

Date: 18 February 2016
 Opposition: FC Augsburg
 Competition: Europa League

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THE TIMES

Sturridge passes up golden chance

Augsburg 0

Liverpool 0

After stating his intention to win the Europa League this season, Jurgen Klopp was immediately provided with a reminder of Liverpool's limitations and the improvements that must be made if such ambitions are to be realised. A largely dour draw away to Augsburg was not a bad result by any means but nor was this a performance to fuel anticipation that Liverpool could go trophy-gathering in May. Klopp would have wanted to make a greater statement on his return to Germany but even an away goal proved beyond Liverpool as they failed to take any of the chances that could have allowed them to make next Thursday's second leg at Anfield a formality. As it is, they go into that game, three days before the Capital One Cup final against Manchester City, with the tie in the balance. Again, Klopp had been hoping for better.

With Liverpool's injury problems easing, Klopp was able to name an unchanged side for the first time since becoming manager; the search for rhythm and consistency being the most significant factors in his team selection along with the Europa League emerging as the Merseyside club's most realistic route into next season's Champions League.

Retaining the starting XI that had dismantled Aston Villa four days earlier meant Daniel Sturridge was able to make his third European appearance for Liverpool. Klopp is all too aware of the qualities that Sturridge offers when fully fit but this was the first time in 11 months that the forward had been able to start back-to-back matches.

At least the Augsburg Arena proved a less than intimidating setting for Sturridge to be put through his paces with the home side celebrating the seventh and biggest European game in their history by rolling out the red carpet for their illustrious opponents. After the announcement of Klopp's name was warmly applauded, the Augsburg fans joined in with You'll Never Walk Alone as Liverpool were made to feel at home.

The sense of goodwill extended to the game itself during the opening stages when Markus Feulner's stray pass gave Roberto Firmino a sight of goal only for the forward to snatch at his shot. Ragnar Klavan was then fortunate to see his attempted clearance ricochet off Sturridge's chest and into Marwin Hitz's grateful arms as Augsburg showed signs of defensive vulnerability when put under pressure.

Going forward, the team fifth from bottom in the Bundesliga were a different proposition, betraying no signs of diminished confidence despite a four-game winless run as they took the game to Liverpool, playing the kind of high-intensity, high-pressing football that Klopp knows well. For all their endeavour, though, chances were hard to come by during the first half and they were not helped by the withdrawal of Raul Bobadilla, their most prolific forward, with a hamstring injury.

While Augsburg's limitations were clear, so too was Liverpool's inability to dominate opponents nowhere as obliging as Villa had been. In midfield in particular, Liverpool lacked authority as Augsburg found space too easy to come by on several occasions. With both teams struggling to gain the ascendancy, the first half became increasingly ragged, although Augsburg ended it the stronger of the two and were only prevented from taking the lead by Simon Mignolet's save from Alexander Esswein after the forward had cut inside Kolo Toure.

Liverpool raised the tempo at the start of the second half and immediately looked better for it with Philippe Coutinho screwing one shot wide after an intricate move and Sturridge missing an even more presentable chance after being picked out on the edge of the six-yard box by James Milner. With Augsburg showing strain, Liverpool should have profited from Alberto Moreno's inswinging free kick only for Toure to fail to make a clean contact before Hitz recovered his ground just in time to prevent a ricochet off Paul Verhaegh from crossing the line.

Sturridge's latest run-out came to an end after 68 minutes when he was replaced by Divock Origi whose superior movement ensured he was introduced ahead of Christian Benteke. Liverpool's quest for an away goal continued with Moreno testing Hi.

Despite becoming increasingly dominant, Liverpool survived a scare when Kostas Stafylidis's volley from Esswein's cross was prodded wide by Caiuby, the substitute, as Augsburg offered a reminder of their threat on the break.

Liverpool's discomfort would have turned into disappointment had a shot from Ji Dong Won, the substitute, crept in instead of striking the post. They emerged unscathed, albeit with their prospects of winning the competition having been maintained rather than enhanced.

Augsburg (4-3-3): M Hitz 6 -- P Verhaegh 6, C Janker 6, R Klavan 7, K Stafylidis 6 -- D Kohr 5, M Feulner 6, A Esswein 6 -- R Bobadilla 6, H Altintop 6 (sub: J Koo, 87min), T Werner 6 (sub: Ji Dong Won, 81). Substitutes not used: G Gkelios, D Opore, Caiuby, P Max, E Thommy. Booked: Janker, Feulner, Kohr, Werner.

Liverpool (4-3-2-1): S Mignolet 6 -- N Clyne 6, K Toure 6, M Sakho 6, A Moreno 7 -- J Milner 7 (sub: J Ibe, 81), J Henderson 6, E Can 6 -- R Firmino 6, P Coutinho 7 -- D Sturridge 6 (sub: D Origi, 68 6). Substitutes not used: D Ward, C Randall, S Caulker, L Leiva, C Benteke.

Booked: Moreno.

Referee: D Borbalan.

the guardian

Daniel Sturridge fluffs his lines but Liverpool earn draw at Augsburg

"Klopp Is Coming Home" read the front page headline on the Augsburg Allgemeine but the celebrated return of the celebrated German coach was, well, nothing to celebrate. Liverpool's tame goalless draw against an Augsburg side struggling in the Bundesliga will not linger in the memory as long as the potential knock-on effects for Jürgen Klopp.

There was more entertainment in the post-match press conference than on the pitch as Klopp was presented with a large pretzel by an Augsburg official, after the manager mentioned that he had missed the delicacy during his five months away. He slowly devoured the pretzel while taking his poor translator to task, in German and in English, for several misinterpretations that left the local media in hysterics. Klopp's thoughts on an away draw in Europe, one that Augsburg appeared to savour after the final whistle, were also open to interpretation.

"A nil-nil away in the Europa League is okay," said the Liverpool manager. "We had some great moments and some good play but there were other moments I am not happy with. I am not 100% satisfied and I want to change things in the second game. Doing the right thing at the right moment is important – we had a few good moments. In the second half we had three or four really good moves. My problem is that I think, with our quality, we should do better. But I have to be patient. Augsburg tactically were really good but we have our return match next week at Anfield."

Liverpool recovered from a dour first half to create inviting chances after the interval, limiting the home team's threat in the process, but also survived a late scare when the substitute Ji Dong-won struck Simon Mignolet's post with his first touch. The lack of an away goal was not Klopp's only concern in Bavaria. His team face Manchester City in the Capital One Cup final three days after next week's second leg and Augsburg will not be treated lightly.

Klopp said: "Will we play as strong a team in second leg? Yes, I think so. Maybe it's a different team but we should not think too much about the final. I will not ignore it, of course, but this result doesn't complicate my plans. How was it supposed to be here, winning 5-0 and have a friendly game in the rematch?"

"You have to respect German teams more. It is not possible to beat Augsburg 5-0, and if we win 1-0 or 2-0 then nothing is decided. We have to be really concentrated in the return and show we want to go to the next round. If we want to save energy then we will lose on Thursday and on Sunday."

Liverpool's manager had labelled the tie "the biggest game in Augsburg's history", taking his cue from his opposite number, Markus Weinzierl, who claimed this was his club's chance to announce themselves on the international stage. The pre-match talk bore no relation to what unfolded on the pitch, however, as unforced errors and careless distribution from both sides undermined the managerial hype.

A sloppy tone was set early when Mamadou Sakho directed a routine defensive clearance straight to Raúl Bobadilla unmarked on the edge of the area. His volley struck the ground before looping over Mignolet and on to the roof of Liverpool's net, much to the Paraguay striker's disgust. His night would not ignite. The forward suffered a hamstring injury and his replacement, Caiuby, created the clearest opening of the first half when releasing Alexander Esswein behind the Liverpool defence. Esswein cut back inside Kolo Touré but Mignolet was out quick to close the angles and block the shot.

Liverpool did have their moments before the interval without seriously troubling Marwin Hitz in the Augsburg goal. The visitors were far too static in the final third but as their movement improved in the second half so, predictably enough, did their threat. The spectacle improved considerably too. Daniel Sturridge should have given Klopp's team the lead when James Milner and Roberto Firmino carved open the home defence and the former drilled an inviting pass across the face of goal. The striker opened his body to shoot but failed to get enough on the ball and miscued badly wide of the far post.

Augsburg were again exposed on their left when Sturridge released Nathaniel Clyne to the byline. The defender's cross was destined for Philippe Coutinho, arriving at the near post, only for Paul Verhaegh, having tracked the Brazilian's run, to make a vital interception. Liverpool went close for a third time when the Bundesliga side made a hash of clearing Alberto Moreno's free-kick into the heart of their penalty area. Caiuby struck his clearance against Verhaegh and the ball rebounded into the grateful grasp of the goalkeeper Hitz on the line.

Moreno almost deceived the Augsburg keeper with a swerving shot from distance while the home side's chances were limited, by contrast, in the second half. That said, Kostas Stafylidis and Ji almost spoiled Klopp's homecoming and, in truth, the free pretzel was arguably his highlight.

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The Mail

KLOPP STOPPED; No happy return for Jurgen as stubborn Germans deny Reds

SO much for best-laid plans. In an ideal world, Jurgen Klopp's return to Germany would have ended in a flurry of goals and a comfortable win.

The intention was for Liverpool to take care of Augsburg at the first attempt and make the second leg of their round-of-32 meeting a formality next Thursday. Klopp could then rest key players before the Capital One Cup final 72 hours later. After a difficult night in Bavaria, though, that will not be the case. If Liverpool are going to progress, they will have to go full throttle at Anfield to see off a team who left their wretched domestic form behind and pushed their big-name visitors to the wire.

This game had captured the imagination of locals since the draw was made and the noise inside this compact, modern arena was befitting of the occasion, with 25,000 home supporters making the kind of racket you would expect from twice that many.

Yet if it was a big deal for the people in these parts, it was also a big deal for Klopp. It is fashionable to deride the Europa League but Klopp's intention to win the competition was shown in the team sheet which, for the first time in his 31-game reign, featured no changes.

It meant another chance for Daniel Sturridge, making only his third European appearance for Liverpool in three years, to play alongside Philippe Coutinho and Roberto Firmino. This, clearly, is the forward line Klopp believes will transform his side's fortunes.

That triumvirate terrorised Aston Villa on Sunday in the 6-0 mauling but they had to work significantly harder to fashion any scoring chances here as Augsburg defended with two solid banks of four and kept Liverpool at arms length for much of the first half.

Liverpool's best opportunity in that period came in the eighth minute when Augsburg midfielder Markus Feulner dithered in possession and allowed Firmino to nip in and take the ball but, disappointingly, the Brazilian's shot never troubled Marwin Hitz.

Augsburg's determination to slow the game down left Liverpool frustrated and the only other chances they had before the interval were a shot by Jordan Henderson from 25 yards and a scuffed effort from Sturridge, both of which Hitz gathered easily.

But this was not just a defensive performance from a side 14th in the Bundesliga and only a point above the relegation zone. They made Liverpool's defenders work and even shrugged off the disappointment of losing main striker Raul Bobadilla to an early injury.

Klopp, in his own inimitable way, had said Bobadilla was so big his defenders would need GPS to get around him, but Augsburg never lost heart and, significantly, they looked most likely to find a breakthrough before the interval. With more composure, it would have arrived in added time.

A break down the right ended with Alexander Esswein twisting his way past Kolo Toure to find a clear sight of Simon Mignolet's goal but, much like Firmino, he never gave the impression he would score.

Liverpool looked a long way from being Europa League winners here but there was a definite improvement in the second period as the game began to open up and within 90 seconds of the restart, Toure almost got his head to a terrific free-kick from Alberto Moreno.

If Toure's failure to make a decent contact left Klopp frustrated, he was even more aghast in the 53rd minute when Liverpool's best move saw James Milner scurry to the byline and zip in a perfect ball to Sturridge, who had eluded his markers in the six-yard area.

Yet just when it seemed certain that the next word would be 'goal', Sturridge failed to make a proper connection and the moment was gone.

His night would end not long after, with Klopp freshening up his attack by introducing Divock Origi.

The Belgian offered no improvement on Sturridge, however, and in the end Klopp had to settle for a draw.

However, the German wasn't happy with the overall performance of his players and said after: 'I'm not 100 per cent happy about this game.'

'Doing the right thing at the right moment is important we had a few good moments. In the second half we had three or four really good moves.'

'My problem is that I think, with our quality, we should do better. But I have to be patient.'

'Augsburg tactically were really good but we have our return match next week at Anfield.'

The Daily Telegraph

Sturridge fails to find magic as Liverpool draw a blank

If Liverpool are to realise Jurgen Klopp's ambition of winning the Europa League in his first season, the scale of improvement over the next three months will be rapid.

A goalless draw in Augsburg is a firm foundation on which to make progress but, after the flood at Villa Park, came a drought in Germany.

Beforehand, Klopp might have fancied the kind of result that would make the Anfield fixture a formality, especially as it will precede the Capital One Cup final by three days.

The hints of that came in Klopp's pre-match comments - the promise of Champions League qualification by conquering Europe this season; the need for consistency in team selection and rhythm in team performance; and the recognition Liverpool have a week off between the first and second leg.

There was no danger of the German coach resting legs for his homecoming. So Klopp said "same team" for the first time in his reign - his 31st game in charge. That represented some kind of footballing nirvana given the selection problems he has faced since taking over.

Most pertinently, it meant Daniel Sturridge and Philippe Coutinho - arguably the only Liverpool players others in Europe will look upon enviously - continued their partnership, attempting to prove the annihilation against Aston Villa was as much due to their brilliance as the opponent's ineptitude. Evidently Augsburg were a different proposition, although their generosity ought to have gifted Liverpool the lead after eight minutes. Centrehalf Christoph Janker looked uncomfortable under pressure and passed directly to Roberto Firmino on the edge of his own penalty area. The Brazilian had the option of picking out Sturridge with an easy ball but instead shot tamely at goalkeeper Marwin Hitz.

This hinted at an evening in which Liverpool's attacking trio would again be free to run havoc, but sloppiness and sluggishness in possession undermined such hopes. Too often Sturridge and Firmino's movement created openings that demanded a penetrating pass, only for midfielders to select the safer option as Augsburg retreated and opted to play counterattack.

The more Liverpool pondered on the ball, the more the home side's approach looked like it could succeed. Liverpool's own back four, lest we forget, are as susceptible as any under pressure and Augsburg appeared to swiftly realise there is no greater anxiety for the Merseysiders' than when Kolo Toure and Mamadou Sakho are exchanging passes. The Liverpool centrehalves' cause seemed helped when bulldozing striker Raul Bobadilla had to be replaced through injury after 23 minutes, but the more mobile replacement, Caiuby, caused different problems.

Despite having a measure of control, Liverpool should have been behind at the interval when Alexander Esswein had only Simon Mignolet to beat. The Belgian saved what proved an unconvincing strike.

There was initially more pace to Liverpool's passing after the break and Sturridge should have opened the scoring on 53 minutes after one of few slick moves of the game. James Milner's right-wing cross picked out the striker but he failed to connect when trying to ease the ball into the corner.

Sturridge was replaced for Divock Origi after 68 minutes as Klopp continues to ease his prize asset back to full fitness. The frustration for the Liverpool manager was the numerous occasions openings were squandered, players failing to see or execute the right pass when Augsburg looked most vulnerable.

Moreno almost struck a freakish goal from distance on 71 minutes, a bobbling ball forcing an unorthodox save from Hitz, but the German side would have been content to see such desperate attempts.

Instead, Augsburg threatened as much with their counter-attacks, and, when substitute Ji Dong-Won struck the post with three minutes left, it was Liverpool thankful to return to Merseyside with a draw.

Augsburg (4-2-3-1) Hitz; Verhaegh, Janker, Klavan, Stafylidis; Kohr, Feulner; Altintop (Koo 86), Esswein, Werner (Ji 80); Bobadilla (Caiuby 22). Subs Gelios, Opare, Max, Thommy. Booked Janker, Kohl, Werner. Liverpool (4-3-3) Mignolet; Clyne, Sakho, Toure Moreno; Can, Henderson, Milner (Ibe 80); Coutinho, Sturridge (Origi 67), Firmino. Subs Ward, Benteke, Caulker, Lucas, Randall. Booked Moreno.

Referee D Fernandez Borbalan (Spain).

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Klopp frustrated as Liverpool fail to spark on his Germany return

From the railway lines that link Munich Hauptbahnhof to Augsburg, the dazzling neon lights of the Allianz Arena in the distance are a reminder that Liverpool are not really where they wish to be.

Performances like this, half an hour up the tracks in provincial Bavaria, disclose the reality of how much progress is needed under Jürgen Klopp before a return to the grandest courts of European football becomes a possibility. The best chance last night fell to Tobias Werner, a balding 30-year-old midfielder who might win an Attilio Lombardo look-a-like competition. Werner has been with Augsburg since 2008 when they finished the season as the 11th best team in the German second division. Better players were selected ahead of him when Augsburg lost at home to Bayern Munich at the weekend, a result that leaves them just a point above the relegation zone, their campaign suffering from the challenge of being in Europe for the first time.

Augsburg's greenness was contextualised by the presence of Stephen Monaghan, a Liverpool supporter attending his 100th European away game having started on his travels in 1976 when Halil Altintop, Augsburg's oldest player last night, was six years away from being born.

Klopp had warned the Liverpool squad that the tie represented "the biggest game" in Augsburg's history.

The sense of occasion was, indeed, palpable, with fans of both clubs beginning to gather outside the city's Rathaus at midday. Inside the stadium, in the moments before kick-off, You'll Never Walk Alone was projected from the public-address system, and when Klopp's name was read out in a special welcome, but for a few comedy jeers, the home terrace cheered.

Klopp then emerged from the tunnel and a pack of more than 20 photographers scurried to his dugout, encircling him. As he did for his first game as Liverpool manager, he marked his return to Germany by wearing a suit and tie. He had been able to choose the same team in successive matches for the first time in his 31 in charge, the decision reinforcing the acknowledgement earlier this week that now injuries have cleared up, a more consistent selection might subsequently lead to consistent results.

Yet here, in the first half especially, both teams were scruffy and unlovable: surrendering possession with regularity, shooting in hope rather than conviction and clearing in an unnecessarily panicked fashion.

Augsburg's flow was interrupted by the enforced substitution of the Ra*1 Bobadilla, the implausibly proportioned centre forward described by Klopp as someone who requires a navigation system to get around, someone, indeed, with prior experience of scoring against Liverpool having done so with Swiss club Young Boys in 2012.

For a long time, Liverpool were unrecognisable from the team that dismantled Aston Villa on Sunday. Their flow was interrupted because Augsburg seemed to have a better understanding of where to be in the midfield as well as their own limitations. Jordan Henderson and James Milner are not Steven Gerrard, though it did not stop them attempting Steven Gerrard passes. Altintop pressed on Emre Can, squeezing the space he needs to be effective. Two of his three Bundesliga goals for Bayer Leverkusen had come against Augsburg two years ago and although Klopp had commented that he felt better prepared to face this opponent than any of those he has met in the Premier League so far, Can's inability to start moves with purpose made it impossible for Roberto Firmino and Philippe Coutinho to get involved from dangerous positions.

None of this helped Daniel Sturridge, of course, who was playing in only his third European game for Liverpool. Sturridge was serviced better after the break when the combination between Nathaniel Clyne and Milner began to dominate from the right. He should have scored when Milner fed him and as he shaped to shoot. It was not to be his night, though, and when Klopp chose to take him off it was Divock Origi and not Christian Benteke brought on as the replacement. It did not prove to be Liverpool's night. Although there was a chance of it being Augsburg's when substitute Ji Dong-Won's low volley struck a post.



From a rout to now; Reds run out of ammo after their six-goal show at Villa

GIVEN they crashed out at this stage in their last two Europa League ventures, Liverpool will consider this hard-fought draw a minor triumph.

The Reds head to Anfield for the second leg against Augsburg knowing their prospects of winning the trophy remain undamaged.

They know too, though, that even if this methodical, hardworking performance makes them firm favourites for the second leg next week, they will have to improve massively to progress much further in the competition.

They rarely thawed out on an Arctic evening, the flood of Villa Park just five days ago turning to an icy drought as they failed to find their rhythm against committed, organised German opponents. And the Reds survived some scares too. Not least five minutes from time when Augsburg substitute Ji Dong-Won was perfectly positioned to strike a knock-down from Caiuby, only to see his crisp shot cannon off an upright.

If Liverpool are a side that can win the trophy, as Jürgen Klopp believes, then they did little to suggest it last night, with their passing and movement in midfield too often pedestrian, despite the edge offered by a promising developing partnership up front.

Daniel Sturridge's relationship with Roberto Firmino was probably the best thing to come out of the game, with the English striker coming closest to breaking the deadlock when he glanced a cross from James Milner just wide.

Albert Moreno saw another shot well saved - if somewhat unconventionally - by Marwin Hitz in the home goal, but that was it for the Reds as they struggled to come to terms with the slower pace of European combat.

Klopp marked the 31st game of his Anfield reign by naming an unchanged side for the very first time...but that was just about the only thing unchanged from the performance at Villa.

Where the Reds were vibrant in their attacking intent against the Premier League stragglers, here they were forced to sit deeper and defend stoutly for long periods, relying on the counter-attacking pace of Sturridge and Firmino for threat. The Reds arrived here knowing that on the only two occasions they have beaten German sides on home turf in Europe, they have gone on to win the trophy - the UEFA Cup in 1973, and that famous Champions League triumph in 2015. For long stretches of the game, though, it seemed there was little prospect of Liverpool adding a third win in Germany from 17 appearances in this country, with Augsburg dominating possession.

Klopp wasn't happy with the performance but happier with the result. "I'm not satisfied," he said. "The result is good in terms of European competition but with the quality we have we should have done better."

"Hopefully we can finish it off next week."

Klopp is right to be upbeat about progressing to the last 16 because the Germans, playing in Europe for a first season, are little more than journeymen opponents.

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Klopp frustrated on return to Germany

Liverpool failed to break down a spirited Augsburg as Jurgen Klopp's return to Germany ended in a dour stalemate.

A strong side – unchanged from Sunday's 6-0 win at Aston Villa – scrapped to a goalless draw in the first leg of their Europa League round of 32 match.

It puts the Reds in the driving seat for next Thursday's return match at Anfield, but the lack of an away goal will no doubt concern Klopp.

Daniel Sturridge missed Liverpool's best chance but the home side came closest when substitute Ji Dong-won hit the post in the closing stages.

This was regarded as the biggest game in Augsburg's history, with the Bundesliga side rolling out the red carpet for their visitors and the home crowd boisterous before kick-off.

But while Liverpool soon quietened the sold-out WWK Arena with a composed opening, they were indebted to a smart Simon Mignolet save to avoid going in behind at the interval.

Roberto Firmino almost pounced on eight minutes when intercepting a poor square pass but eventually struck his shot tamely at Augsburg goalkeeper Marwin Hitz.

Midway through the half, Philippe Coutinho gave Sturridge a glimmer but Ragnar Klavan blocked and the ball bounced through to a grateful Hitz.

Augsburg, already missing several key players, lost another when top scorer Raul Bobadilla, with six goals in this season's Europa League, limped off with a hamstring problem.

But the Bundesliga side should have been ahead in first-half injury time when Alexander Esswein was sent clear but the midfielder, after cutting inside, saw his shot smothered by Mignolet.

A lethargic Liverpool lacked the verve of their dismantling of Aston Villa four days earlier, although they started the second half brighter with Coutinho firing wide after a clever combination with Alberto Moreno.

And the Reds should have been ahead on 53 minutes when a fine move ended with James Milner crossing low from the right and Sturridge failing to connect properly from a matter of yards out with the goal gaping.

Liverpool began knocking louder and, after Kolo Toure completely missed his attempted header from a teasing Moreno free-kick delivery, Paul Verhaegh almost put the loose ball through his own goal.

On 71 minutes, Moreno came close with a speculative, swerving strike from range that Hitz scrambled over the crossbar.

Augsburg then threatened but substitute Caiuby couldn't quite get a telling touch on a shot from Kostas Stafylidis after a cross from the right.

Liverpool had a lucky escape four minutes from time when, from Caiuby's header down, Augsburg substitute Ji struck the outside of the post.

But the goalless draw means there will be plenty to play for at Anfield next week.

AUGSBURG (4-4-2): Hitz; Verhaegh, Janker, Klavan, Stafylidis; Feulner, Kohr, Esswein, Altintop (Koo 87); Werner (Ji 81), Bobadilla (Caiuby 23). Subs: Opare, Gelios, Max, Thommy. BOOKINGS: Janker, Kohr, Werner, Feulner.

LIVERPOOL (4-2-3-1): Mignolet; Clyne, Toure, Sakho, Moreno; Can, Henderson; Milner (Ibe 81), Coutinho, Firmino; Sturridge (Origi 68). Subs: Ward, Bentke, Caulker, Lucas, Randall. BOOKING: Moreno.

REFEREE: David José Fernández Borbalán (Spain).

Augsburg Allgemeine

Danke, Jungs! FCA erkämpft Unentschieden gegen Liverpool

Endet die märchenhafte Reise des FC Augsburg vielleicht doch nicht kommende Woche in Liverpool? Seit Donnerstagabend ist aus dem Funken Hoffnung eine lodernde Flamme geworden. Denn mit dem 0:0-Unentschieden im Heimspiel gegen den FC Liverpool vor 25.000 Zuschauern in der ausverkauften WWK-Arena hat sich der FCA eine gute Ausgangsposition für das Rückspiel geschaffen. Ein Unentschieden mit mindestens einem Tor, oder ein Sieg würde dem FCA in England zum Weiterkommen reichen.

Seit Mittwoch herrschte in Augsburg medialer Ausnahmezustand. Die Rückkehr von Jürgen Klopp neun Monate nachdem er für Borussia Dortmund im DFB-Pokalfinale sein bislang letztes Pflichtspiel in Deutschland absolvierte, und die leise Hoffnung auf eine Riesenüberraschung durch den FCA hatte Dutzende von Fernsichtteams, zig Fotografen, etliche Radioteams und fast eine Hundertschaft schreibender Journalisten nach Augsburg gelockt. Sie wurden nicht enttäuscht. Es war aber auch das erste Aufeinandertreffen in einem spannenden Trainer-Duell, die von den Charakteren sehr unterschiedlich sind. Dort der manchmal spröde wirkende Weinzierl, auf der anderen Seite der Trainer-Entertainer Klopp. Sportlich haben sie aber viele Gemeinsamkeiten. "Wir konnten beide nicht besonders gut kicken und durften trotzdem in der Bundesliga als Trainer arbeiten", sagte Klopp am Mittwoch über sich und Weinzierl. Zudem steht Weinzierl mit dem FCA gerade dort, wo Klopp mit dem FSV Mainz 05 Anfang des Jahrtausends stand. Auf dem Weg vom Nobody zum anerkannten Bundesligisten. Klopp: "Es ist ähnlich mit dem, was wir in Mainz gemacht haben. Da haben auch viele Leute gesagt: Den Verein hätten wir jetzt auch nicht unbedingt gebraucht, aber jetzt ist er halt da und nicht mehr wegzukriegen." Er muss aber in Liverpool Titel holen. Der des Europa-League-Gewinners wäre schon mal ein Anfang. Deshalb ließ er auch seine Bestbesetzung in Augsburg auflaufen. Genau die Mannschaft, die am Wochenende Aston Villa mit 6:0 besiegte hatte. Beim FCA arbeitet Weinzierl derzeit intensiv am Nichtmehrwegzukriegen. Deswegen ist das Heimspiel im Duell mit Liverpool "das größte Spiel der Vereinsgeschichte" (Kapitän Verhaegh) – aber nicht das wichtigste. "Das wichtigste Spiel ist das in Hannover", sagt Trainer Weinzierl. Es ist, drei Tage später, die Reise ans Tabellenende der Bundesliga.

FC Augsburg mit zahlreichen Veränderungen
 Dorthin will Weinzierl nicht mehr. Deswegen überraschte er mit einigen Personalentscheidungen gegenüber dem Bayern-Spiel. Tobias Werner (für Caiuby) stand nach seiner Schambein-Entzündung erstmals wieder seit dem 8. November im Kader und gleich in der Startelf, Halil Altintop (für Trochowski) hatte zuletzt am 26. November in Bilbao gespielt, Stafylidis ersetzte Max, Janker spielte für Hong, Esswein für Koo, Feulner für Gouweleew.

Eine B-Elf also? Keineswegs, es waren hochmotivierte FCA-Profis die von der ersten Sekunde an ihm rot-grün-weißen Fahnenmeer der Choreografie gegen die Engländer um ihre Chance kämpfte. Nach einer Viertelstunde beruhigte sich das Spiel aber und nach 22 Minuten verdüsterte sich die Miene von Trainer Weinzierl. Raul Bobadilla hielt sich den linken hinteren Oberschenkel und musste ausgewechselt werden. Die Verletzung hatte er sich bei einem Zweikampf schon nach wenigen Minuten zugezogen. Danach belauerten sich beide Mannschaften. Vom berühmten Klopp-Vollgas-Fußball war nichts zu sehen, der FCA bestimmte das Spiel sogar und hätten die FCA-Spieler bei einigen Aktionen rund um den englischen Strafraum etwas konzentrierter agiert, die Augsburgers wären mit einer Führung in die Kabine gegangen. Wie in der 45. Minute, als Alexander Esswein nach einem wunderschönen Konter allein vor Torhüter Simon Mignolet auftauchte. Doch anstatt den noch besser postierten Tobias Werner zu bedienen, schloss er mit einem Schüsschen ab. Die größte Chance bis dahin war leichtfertig vertan. Nach dem Wechsel nahm die Partie wieder an Fahrt auf. Klopp hatte seine Spieler anscheinend aufgeweckt. Liverpool agierte druckvoller, der FCA hatte einige brenzlige Situationen zu überstehen. Nach 70 Minuten bog die Partie in ihre entscheidende Phase ein. Weinzierl hatte sich an der Seitenlinie seiner warmen Jacke entledigt, um auch im Sakko zu signalisieren: Jetzt müssen wir noch einmal die Ärmel hochkrepeln. Und seine Spieler legten noch einmal zu. Stafylidis (75.) verfehlte das Tor nur knapp und in der 85. Minute rasierte der eingewechselte Dong-Won Ji den rechten Außenpfosten. Das Tor wäre nicht unverdient gewesen.

Date: 18 February 2016
 Opposition: FC Augsburg
 Competition: Europa League

Times	Telegraph	Augsburger Allge.
Guardian	Mirror	Echo
Independent	Mail	BBC

18 February
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Liverpool have a good chance of making the Europa League last 16 following a goalless draw in the first leg of their tie with Augsburg.

The Reds had marginally the better of a largely dour game in Germany. Daniel Sturridge had a deflected shot saved and fluffed an effort from six yards out from James Milner's cross.

Former Sunderland player Ji Dong-won came close to giving Augsburg an advantage for next Thursday's second leg with a shot that hit the post.

Disciplined but uninspiring

Barring deflected shots from Sturridge and Roberto Firmino, both of which were saved by home goalkeeper Marwin Hitz, and an injury to Augsburg top-scorer Raul Bobadilla, there was little to report about a forgettable first half.

It was more entertaining after the break as the visitors came out with greater intent and would have led but for Sturridge's early miss from close range.

Hitz also had to be alert to prevent a deflection off home defender Paul Verhaegh finding the net following a Liverpool free-kick.

However, Augsburg, who reached the German top flight for the first time in 2011 but are in relegation trouble this season, could and probably should have won the game in the final 15 minutes.

Stafylidis found space in the box but poked wide of the far post before Ji's well-struck effort hit the outside of the upright and went wide.

Klopp's low-key return to Germany

The match was Liverpool's manager Jurgen Klopp's first in his native Germany since taking over at Anfield in October.

Prior to that, he spent seven years as Borussia Dortmund boss, leading them to two Bundesliga titles and the Champions League final in 2012-13.

His ambition this season is to reach Europe's premier club competition and with the Reds currently nine points off the Premier League's top four, winning the Europa League is probably his best chance of achieving this aim.

And the biggest positive he can take from this game is that his team retain a serious interest in this competition in a month that also sees them face Manchester City in the League Cup final.

Klopp is 'not a patient man'

Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp: "We should be realistic about the result, that's OK in a European away game. We could have scored goals but as a performance I am not satisfied.

"We fight for consistency and played like this in the game, but we always let them come back in the game and that's not necessary. I'm not 100% happy about this game.

"My problem is that, with our quality, we should have had more. I have to be patient, but I'm not a patient man, not really. My feeling is we could have done better."

What next?

Liverpool are out of the FA Cup and so do not play this weekend. The return leg with Augsburg at Anfield is their next game on Thursday, 25 February, followed by the League Cup final three days later.

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Match ends, FC Augsburg 0, Liverpool 0.
 90'+3' Second Half ends, FC Augsburg 0, Liverpool 0.
 90'+2' Markus Feulner (FC Augsburg is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.
 90'+2' Emre Can (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 90'+2' Foul by Markus Feulner (FC Augsburg.
 90' Foul by Roberto Firmino (Liverpool.
 90' Ragnar Klavan (FC Augsburg wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 89' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Dominik Kohr.
 89' Attempt blocked. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Alberto Moreno.
 87' Substitution, FC Augsburg. Ja-Cheol Koo replaces Halil Altintop.
 86' Dong-Won Ji (FC Augsburg hits the left post with a left footed shot from the centre of the box. Assisted by Caiuby with a headed pass.
 86' Attempt saved. Jordan Ibe (Liverpool right footed shot from the right side of the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Jordan Henderson.
 85' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Konstantinos Stafylidis.
 84' Offside, FC Augsburg. Alexander Esswein tries a through ball, but Paul Verhaegh is caught offside.
 82' Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
 82' Foul by Markus Feulner (FC Augsburg.
 81' Substitution, FC Augsburg. Dong-Won Ji replaces Tobias Werner.
 81' Substitution, Liverpool. Jordan Ibe replaces James Milner.
 78' Attempt saved. Dominik Kohr (FC Augsburg right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom left corner.
 77' Alberto Moreno (Liverpool is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.
 77' Foul by Alberto Moreno (Liverpool.
 77' Markus Feulner (FC Augsburg wins a free kick on the right wing.
 77' Attempt missed. Konstantinos Stafylidis (FC Augsburg right footed shot from the centre of the box is close, but misses to the right. Assisted by Alexander Esswein with a cross.
 74' Foul by Alberto Moreno (Liverpool.
 74' Alexander Esswein (FC Augsburg wins a free kick in the attacking half.
 73' Tobias Werner (FC Augsburg is shown the yellow card.
 72' Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 72' Foul by Markus Feulner (FC Augsburg.
 72' Attempt missed. Jordan Henderson (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is too high. Assisted by James Milner.
 71' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Marwin Hitz.
 71' Attempt saved. Alberto Moreno (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Jordan Henderson with a headed pass.
 69' Foul by Divock Origi (Liverpool.
 69' Konstantinos Stafylidis (FC Augsburg wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 68' Attempt blocked. Christoph Janker (FC Augsburg right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Dominik Kohr.
 68' Substitution, Liverpool. Divock Origi replaces Daniel Sturridge.
 66' Attempt blocked. Alberto Moreno (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Nathaniel Clyne.
 65' Attempt missed. Ragnar Klavan (FC Augsburg left footed shot from outside the box misses to the left. Assisted by Dominik Kohr.
 64' Attempt blocked. James Milner (Liverpool left footed shot from the right side of the box is blocked. Assisted by Jordan Henderson.
 64' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Dominik Kohr.
 59' Dominik Kohr (FC Augsburg is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.
 59' Roberto Firmino (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
 59' Foul by Dominik Kohr (FC Augsburg.
 58' Offside, FC Augsburg. Ragnar Klavan tries a through ball, but Tobias Werner is caught offside.
 58' Attempt missed. Emre Can (Liverpool header from the centre of the box is too high. Assisted by James Milner with a cross following a corner.
 57' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Paul Verhaegh.
 56' Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 56' Foul by Ragnar Klavan (FC Augsburg.
 55' Attempt saved. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is saved in the top centre of the goal. Assisted by Jordan Henderson.
 55' Attempt missed. Markus Feulner (FC Augsburg right footed shot from outside the box misses to the right. Assisted by Caiuby.
 54' Attempt missed. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool left footed shot from very close range misses to the left. Assisted by James Milner.
 53' Foul by Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool.
 53' Markus Feulner (FC Augsburg wins a free kick in the attacking half.
 52' Attempt missed. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box misses to the left. Assisted by Alberto Moreno.
 51' Offside, FC Augsburg. Konstantinos Stafylidis tries a through ball, but Tobias Werner is caught offside.
 49' Offside, Liverpool. James Milner tries a through ball, but Jordan Henderson is caught offside.
 Second Half begins FC Augsburg 0, Liverpool 0.
 45'+2' First Half ends, FC Augsburg 0, Liverpool 0.
 45'+1' Attempt saved. Alexander Esswein (FC Augsburg left footed shot from the right side of the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Caiuby with a through ball.
 44' Caiuby (FC Augsburg wins a free kick in the attacking half.
 44' Foul by Mamadou Sakho (Liverpool.
 41' Attempt missed. Dominik Kohr (FC Augsburg right footed shot from outside the box misses to the right.
 39' Corner, FC Augsburg. Conceded by Roberto Firmino.

39' Attempt blocked. Konstantinos Stafylidis (FC Augsburg left footed shot from outside the box is blocked.
 37' Foul by Emre Can (Liverpool.
 37' Halil Altintop (FC Augsburg wins a free kick on the right wing.
 36' Hand ball by Paul Verhaegh (FC Augsburg.
 36' Attempt saved. Jordan Henderson (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the top centre of the goal. Assisted by James Milner.
 35' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Christoph Janker.
 35' Attempt blocked. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Roberto Firmino.
 31' Hand ball by Emre Can (Liverpool.
 30' Hand ball by Caiuby (FC Augsburg.
 26' Attempt missed. Halil Altintop (FC Augsburg right footed shot from outside the box is close, but misses to the left. Assisted by Caiuby with a headed pass.
 24' Tobias Werner (FC Augsburg wins a free kick in the attacking half.
 24' Foul by Nathaniel Clyne (Liverpool.
 23' Attempt blocked. Tobias Werner (FC Augsburg left footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Caiuby with a headed pass.
 23' Substitution, FC Augsburg. Caiuby replaces Raúl Bobadilla because of an injury.
 20' Christoph Janker (FC Augsburg is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.
 20' Mamadou Sakho (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
 20' Foul by Christoph Janker (FC Augsburg.
 17' Emre Can (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
 17' Foul by Markus Feulner (FC Augsburg.
 15' Foul by Raúl Bobadilla (FC Augsburg.
 15' Mamadou Sakho (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 13' Marwin Hitz (FC Augsburg wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 13' Foul by Kolo Touré (Liverpool.
 13' Attempt saved. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool header from very close range is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Emre Can.
 13' Attempt missed. Emre Can (Liverpool header from the centre of the box misses to the right. Assisted by James Milner with a cross following a corner.
 12' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Ragnar Klavan.
 12' Attempt blocked. Jordan Henderson (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.
 8' Attempt saved. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the centre of the goal.
 7' Foul by Roberto Firmino (Liverpool.
 7' Markus Feulner (FC Augsburg wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 7' Foul by Dominik Kohr (FC Augsburg.
 7' Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
 3' Attempt missed. Raúl Bobadilla (FC Augsburg right footed shot from the centre of the box is too high.
 2' Foul by Dominik Kohr (FC Augsburg.
 2' Roberto Firmino (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
 1' Offside, FC Augsburg. Konstantinos Stafylidis tries a through ball, but Raúl Bobadilla is caught offside.
 First Half begins.
 Lineups are announced and players are warming up. 0