Klopp's frustration was evident. Mistakes, he claims, will happen; blame him, he implores. He can absorb in no longer.

How often can he watch a side, capable of playing the sort of football he wants on the front foot, then shoot themselves in it? Simon Mignolet was beaten at his near post for the opener and looked flat-footed for the second.

Mamadou Sakho, dazed from an earlier collision admittedly, found his leg in knots. Kolo Toure was hardly blameless, either, for Olivier Giroud's second strike. Klopp was no doubt prepared for his huge task he took on when coming to Merseyside. Doubters into believers, he said. First, before he begins setting foundations, he must fix the current ailment. Before becoming Klopp the builder, he must be a prime plumber – and plug those leaks at the back.

They won't score three every game. There is no guarantee they won't concede that, on this evidence, though.

In fixture that often looks back, Liverpool must look forward

In a fixture that has been punctuated with bursts of goalscoring activity – Robbie Fowler's four-minute hat trick, Liverpool's four-goal assault in 2014 – no surprise to see four goals inside 16 minutes.

Liverpool managed just half of those, however. There had been talk, in the build-up to the game, of how far Liverpool had fallen since that 5-1 win almost two years ago. Luis Suarez, Raheem Sterling and Steven Gerrard have gone; Daniel Sturridge, meanwhile, continues the cold mid-winter pre-season.

But some of the football on show on Wednesday evening was worthy of what was achieved in that five-goal hammering on that February afternoon.

It is all about small margins. Forget the defence, for there will be enough words to chastise over the next few days. Instead, fixate upon the strike force.

No Suarez, but another South American whose role was to galvanise. No Gerrard, but a Henderson still growing into the armband while recovering from injury. No Sterling, but Jordon Ibe, a player only just finding momentum and confidence under his new manager. It is no shame to not be at their level, and no revelation to say they are nowhere near. But that team was the result of a supernova explosion from Suarez, an unprecedented run of fitness from Sturridge, and over 18 months of working under a manager with his own ideas. It was not until the latter part of Brendan Rodgers' first season that the signs of that team started to show. This is just four months – 21 games – into Klopp's reign A reign over players he did not buy. Soon, the comparisons between this side and previous ones will stop. Perhaps when he begins to bring his players, and his style, to the team.

For now, the looking back does no one favour. Given this is a squad under development, and forever finding its feet which dangle above a trapdoor, looking forward is the only option.

Firmino shows both sides in supreme showing

Roberto Firmino did not just introduce himself to the Liverpool fans with his two goals against Arsenal. He took a chair, laid back and sipped a caipirinha.

This was the performance he, and Liverpool, had waited for. His role in the win against Manchester City cannot be understated, but that was in a supporting role;

a false 9 to the real deal, that night, wearing no.10.

There was no Philippe Coutinho against Arsenal. Instead, Adam Lallana, James Milner and Jordon Ibe – a real mixture in terms of talent, strengths and weaknesses. The onus, then, fell upon the Brazilian to be the real focal point of attack – and the provider of goals.

How he did that. How he showed both sides to his game; a game that saw the club put over £20m worth of faith in him. His first goal was clinical, his second an instep of class. He has has to acclimatise of course, and any judgement is far too soon, but Liverpool would have been right to wonder when some sort of return was coming. Wonder no longer. Aside from the goals, he was supreme. His touch was sharp, his movement smart, his passing slick. Supreme.

The importance of being Milner

He has been missed, James Milner. It might not be a popular opinion, but the absence of the midfielder's experience is only evident when he steps back on to the pitch. That, perhaps, has been the problem since arriving on a free in the summer. All graft, no glamour. He has played in central midfield as a holder and a box-to-box; he has played out wide, left and right. He has even featured in a hybrid of the two. He is still finding his way in this team. It might be a sheer irony that, after a move to see him escape the shackles of the Etihad, he might find his niche in this side in a similar sort of role he occupied in Manchester.

Stationed on the left, he gave Liverpool a platform to their attacking play. He was always available as an outlet, always looking to receive the ball and allow others to play. This is what he did so well at City. This is what he was doing so well for Liverpool against Arsenal. Klopp often liked a workhorse out wide, a player to give shape and solidity. Milner might fulfil that role in this team, for now.

EveningStandard.

Joe Allen strikes late to deny Gunners victory in Anfield thriller

Joe Allen scored a 90th-minute equaliser as Liverpool dented Arsenal's Premier League title hopes in a pulsating 3-3 draw at Anfield. Roberto Firmino netted an early brace - his first Anfield goals since last summer's £29million move from Hoffenheim - to give Jurgen Klopp's side the lead either side of Aaron Ramsey's 14th-minute leveller. Olivier Giroud also scored twice, converting a corner at the near post before handing the Gunners the advantage in the 50th minute with an excellent turn and finish. However, Allen, on as a substitute just eight minutes earlier, volleyed home in the last minute of normal time to deny Arsenal a precious victory, leaving them top of the table on goal difference only from Leicester City. Joel Campbell was recalled in place of Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain from Arsenal's last League outing as Wenger made five changes from their FA Cup win over Sunderland. Liverpool captain Jordan Henderson returned as part of an entirely different starting line-up from last Friday's 2-2 draw at Exeter, which included the surprise decision to opt for Firmino at the apex of the home side's attack ahead of Christian Benteke. Klopp demanded a fast start from his side and got just that. Adam Lallana burst into the penalty area and fell under a challenge from Per Mertesacker but referee Mike Jones rightly remained unmoved. They would not be denied a clear opening much longer, however. Arsenal attempted to clear 10th-minute corner as Theo Walcott decided to try and run the ball out of defence. Instead, he lost possession on the edge of the box to Henderson. Milner received his pass and quickly moved the ball onto Emre Can. The midfielder had sufficient space to unleash a fierce drive at goal which Cech could only parry out to Firmino, who finished left-footed from close range. Arsenal responded with their first attack of note. Giroud and Mamadou Sakho collided in an aerial challenge but Kolo Toure tamely headed the ball straight to Ramsey. The Welshman looped it towards Campbell, who did well to bring the ball under control before weighting a perfect slide-rule return pass into the box for Ramsey, who beat Liverpool goalkeeper Simon Mignolet at his near post with a crisp finish for his fifth goal of the season.

They were level for just four minutes as Henderson gave the ball away only to immediately win it back and find James Milner, who played a square pass to Firmino. The Brazilian took aim from 25 yards and bent a sumptuous shot into the top right-corner with Petr Cech helpless. Liverpool conceded a goal direct from a corner against Exeter and another set-piece failure helped Arsenal restore parity once again. Giroud flicked a corner past Mignolet and suddenly it was the visitors who were on the front foot. Campbell showed excellent composure in the box to check back with the ball, take his time and play a cute pass for Walcott, who burst through to the byline and found an excellent cross for Giroud inside the six yard box with the goal gaping before him.

Somehow, the Frenchman got his contact all wrong and failed to turn his effort goalwards with Mignolet stranded and Liverpool managed to scramble it clear. The game settled down after such a frenetic opening but Liverpool could have been back in front on the stroke of half-time. Laurent Koscielny only partially blocked a right-wing cross and the ball fell to Firmino, who swivelled and hit a fine left-foot effort from inside the box which clipped the top of the crossbar.

Campbell and Alberto Moreno wasted presentable opportunities at either end shortly after the restart but Giroud would soon atone for his first-half error. Campbell's pass into the box deflected off Moreno's outstretched leg and Giroud reacted quickest, turning in a flash to fire a left-foot shot past Mignolet and into the bottom corner. The assist benefitted from a slice of luck but Campbell's influence in the game was both notable and sustained as Arsenal attempted to control the final 30 minutes.

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	Guardian	Mirror	Standard		
	Independent	Mail	Echo		

Milner made way for Benteke as Klopp went in search of an equaliser. Liverpool responded and began knocking on the door without any conviction of finding an opening. Defender Steven Caulker was handed his debut in attack - to murmurs of discontent from the home crowd - as Liverpool went more direct but it was another substitute in the shape of Allen who salvaged a point at the death.

BBC

Arsenal had their advantage at the top of the Premier League cut after Joe Allen's late equaliser gave Liverpool a deserved point in an Anfield thriller.

Olivier Giroud's second-half strike - his second of the night and 18th of the season - looked to have put the Gunners on course for a crucial victory, but substitute Allen rewarded the hosts for a display bursting with energy and spirit with a low 90th-minute finish. Roberto Firmino twice gave Liverpool the lead in a breathless first half, the second a spectacular 20-yard drive, but Arsenal took advantage of poor defending from Jurgen Klopp's side to level through Aaron Ramsey and Giroud. Giroud also missed an open goal in the first half, while Firmino struck the bar in a wide open game. With 10 minutes remaining, Arsenal's lead at the top of the table was four points. Yet Robert Huth's late winner for Leicester City at Tottenham and Allen's late strike left Arsenal only ahead of the Foxes on goal difference.

Arsenal pay the price for frailty

The visitors looked to have finally established supremacy in this topsy-turvy encounter when Giroud turned to put them ahead 10 minutes after the break - but then failed to press home the advantage and paid a heavy price.

And it will be a matter of concern to Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger that on nights like this at places like Anfield, they did not show the necessary ruthlessness to close out a game that was within their grasp. The Reds deserve great credit for the way they responded to the disappointment of going behind after leading twice - but Arsenal showed no assurance or authority when the pressure mounted in the closing stages and there was an inevitability about Allen's equaliser. Arsenal, when they should have been pressuring a desperately poor and under-strength Liverpool defence, instead allowed themselves to be pushed back. This was two points lost and Klopp will be the much happier manager.

Two sides to Olivier Giroud

For such a regular goalscorer, Giroud remains a maligned figure by some Arsenal fans who regard him as just short of the highest class - and yet his strike rate speaks eloquently on his behalf. He showed a poacher's instinct to touch home his first from Ramsey's corner then showed good awareness and movement to turn Kolo Toure and score his second. And yet those who remain unconvinced by Giroud will point to his astonishing first-half miss when he somehow failed to convert Hector Bellerin's pass from a matter of inches in front of the Kop. Here, though, he demonstrated again that he will get goals and that is the best answer he can give to those who still doubt the France striker's pedigree.

Mignolet on borrowed time

Liverpool keeper Simon Mignolet is poised to sign a new five-year contract at Anfield and has won the consistent backing of manager Klopp despite his fragile form. And yet he was once again a very obvious weakness behind a Liverpool defence that was an accident waiting to happen for large portions of this enthralling game. The 27-year-old Belgian was beaten too easily inside his near post when Ramsey equalised after Firmino's opener, then was hopelessly stranded as Giroud's faint touch allowed a corner to sneak in. It was desperately poor keeping. For all Klopp's public assurances - he would not do otherwise - he must surely be concerned at Mignolet's obvious frailty, alongside the glaring inadequacy of his deputy Adam Bogdan, as proved by his errors at Watford and Exeter City. Liverpool have recalled 22-year-old Welsh keeper Danny Ward from a successful loan spell at Aberdeen so he is now in the mix - but Klopp has to consider a more reliable, experienced long-term solution after Mignolet's latest blunders.

Man of the match - Roberto Firmino (Liverpool)

What the managers said

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp: "We started so good and played good football. It showed all of us how good we could be.

"Then we concede a goal from a set play and we have to work at it. Organisation is one thing and sometimes we have a little problem with concentration.

"We gave them two easy goals after we had to work really hard for our goals. We had many moments which I am happy with."

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger: "I'm very disappointed but, overall, I cannot fault the effort and commitment of the team.

"We had a difficult start. At 3-2, we should have made it 4-2 and didn't make the right decision in the final third.

"Liverpool fought until the last second."

The stats you need to know

Olivier Giroud has scored four times in his past four Premier League games against Liverpool The Frenchman has scored 11 goals in his past 11 appearances away from home in all competitions Roberto Firmino ended a seven-game Premier League run without a goal, having last scored v Man City in November Two of Joe Allen's past three Premier League goals have come in 3-3 draws, also v Palace in May 2014 Aaron Ramsey has been involved in five goals in the past four Premier League games versus Liverpool (two goals, three assists)

This was the first Premier League fixture at Anfield to see both sides score twice in the first 25 minutes The last 10 Premier League meetings between these clubs at Anfield have seen 41 goals scored James Milner made his 300th Premier League start in this fixture. He provided his first Premier League assist v Arsenal in his 23rd game against them.

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BBC Full time Match ends, Liverpool 3, Arsenal 3. 90:00+3:04Full time Second Half ends, Liverpool 3, Arsenal 3. 89:36Goal scored Goal!Goal! Liverpool 3, Arsenal 3. Joe Allen (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box to the bottom left corner. Assisted by Christian Benteke with a headed pass. 89:15 Attempt blocked. Alberto Moreno (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is blocked. 88:22 Nathaniel Clyne (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half. 88:22 Foul by Laurent Koscielny (Arsenal. 87:42 Roberto Firmino (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half. 87:42 Foul by Mikel Arteta (Arsenal. 87:08Substitution SubstitutionSubstitution, Liverpool. Steven Caulker replaces Adam Lallana. 86:23Substitution SubstitutionSubstitution, Arsenal. Mikel Arteta replaces Mesut Özil. 85:26 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Mathieu Flamini. 85:22 Attempt blocked. Jordon Ibe (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Joe Allen. 82:54 Offside, Liverpool. Nathaniel Clyne tries a through ball, but Roberto Firmino is caught offside. 81:45 Offside, Arsenal. Olivier Giroud tries a through ball, but Kieran Gibbs is caught offside. 81:32Substitution SubstitutionSubstitution, Liverpool. Joe Allen replaces Emre Can. 80:47 Foul by Mamadou Sakho (Liverpool. 80:47 Olivier Giroud (Arsenal wins a free kick in the attacking half. 79:07 Attempt blocked. Christian Benteke (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Jordan Henderson. 78:23 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Kieran Gibbs. 77:57 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Per Mertesacker. 76:48 Nathaniel Clyne (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half. 76:48 Foul by Mathieu Flamini (Arsenal. 75:44 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Per Mertesacker. 75:39 Attempt blocked. Adam Lallana (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Emre Can. 75:06Substitution SubstitutionSubstitution, Arsenal. Kieran Gibbs replaces Theo Walcott. 74:50Substitution SubstitutionSubstitution, Arsenal. Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain replaces Joel Campbell. 74:18 Attempt missed. Alberto Moreno (Liverpool left footed shot from the left side of the box is too high. Assisted by Adam Lallana. 73:24 Attempt saved. Christian Benteke (Liverpool right footed shot from the left side of the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Adam Lallana. 70:17 Attempt blocked. Alberto Moreno (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is blocked. 69:11 Foul by Nathaniel Clyne (Liverpool. 69:11 Joel Campbell (Arsenal wins a free kick on the left wing. 68:29 Attempt missed. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool header from the centre of the box is close, but misses to the right. Assisted by Alberto Moreno with a cross following a corner. 68:17 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Joel Campbell. 68:08 Attempt blocked. Alberto Moreno (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is blocked. 67:43 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Nacho Monreal. 67:41 Attempt blocked. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool header from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Alberto Moreno with a cross. 65:53Substitution SubstitutionSubstitution, Liverpool. Christian Benteke replaces James Milner. 65:30 Attempt missed. Jordan Henderson (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box misses to the right. Assisted by Emre Can with a headed pass. 63:33 Foul by Jordon Ibe (Liverpool. 63:33 Nacho Monreal (Arsenal wins a free kick in the defensive half. 62:26 Attempt blocked. Olivier Giroud (Arsenal left footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Joel Campbell. 60:58 Attempt blocked. James Milner (Liverpool right footed shot from the left side of the box is blocked. Assisted by Adam Lallana. 59:49 Attempt blocked. Jordon Ibe (Liverpool right footed shot from the right side of the box is blocked. 58:21 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Joel Campbell. 57:46 Attempt missed. Theo Walcott (Arsenal right footed shot from the left side of the box misses to the right. Assisted by Aaron Ramsey. 57:33 Attempt blocked. Mesut Özil (Arsenal left footed shot from outside the box is blocked. 56:49 Foul by Emre Can (Liverpool. 56:49 Joel Campbell (Arsenal wins a free kick in the attacking half. 56:00 Delay over. They are ready to continue. 55:47 Delay in match James Milner (Liverpool because of an injury. 54:27Goal scored Goal!Goal! Liverpool 2, Arsenal 3. Olivier Giroud (Arsenal left footed shot from the centre of the box to the bottom left corner. 53:21 Attempt missed. Olivier Giroud (Arsenal header from the centre of the box misses to the left. Assisted by Mesut Özil with a cross following a set piece situation. 52:28Booking Nathaniel Clyne (Liverpool is shown the yellow card for hand ball. 52:23 Hand ball by Nathaniel Clyne (Liverpool. 50:47 Attempt missed. Theo Walcott (Arsenal right footed shot from outside the box is close, but misses to the left. Assisted by Nacho Monreal. 49:30 Foul by Emre Can (Liverpool. 49:30 Theo Walcott (Arsenal wins a free kick in the defensive half. 48:12 Jordan Henderson (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half. 48:12 Foul by Olivier Giroud (Arsenal. 47:32 Attempt missed. Alberto Moreno (Liverpool left footed shot from the left side of the box is high and wide to the right. Assisted by Roberto Firmino. 45:29 Attempt missed. Joel Campbell (Arsenal right footed shot from the centre of the box is high and wide to the left. Assisted by Mesut Özil with a cross. 45:00 Second Half begins Liverpool 2, Arsenal 2. 45:00+3:00Half time First Half ends, Liverpool 2, Arsenal 2. 45:00+1:39 Roberto Firmino (Liverpool hits the bar with a left footed shot from the centre of the box. 45:00+0:49 Attempt saved. Emre Can (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the top right corner. Assisted by James Milner. 43:28 Offside, Arsenal. Per Mertesacker tries a through ball, but Olivier Giroud is caught offside. 42:17 Corner, Arsenal. Conceded by Mamadou Sakho. 42:14 Attempt blocked. Theo Walcott (Arsenal right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Nacho Monreal. 40:59 Offside, Arsenal. Mathieu Flamini tries a through ball, but Olivier Giroud is caught offside. 35:07 Offside, Arsenal. Nacho Monreal tries a through ball, but Olivier Giroud is caught offside. 34:30 Foul by Jordan Henderson (Liverpool. 34:30 Joel Campbell (Arsenal wins a free kick in the defensive half. 32:59 Corner, Arsenal. Conceded by Mamadou Sakho. 32:56 Attempt blocked. Joel Campbell (Arsenal left footed shot from the right side of the box is blocked. 29:36 Attempt missed. Emre Can (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is too high. Assisted by Roberto Firmino. 28:38 Attempt saved. Joel Campbell (Arsenal left footed shot from the right side of the box is saved in the bottom left corner. Assisted by Mesut Özil. 27:47 Attempt missed. Olivier Giroud (Arsenal left footed shot from very close range misses to the right. Assisted by Theo Walcott. 24:42Goal scored Goal!Goal! Liverpool 2, Arsenal 2. Olivier Giroud (Arsenal left footed shot from the left side of the six yard box to the centre of the goal. Assisted by Aaron Ramsey with a cross following a corner. 24:14 Corner, Arsenal. Conceded by Mamadou Sakho. 24:12 Attempt blocked. Aaron Ramsey (Arsenal right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Olivier Giroud with a through ball. 22:56 Mamadou Sakho (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half. 22:56 Foul by Olivier Giroud (Arsenal. 20:04 Offside, Liverpool. Jordan Henderson tries a through ball, but Alberto Moreno is caught offside. 20:01 Emre Can (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half. 20:01 Foul by Aaron Ramsey (Arsenal. 18:52Goal scored Goal!Goal! Liverpool 2, Arsenal 1. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box to the top right corner. Assisted by James Milner. 16:51 Foul by Roberto Firmino (Liverpool. 16:51 Mathieu Flamini (Arsenal wins a free kick in the defensive half. 15:50 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Theo Walcott. 15:18 Delay over. They are ready to continue. 14:30 Delay in match Olivier Giroud (Arsenal because of an injury. 13:27Goal scored Goal!Goal! Liverpool 1, Arsenal 1. Aaron Ramsey (Arsenal right footed shot from the centre of the box to the bottom right corner. Assisted by Joel Campbell with a through ball. 12:56 Offside, Liverpool. Jordan Henderson tries a through ball, but Adam Lallana is caught offside. 9:43Booking Roberto Firmino (Liverpool is shown the yellow card for excessive celebration. 9:06Goal scored Goal!Goal! Liverpool 1, Arsenal 0. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box to the bottom right corner following a corner. 9:04 Attempt saved. Emre Can (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom right corner. Assisted by James Milner. 8:30 Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Joel Campbell. 7:47 Offside, Liverpool. Emre Can tries a through ball, but James Milner is caught offside. 6:53 Attempt blocked. Nathaniel Clyne (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. 3:03 Offside, Arsenal. Mesut Özil tries a through ball, but Theo Walcott is caught offside. 0:49 Foul by Alberto Moreno (Liverpool. 0:49 Joel Campbell (Arsenal wins a free kick in the defensive half. 0:21 Foul by Olivier Giroud (Arsenal. 0:21 Emre Can (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half. 0:00 First Half begins. 0:00 Lineups are announced and players are warming up.							