

Date: 25 February 2016
 Opposition: FC Augsburg
 Competition: Europa League

Times	Telegraph	Augsburg Allgem
Guardian	Mirror	Echo
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25 February
 2016

THE TIMES

Klopp grateful for another gift as Liverpool labour into last 16

Liverpool
 Milner 5 (pen) 1
 Augsburg 0

(Liverpool win 1-0 on agg)

One week after being presented with a giant pretzel in Bavaria, Jurgen Klopp was relieved to discover that Augsburg's hospitality did not end with oversized baked bread. This time the present came in the form of a handball so needless that a shocked Anfield failed to appeal for the penalty that James Milner converted. Another gift had been accepted and with it progress to the last 16 of the Europa League.

This was not a performance that will trouble Manchester City before the Capital One Cup final on Sunday. Whereas Manuel Pellegrini's side head into the Wembley showpiece on the back of arguably their most convincing display of the season, a 3-1 win away to Dynamo Kiev, Liverpool have only two days to address the issues that emerged in a laboured, narrow victory over two legs against a team ranked 13th in the Bundesliga. This was not a night when those on the Kop could chant "Are you watching Manchester?" with any conviction.

Only after the final whistle had blown and relief had swept the stadium did thoughts turn to City as a chorus of "We're the greatest team in Europe and we're going to Wembley," erupted. The destination might have been accurate but the description was as wayward as Liverpool's finishing and had a 90th minute free kick from Kostas Stafylidis drifted inside the post instead of marginally outside, Klopp would be preparing for his biggest game since taking over as manager with his preparations undermined by recriminations.

Klopp had not expected anything different than the tense affair that transpired. Asked beforehand if his ideal scenario was to end the tie as early as possible to aid preparation for Sunday, the Liverpool manager's response dripped with sarcasm. "The plan is to lead 6-0 after five minutes and then take a holiday," the Liverpool manager said. Such an outcome was never a possibility regardless of Augsburg's lack of European pedigree and Klopp's target from the outset was much more prosaic -- to get through the tie without injuries and progress. On those counts at least he could be satisfied.

The area that did concern him was the lack of ruthlessness that allowed Augsburg to remain competitive for much longer than they should have been able to. Having taken the lead in the fourth minute when Milner beat Marwin Hitz from the penalty spot after Dominik Kohr's inexplicable handling offence when trying to stop Jordan Henderson's cross, Liverpool went on to create numerous opportunities but took none.

Inevitably, such profligacy increased the tension, leading to high anxiety as Augsburg increasingly threatened to score the equaliser that would have taken them through on away goals. "That is how football is, if you can't decide the game early enough that is how it is," Klopp said. "It was hard, but we are in the next round. We were the better team, we created chances but we had one problem in that we didn't use them. It is not relevant to Sunday but the team has benefited from a good performance. You could say same about City in Kiev. We will try our damndest to get a good performance on Sunday."

While Hitz made several good saves, most notably from Philippe Coutinho, Daniel Sturridge and Roberto Firmino during a one-sided first half and Henderson in a more even second period, Liverpool also benefited from quality goalkeeping, none more so than when Tobias Werner bore down on goal only to be thwarted by an alert Simon Mignolet. Liverpool began to live on their nerves as their margin for error decreased and the visiting team sensed that the eighth European game in their history could turn into the most significant of their 109-year existence. Stafylidis's late free kick could have allowed Augsburg to achieve that objective.

As his left-footed shot cleared Liverpool's defensive wall and arced towards the top left-hand corner of Mignolet's goal, Anfield held its breath with many fearing that the net would bulge. The ball, though, curled wide and Liverpool's place in the next round was secure. They had qualified without dazzling but in cup competitions it is only the result that matters.

"After the game with a 1-0 win I am completely fine as I know there are no injuries," Klopp said. The Liverpool manager certainly will not complain if Sunday brings a repeat good performance, when he hopes the latest presentation in his honour will bring a trophy rather than a pretzel.

Liverpool (4-3-2-1): S Mignolet 7 -- N Clyne 6, L Leiva 7, M Sakho 7, A Moreno 7 -- J Milner 6, J Henderson 6, E Can 5 -- R Firmino 6, P Coutinho 7 (sub: J Teixeira, 80min) -- D Sturridge 6 (sub: D Origi, 66 6). Substitutes not used: D Ward, K Toure, B Smith, P Chirivella, C Benteke. Booked: Firmino.

Augsburg (4-3-3): M Hitz 8 -- P Verhaegh 6, C Janker 6 (sub: S Parker, 90), R Klavan 7, K Stafylidis 7 -- A Esswein 6, J Koo 7 (sub: J Moravek, 80), D Kohr 6 -- Caiuby 6, H Altintop 6, T Werner 5 (sub: R Bobadilla, 72). Substitutes not used: A Manninger, D Opape, P Max, T Rieder. Booked: Stafylidis, Caiuby, Janker.

Referee: C Turpin (Fr).

the guardian

Liverpool edge past Augsburg thanks to James Milner penalty

Jürgen Klopp congratulated Markus Weinzierl, the Augsburg coach, on being "a bit annoying" and that was before kick-off. By the end, the Liverpool manager would hold Weinzierl's team in the same regard and with the same respect, having emerged from a fraught night at Anfield with a place in the last 16 of the Europa League.

The struggling Bundesliga team claimed they were robbed by a referee called Turpin after James Milner scored the decisive, only goal of the two-legged tie from the penalty spot. But it was legitimate, as were Liverpool's claims of a merited victory that provided Klopp with the preparation he craved before Sunday's Capital One Cup final against Manchester City. His only complaint was the nervous finale – in which Kostas Stafylidis curled a free-kick a fraction wide in the 89th minute – which could easily have been avoided with more ruthlessness in front of goal.

Liverpool 1-0 Augsburg (1-0 agg): Europa League second leg – as it happened James Milner's early penalty was enough for Liverpool to book their place in the last 16 of the Europa League for the first time in five years at the expense of Augsburg

"If you can't decide the game early enough that is how it is," said the Liverpool manager. "The free-kick was the biggest challenge up front for us. It was a good game, it was absolutely deserved. We were the better team, we created chances but we had one problem in that we didn't use them.

"We couldn't control the game in the last 20 minutes. It was hard, that is how it should be, but we are in the next round."

Liverpool were handed the perfect start, literally, when Clément Turpin was possibly the only person inside the stadium to spot a needless handball by Dominik Kohr. Augsburg had started brightly with Caiuby blazing a good chance over after 44 seconds and Koo Ja-cheol dominant in central midfield but momentum was checked when his fellow midfielder made a mess of dealing with Jordan Henderson's cross into the area.

Kohr was impeded by his own team-mate as he shaped to head clear and, with Caiuby climbing all over his back but getting nowhere near the ball, the midfielder's raised arm made contact. No one appealed, not the Liverpool players or the Anfield crowd, but the alert French official had no hesitation in pointing to the spot. Milner beat Marwin Hitz with a powerful spot-kick low to the goalkeeper's left. The breakthrough enabled Liverpool to settle but they had enough chances to have eased all anxieties long before the interval. Hitz's sharp reflexes and a few wrong decisions in front of goal kept the tie in the balance.

Liverpool were edgy in defence but their play in the final third showed the benefits of a first full week's training since Christmas. There was greater intensity and understanding to their attacking performance than there has been for several weeks. The quickfire combinations between Philippe Coutinho and Daniel Sturridge on the left were a constant worry for the Augsburg defence.

Sturridge started a third consecutive game for the first time in 11 months as Klopp refused to let the impending Capital One Cup final influence his starting selection. Kolo Touré was perhaps the only player rested before Sunday, though Lucas Leiva will hope otherwise having started in central defence, with the Liverpool manager striving for the continuity that has eluded the team in recent months.

Liverpool's best chance of a second fell to Sturridge shortly after the restart, when Hitz and the Augsburg right-back, Paul Verhaegh, played themselves into trouble and invited Coutinho to intercept. The England international was offside when released by the Brazilian but, allowed to continue, he cut inside the last man Ragnar Klavan before placing his shot inches wide.

The threat from Augsburg was limited yet they had their moments to score a crucial away goal. Stafylidis forced Simon Mignolet to save at full stretch and Caiuby was gifted a clear opening when Lucas under-hit a back pass straight to his fellow Brazilian. The Augsburg striker rounded Mignolet but could not find the target from a tight angle. A reprieve.

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The Mail

Milner spot on ...but Klopp's flops struggle

SO ALL the boxes were ticked: a win and a clean sheet; a place in the Europa League's last 16 and no new injuries.

Liverpool's players enjoyed receiving Anfield's acclaim at the final whistle and those supporters who had managed to secure an early exit from work for the 6pm kick-off left the stadium singing about the impending trip to Wembley.

A good evening, then? Jurgen Klopp certainly thought so. But the reality? Very different.

Liverpool's adventure in Europe continues but they made heavy weather of this. It was not the performance of a team who look primed to deliver silverware.

Sluggish in parts and erratic in front of goal, Liverpool's passage was secured thanks to James Milner's first-half penalty but their profligacy was almost costly Manchester City, Sunday's opponents in the Capital One Cup final, will not be losing sleep.

'It is better than if we had been knocked out,' Klopp argued. 'This is not relevant to Sunday but the team has benefited from a good performance -- but you could say the same about City in Kiev last night.' The evening could hardly have started better. When Dominik Kohr handled Jordan Henderson's cross, referee Clement Turpin had no hesitation in pointing to the spot. Milner (right) held his nerve, thrashing his penalty beyond the grasp of Marwin Hitz.

For some reason, though, building on that advantage proved dreadfully hard work. Liverpool had plenty of possession but didn't give the impression they would do something significant with it and the chances they created were all snatched.

Philippe Coutinho, the team's creative spark, shot straight at Hitz after exchanging passes with Daniel Sturridge; Roberto Firmino's instinctive sidefooted effort following a cross by Alberto Moreno was then palmed away by the Augsburg keeper, who finished the half thwarting Sturridge.

The lack of cutting edge led to some restlessness among the natives. There was also anxiety, particularly when Augsburg left back Kostas Stafylidis forced a save out of Simon Mignolet and Caiuby fired into the side netting.

Sturridge had a chance to ease the tension in the 49th minute, when Coutinho picked the pocket of right back Paul Verhaegh, but, on this occasion, the England striker got his angles wrong and rolled his shot wide of the upright.

Lacking sharpness, his night ended shortly after when Klopp decided to save Sturridge's legs for Wembley.

Much to the manager's irritation, however, Liverpool started to become even more ragged. He patrolled his technical area, frequently barking out instructions, occasionally turning to his lieutenants, to see how some calm could be restored.

Sensing they had a chance to pilfer a killer away goal, Augsburg began to push forward. Only a brave tackle from Mignolet to deny Tobias Werner, who scampered through the middle on to a basic, straight ball that alarmingly dissected Liverpool's defence, prevented them being flattened.

As the home fans became increasingly mute -- and Klopp became increasingly irate, at one point screeching at Milner to get into position -- it seemed likely Augsburg would torpedo Liverpool's ambitions. They could not have come closer than they did in the 89th minute.

Lucas, playing as a central defender, gave away a free kick on the edge of his area. Stafylidis hit a left-footed curler over the wall but it drifted inches wide and Liverpool were through. If they are to go further than the last 16, Klopp privately will know improvement is imperative.

'If you can't decide the game early enough it's always like this, especially against a team like Augsburg,' said Klopp. 'At the end they had long balls and the free kick was a big challenge for us. But it was absolutely deserved. We were the better team.'

'We caused our own problem by not scoring enough. We forgot to make the decisive goal but I am completely fine. Now we will try our damndest to get a good performance on Sunday.' Deep down he will know something better than 'good' will be needed to provide a silver lining.

The Daily Telegraph

Milner seals victory for a Liverpool side still struggling for rhythm

Liverpool 1

Milner 5 pen

Augsburg 0

Liverpool win 1-0 on agg

Slow, unspectacular progress with plenty of room for improvement. Liverpool's passage to the last 16 of the Europa League was emblematic of the first few months of Jurgen's Klopp reign.

A James Milner penalty after five minutes was enough, but there was anxiety until the final seconds as Bundesliga side Augsburg threatened to undermine Wembley preparations. An early platform seemed an ideal opportunity for Liverpool to show poise and class - easing themselves to victory while preserving energy for their Wembley trip. Instead, there was the customary relief at a narrow home win. Klopp could point to several missed opportunities and an opposing goalkeeper who repelled Daniel Sturridge and Roberto Firmino, but he will know there is some distance between where Liverpool are and where they ought to be. Shorter term, they must radically improve when they meet Manchester City on Sunday.

"Continuity and rhythm," has been the Klopp buzz phrase in recent weeks. Never mind 'heavy metal football' because at times this was more like a sentimental ballad by an out-of-tune crooner. It is not as if Klopp is not trying to get the beat going - the ability to pick a side and stick with it offering a glimpse of Liverpool's future.

Rotation has been a compulsion rather than choice since he took over but, armed with Sturridge, Philippe Coutinho and Firmino, the German was prepared to keep changes to a minimum. It meant parking the League Cup final to focus primarily on Europe. Lucas Leiva's inclusion at centre-half ahead of Kolo Toure was the only concession.

That decision almost backfired immediately when the makeshift defender lost possession within 60 seconds, presenting striker Caiuby with his first sight of goal. Augsburg's Brazilian shot horribly over. He would squander an easier chance from another Lucas error before half-time, gifted a one-on-one with Simon Mignolet only to tamely find the side-netting. The warnings were there for Liverpool even during those periods they seemed to be in control, the lack of ruthlessness a recurring issue.

"This is how football is if you can't decide the game early enough," said Klopp. "They never changed their plan even when they were a goal behind but, for 70 minutes, we were so good we could not see their plan. Everyone will say we deserved the win and had the better chances but the biggest problem is we did not score enough. It's still a long way and the problem is we could not control the game in the last 20 minutes."

There were moments of encouragement, as Liverpool's attacking trio combined, even if their early lead was courtesy of Augsburg's generosity and diligent refereeing. Clement Turpin was the only one in the stadium to spot Dominik Kohr's handball from Jordan Henderson's fifth-minute cross. There was no appeal but the official pointed to the spot, replays earning him congratulation rather than condemnation. Milner stepped up and stroked Liverpool ahead.

As well as the lead, it ensured no heavy legs before Wembley as extra-time was now impossible.

Leaving Anfield injury free was significant especially as robust challenges were shaken off. "Absolutely, it's important, every player needs to know they can carry on when it gets a bit harder," said Klopp. "They're both very important for us but we need them in best shape and can only get that through training and matches. "Phil had one or two challenges but we need to find new faith or trust in the body of the players."

Liverpool needed a second and Sturridge was inches away three minutes into the second half after quick thinking from Coutinho. The striker looked off-side as he stoked past Hitz, but controversy was averted as he was narrowly wide.

The home pressure was intensifying but there were also anxieties, as Klopp knew an away goal would change the complexion of the evening. The latter stages played out with familiar lack of assuredness in Liverpool's defence, Augsburg piling forward in pursuit of the critical away goal. "It is not relevant to Sunday but the team has benefited from a good performance. You could say same about City in Kiev last night," said Klopp. "We will try our damndest to get a good performance on Sunday." Liverpool have not yet made a significant forward thrust under Klopp. A Wembley win would finally provide it.

Liverpool (4-3-3) Mignolet 6; Clyne 6, Sakho 5, Lucas 6, Moreno 6; Milner 7, Henderon 6, Can 5; Coutinho 6 (Teixeira 80), Sturridge 6 (Origi 66), Firmino 6. Subs Toure, Benteke, Smith, Ward, Chirivella. Booked Firmino.

Augsburg (4-2-3-1) Hitz 7; Stafylidis 6, Klavan 5, Jancker 5 (Parker 90), Verhaegh 6; Altintop 6, Kohr 5; Werner 5 (Bobadilla 72), Ja-Chaol 6 (Moravek 80), Esswein 6; Caiuby 5. Subs Manninger, Opape, Max, Rieder. Booked Jancker, Caiuby, Stafylidis. Referee C Turpin (France).

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THE INDEPENDENT

Milner's early breakthrough gives Klopp breathing space for cup final
 When Daniel Sturridge glided through the night air the fear was he might stop and signal to the bench that he could not carry on, his brittle muscles succumbing to the freeze. When captain Jordan Henderson fell clutching his knee, only the sound of a few moaning infants could be heard. When James Milner fired past Marwin Hitz so early on to score the opener, the reality of extra time not being necessary dawned, and the relief across Anfield was tangible.

Everything just about worked out for Liverpool and Jürgen Klopp here last night. Progression in the Europa League round of 32 was secured but not by exerting more energy in playing an increased number of minutes ahead of Sunday's League Cup final with Manchester City. There were no injuries sustained either and Klopp did not suffer the indignity of an exit to German opposition struggling in the Bundesliga.

Hitz, a goalkeeper who was charged and fined by the German FA two months ago for sabotaging the ground near the penalty spot before a kick was missed in a game against Cologne, did not require such skulduggery to enhance his display, for the performance of the Swiss was surely a career best, denying Liverpool a more comfortable victory.

Liverpool have now kept three clean sheets for the first time since the first three games of the season. Klopp's only change was to replace Kolo Touré with Lucas Leiva at centre-back and, by selecting more or less the same side in three successive games, he has been able to breathe much coveted continuity and rhythm into his side's play.

Klopp was happy. He goes to Wembley in an optimistic mood. "The win was absolutely deserved and I think most people would agree with me," he said. "We should have scored more but that is how football is sometimes. With a 1-0, I am completely fine."

He was particularly satisfied that Sturridge and Philippe Coutinho made it through 65 and 80 minutes respectively. "We need to find new faith and trust in the body of the players," he admitted. "They can only get their best shape through training and matches. Maybe we are nearly there."

The challenge was made complex by the fact this was the biggest game in Augsburg's history. In explaining what the prospect of a European fixture at Anfield meant to him, their manager, Markus Weinzierl, had been in danger of affording Liverpool too much respect. "Anyone who can walk has made the journey," he said. "Christmas has come early. We want to achieve the unthinkable."

Midfielder Tobias Werner seemed to have a more realistic grip on the task before him, talking positively about the quality of Liverpool's players but reminding us of their human side. "Even they put their trousers on one leg at a time," he said.

Augsburg's success in recent seasons has been built upon a solid defence, a well-drilled midfield and an attack that makes a contribution but without using any amount of flair. They were just the type of opponent Liverpool have struggled to break down and unlike last week, when their supporters gathered in front of the city hall at noon staring dolefully into their steins following a poor return to their domestic campaign after the winter break, they convened on Merseyside by marching confidently en masse from Derby Square, past Lime Street and up Scotland Road.

What Liverpool really did not want was extra time ahead of a cup final. Having drawn the first leg 0-0, what Klopp wished for was the possibility of that happening being extinguished swiftly. Liverpool have not scored many early goals at Anfield since he became manager, so when the French referee Clément Turpin spotted an indiscretion inside Augsburg's penalty area after only five minutes Liverpool could relax a little.

Henderson's cross would have been headed away by Brazilian striker Caiuby had it not been for Dominik Kohr, the enthusiastic midfielder who on this occasion proved way too eager to make his presence felt, flinging his hand in front of Caiuby. Liverpool were awarded a penalty and from there Milner - the reliable sort in this type of situation - passed Hitz without any fuss at all.

It frustrated Klopp that Liverpool did not secure progression by half-time. On chances, a 4-1 scoreline would not have been unfair at that stage.

Sturridge fed Coutinho, who fired into Hitz's feet; Coutinho then returned the favour for Sturridge but again Hitz was there, making the save of the night. In between those chances, when Roberto Firmino reacted quickly to send Alberto Moreno's cross darting towards goal, Hitz reacted in a surprised manner but was nevertheless able to stop it going in.

The pattern continued. When Sturridge turned his marker Christoph Janker shortly after the break it appeared Liverpool were finally going to be able to take it easy, and yet Sturridge's release was screwed. When Henderson raced on to Firmino's flick, Hitz was there one last time to deny him.

There was the usual charge by the trailing team when a lead is so slender. Weinzierl brought on Raul Bobadilla, the oxen-thighed striker. That the closest they came to an equaliser was through two shots from a left-back in Kostas Stafylidis - one of them a free-kick - showed Liverpool were not under as much pressure as it may have seemed.

DAILY MIRROR

Milner stands and delivers; James' penalty present cracks highway code for Reds

WITH a controversial winner and a referee named Turpin, Augsburg may claim they were the victims of highway robbery last night.

The reality though, is that Liverpool were far more Robin Hood in their generosity towards their relatively poor German opponents, offering a Europa League lifeline when their dominance demanded they showed no mercy.

Yes, the visitors will point to a penalty awarded in the first half by French official Clément Turpin, which seemed to be harsh, given that the offender Dominik Kohr handled only when accidentally struck by his own player.

The reality is that the Reds created a tense finale - where they so very nearly conceded the equaliser on the night which would have put Augsburg through - because of some sloppy finishing.

Liverpool carved out enough chances to have won not only this tie, but the Capital One Cup Final on Sunday, too. But they had only that spot-kick, converted coolly enough by James Milner on five minutes, to show for it.

The list of openings was almost endless, the best of them coming when man-of-the-match Marwin Hitz in the visiting goal saved instinctively from Daniel Sturridge on 22 minutes, and denied him again just before the interval.

Jordan Henderson also saw his shot saved, and Liverpool wasted so many late opportunities on the break it seemed almost inevitable that the Germans would capitalise on such generosity.

They nearly did too, not least in the final minute, when a curling, dipping free-kick from Kostas Stafylidis looked for all the world as if it was going in, before flashing inches wide of goal.

Reds keeper Simon Mignolet deserved that, because his fine save minutes earlier when Tobias Werner screamed through on goal effectively put Liverpool through to the last 16.

His decisiveness in racing from his line and thrusting out a foot to deny the opposition forward was one of the few real positives that boss Jürgen Klopp (right) could take from a frustrating night.

Another was the form and returning fitness of striker Sturridge. He looks sharper by the game, and even though he twice saw good efforts saved and a third fly the wrong side of a post, his movement, passing and combination with Roberto Firmino all offer hope.

Sturridge said, in confirming he sees his future at Anfield, that he is ambitious to win trophies. But Liverpool will have to improve dramatically if they are going to win the Capital One Cup.

If this was a dress rehearsal, they need new costumes, because their lack of ruthlessness and canny ability to choose the wrong pass in good positions, showed an inexperience and naivety that Manchester City will exploit.

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Reds overcome plucky roadblock on final stretch before Wembley

This was hardly the most emphatic of Wembley send-offs. Liverpool will head for the capital on a high after progressing to the last 16 of the Europa League but they made painfully hard work of overcoming plucky Augsburg. Rather than warm up for Sunday's Capital One Cup final with Manchester City at Wembley with a show of force, the Reds toiled on a nervy night at Anfield.

Relief was the overwhelming emotion after Jurgen Klopp's men clung on to the narrow lead given to them by James Milner's early spot-kick to book their place in Friday's draw. Liverpool only had themselves to blame for the tension and the anxiety which engulfed Anfield in the closing stages.

They should have been out of sight but their wastefulness in the final third - coupled with the brilliance of keeper Marwin Hitz - kept the tie in the melting pot until the end. So much for getting the job done and cruising to the finish line to spare the legs for Sunday. Instead Liverpool had to dig deep and put their bodies on the line during an energy-sapping contest to avoid what would have been an embarrassing exit. Thankfully, they came through unscathed and now it's all about rest and recovery ahead of the showdown with City.

This wasn't a performance to strike fear into Manuel Pellegrini's side but there were some encouraging signs to cling to as the Reds look to end the club's four-year wait for silverware. Liverpool will head for Wembley on the back of three successive clean sheets and with Simon Mignolet's confidence having received a timely lift. The Belgian keeper made one crucial save midway through the first half to deny Tobias Werner a precious away goal. As an attacking force, Liverpool were transformed following the sluggish display in Bavaria seven days earlier.

Some of the link up play between Daniel Sturridge, Roberto Firmino and Philippe Coutinho was sublime with the over-worked German backline chasing shadows for long periods. But the lack of a ruthless streak repeatedly let the Bundesliga strugglers off the hook.

Lack of ruthlessness gave Bundesliga side hope

The team for Liverpool virtually picks itself. The only change is likely to be the inclusion of Kolo Toure for Lucas Leiva. One first-half howler aside, long-serving midfielder Lucas did little wrong after being pressed into duty as a makeshift centre-back alongside Mamadou Sakho. But with Dejan Lovren ill and lacking match sharpness after three weeks out, and Martin Skrtel still on the comeback trail, Toure looks likely to start at Wembley just a few weeks short of his 35 birthday. The veteran Ivorian deserves that opportunity after his form in recent weeks and he will be fresh for the battle with his former club and his younger brother Yaya after being rested. The omens were good for Liverpool. On the three previous occasions they had drawn 0-0 in the first leg of a European tie in Germany they had progressed. They were also unbeaten in 16 meetings with Bundesliga opposition at Anfield. There was an early scare when Caiuby burst through a gaping hole and blazed over but the Reds were soon gifted the breakthrough. Dominik Kohr stupidly handled Jordan Henderson's cross and Milner stepped up to fire the spot-kick into the bottom corner. That goal immediately killed off any prospect of the tie going to extra time. It wasn't one-way traffic with Liverpool playing themselves into trouble at times. However, going forward Klopp's men looked infinitely more dangerous than at the WWK Arena.

In Bavaria they had been too slow in both thought and deed but on home turf they moved the ball at speed and really stretched Augsburg. Firmino volleyed wide before Coutinho was denied by Hitz after a neat exchange with Sturridge. Another slick move saw Sturridge pick out the run of Firmino. His lay off found Nathaniel Clyne, whose low strike was deflected narrowly wide. Liverpool were bright and inventive with the outstanding Coutinho dropping off into space and pulling the strings. Augsburg, roared on by 2,500 passionate Bavarians, had their moments with Mignolet called into action to push away Kostas Stafylidis' 25-yarder.

Reds attack sparkles until final finish

But for the most part the visitors were camped inside their own half and trying to repel wave after wave of attacks. Full-backs Clyne and Alberto Moreno both impressed as they rampaged down the flanks and got in behind Augsburg's backline. Moreno's low cross was swept goalwards by Firmino but Hitz reacted smartly to tip it over. Liverpool's only problems were of their own making. Ten minutes before the break Caiuby pounced on Lucas' woeful backpass and went around Mignolet but the angle was tight and the Brazilian striker scuffed wide.

There was a scare of a different kind when Henderson stayed down after being clattered by Koo Ja-Cheol but after treatment the captain was able to continue. Emre Can and Coutinho carved Augsburg apart once again but Hitz did well to claw behind Sturridge's effort. The second half brought more of the same. Coutinho's relentless pressing created a golden opportunity for Sturridge but he side-footed horribly wide. Firmino and Coutinho both threatened to deliver the killer blow but chances continued to go begging. From a position of control, the nerves started jangling both on and off the pitch. There were howls when Can and Sakho ended up challenging each other for a header. Augsburg sensed that all was not lost and threw caution to the wind. Mignolet had to be alert to dash off his line to thwart Werner. The fact that Divock Origi was sent on to replace Sturridge was another sign of Christian Benteke's place in Klopp's pecking order. Henderson, who endured a frustrating night as passes went astray, should have

settled it but Hitz somehow saved from close range. The number of errors grew as nerves became frayed but the commitment certainly couldn't be questioned with Milner putting in a tireless shift down the right. That hard graft ultimately saw Liverpool through. Anfield collectively held its breath as Stafylidis curled a late free-kick agonisingly wide. Next stop Wembley.

MATCH FACTS

Liverpool: Mignolet, Clyne, Lucas, Sakho, Moreno, Can, Henderson, Milner, Firmino, Coutinho (Teixeira 79), Sturridge (Origi 66).

Not used: Ward, Toure, Benteke, Smith, Chirivella

Augsburg: Hitz, Verhaegh, Janker (Parker 90), Klavan, Stafylidis, Esswein, Altintop, Werner (Bobadilla 72), Koo Ja-Cheol (Moravek 80), Kohr, Caiuby.

Not used: Manninger, Opore, Max, Rieder

Referee: Clement Turpin Attendance: 43, 081 Goals: Milner 5

Bookings: Stafylidis, Caiuby, Firmino, Moravek.

Man of the match: Philippe Coutinho. At the heart of everything best about Liverpool.



Augsburger Allgemeine

FC Augsburg scheidet nach großem Kampf am FC Liverpool

Die fünfmonatige Traumreise durch die Europa League ist für den FC Augsburg am Ziel vieler Fußballer-Träume zu Ende gegangen. Der FCA verlor an der Anfield Road gegen den FC Liverpool mit 0:1 (0:1). Das reichte nach dem 0:0 im Hinspiel nicht. Ein einziges Törchen bedeutete nach zwei kämpferisch großartigen Spielen das Aus.

Vor dem Spiel hatte die wichtigste Frage in Augsburg gelautet: Spielt Raul Bobadilla oder spielt er nicht? Sie wurde um kurz vor 18 Uhr beantwortet. Nein, er spielte nicht. Der Stürmer des FC Augsburg, der sich im Hinspiel am Oberschenkel verletzt hatte saß aber wenigstens auf der Bank.

Vor der Partie hatte FCA-Trainer Markus Weinzierl lange ein Geheimnis um die Planungen mit seinem Stürmer gemacht. Auch Daniel Baier war mit nach Liverpool gereist, doch ihm blieb nur die Rolle des Zuschauers auf der Tribüne. Es schien fast so, als wollte Weinzierl ein paar Nebelkerzen zünden, um seinen Kollegen Jürgen Klopp etwas zu verwirren.

Haarige Ausgangslage für Liverpool

Bei der Presseabteilung des FC Liverpool war dies auf jeden Fall gelungen. Da führten sie Dominik Kohr zum Beispiel als Mittelstürmer auf oder Alexander Esswein als defensiven Mittelfeldspieler. Dabei hatte Weinzierl gegenüber dem 0:0 im Rückspiel neben Bobadilla nur Markus Feulner (Jochbeinbruch) ersetzen müssen. Mit einer Viererabwehrkette (Verhaegh, Janker, Klavan, Stafylidis), einem defensiven Mittelfeldspieler (Kohr), einer Viererkette (Esswein, Koo, Altintop, Werner) und einem Stürmer (Caiuby) wollte er das Wunder von Liverpool schaffen.

Klopp hatte gegenüber Augsburg nur seinen Innenverteidiger Toure gegen Lucas getauscht. Bei den Liverpooler Medien spielte das aber keine große Rolle. Dort war die Woche über das Hauptthema das Ligacup-Finale am Wochenende. Es könnte der erste Titel für Klopp werden. Und nur die zählen. Das Duell mit dem FCA schien Nebensache.

Dabei war die Ausgangslage durchaus haarig für den 18-fachen englischen Meister. Mit einem Sieg oder einem Unentschieden mit mindestens einem Tor wäre der FCA weiter gewesen. Klar war aber auch, fällt ein Tor an der Anfield Road, würde es keine Verlängerung geben. Und das war nach fünf Minuten klar. Dominik Kohr hatte den Ball im eigenen Strafraum mit der Hand berührt, der französische Schiedsrichter Clément Turpin pfiff. Den fälligen Elfmeter verwandelte James Milner sicher zum 1:0. 41.000 Liverpooler Fans im ausverkauften Stadion jubelten, die rund 3.000 mitgereisten FCA-Fans schwiegen. Aber nicht lange. Sie hatten das Gegenteil schneller verdaut als die Mannschaft. Die wirkte fähig, nicht griffig genug, etwas unkonzentriert, einfach beeindruckt. Außer Torhüter Marwin Hitz. Der verhinderte mit mehr als einem halben Dutzend spektakulären Paraden einen höheren Rückstand und flog noch in der Nacht in die Heimat zurück, weil seine Frau kurz vor der Geburt des zweiten Kindes stand. Auf der anderen Seite hatte Caiuby (1. und 35.) zwei gute Chancen und einmal prüfte Stafylidis (25.) Liverpools Torhüter Mignolet.

Stafylidis scheidet ganz knapp

Mit dem 0:1 konnte der FCA durchaus zufrieden in die Kabine gehen. Es war verdient, ließ aber weiter alle Chancen offen. Nach dem Wechsel das gleiche Bild. Liverpool, das viel aggressiver auftrat als in Augsburg, versuchte mit dem 2:0 frühzeitig die Entscheidung zu erzwingen. Sturridge schob in der 49. Minute unbedrängt am Tor vorbei.

Und dann kam er doch noch. In der 72. Minute wurde Raul

Bobadilla eingewechselt. Kurz zuvor war Tobias Werner am herausstürmenden Mignolet gescheitert. Bobadilla, der Mann der letzten Sekunden. In Belgrad hatte er mit einem Last-Minute-Tor das Weiterkommen gesichert. Ein kleines Fünkchen glimmte noch, weil Hitz weiter tausend Arme zu haben schien. In der 85. Minute kam Esswein zwei Meter vor dem Tor nicht richtig an den Ball. In der 89. Minute durfte dann Stafylidis aus 25 Metern zum Freistoß antreten. Der Ball flog und flog - Zentimeter am Tor vorbei. Es gab fünf Minuten Nachspielzeit. Genau um 19.52 Uhr englischer Ortszeit war die Reise zu Ende.

Date: 25 February 2016
 Opposition: FC Augsburg
 Competition: Europa League

Times	Telegraph	Augsburg Allgem
Guardian	Mirror	Echo
Independent	Mail	BBC

25 February
2016



Liverpool warmed up for the Capital One Cup final on Sunday by reaching the last 16 of the Europa League with a tense win over Augsburg at Anfield. Following a goalless first leg, James Milner scored a penalty after Dominik Kohr's handball to put the Reds ahead.

Liverpool failed to take their chances and a Lucas Leiva back-pass released Augsburg's Caiuby but he shot wide. An away goal would have put the Germans through and Reds keeper Simon Mignolet had to save from Tobias Werner late on.

Liverpool ended up hanging on as they made it into Friday's draw in which there are no seedings or restrictions on facing teams from your own country. Liverpool lack cutting edge

The Reds would have wanted to put this tie to bed as quickly as possible with the Wembley showpiece against Manchester City on Sunday and they were aided by the early penalty.

Liverpool pressed high up the pitch and played some stylish football but, with six goals in seven previous Europa League outings this season, they again struggled in front of goal and failed to turn their superiority into a bigger lead.

Brazil midfielder Philippe Coutinho had a promising chance when he was set up by the impressive Daniel Sturridge, only to see his stabbed shot from eight yards saved by keeper Marwin Hitz.

England international Sturridge had a shot palmed on to a post after a Coutinho pull-back and the striker also sent a shot just wide when he was not flagged after appearing offside.

The anxiety for the home side increased as the game went on - and Reds captain Jordan Henderson had a close-range shot saved before the relief of the final whistle.

"It is frustrating. We should be scoring two or three and killing the game off and it makes it tough second half as you know if they score they go through," England midfielder Henderson told BT Sport.

"We have to give credit to Augsburg as well. They are a quality team and put us under pressure."

Were Liverpool lucky?

The hosts were the better team but Augsburg, who are 13th in the Bundesliga, had their chances as they almost capitalised on Liverpool's lack of ruthlessness. Kostas Stafylidis had a well-struck shot parried away by Reds keeper Mignolet and Caiuby missed after Lucas' back-pass.

Mignolet also rescued his side when he quickly came off his line to block a Werrner shot when he had been put clean through on goal.

A late 20-yard free-kick from Stafylidis also curled just the wrong side of the post as the German side's debut season in European competition came to an end.

What shape are the Reds in for Sunday's final?

Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp chose to play a strong line-up, despite the game being just three days before the trip to Wembley.

Sturridge and Coutinho had only recently returned from hamstring injuries but both played, with the former being taken off after 66 minutes and the Brazilian playmaker being substituted after 80 minutes.

Milner did go down at one point following an accidental clash with Stafylidis, but there did not appear to be any other injury worries for Klopp.

"Phil had one or two situations after challenges but we need to find new faith or trust in the body of the players," said the 48-year-old German.

"They (Sturridge and Coutinho) are very important for us but we need them in their best shape and you can only get this from training and matches."

Man of the match - Daniel Sturridge

Manager reaction

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp: "It was absolutely deserved. We were the better team, we created chances but we had one problem in that we didn't use them."

"We couldn't control the game in the last 20 minutes and it was hard, that is how it should be, but we are in the next round."

Augsburg coach Markus Weinzierl: "I think we were a little unlucky with the penalty but we kept it going right till the end and that says a lot for our team and I am very proud of the players and the club."

The stats you need to know

Two of Liverpool's three fastest goals in all competitions this season have been scored in the Europa League - Adam Lallana v FC Sion (3:47) and Milner v Augsburg tonight (4:29).

This was Liverpool's first clean sheet at Anfield in Europe since last season's last-32 Europa League game against Besiktas, also a 1-0 win.

Augsburg scored against all three of their other opponents (Athletic Club, Partizan Belgrade and AZ) in their maiden European season but failed to do so in two games against Liverpool.

Liverpool have reached the last 16 of a European competition for the first time since the 2010-11 season when they did so in the Europa League.

What next?

As mentioned, Liverpool are back in action on Sunday as they face Manchester City in the Capital One Cup final as the Premier League rivals compete for the first piece of major silverware of the English domestic season.

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Match ends, Liverpool 1, FC Augsburg 0.
 90'+6' Second Half ends, Liverpool 1, FC Augsburg 0.
 90'+5' Attempt missed. Raúl Bobadilla (FC Augsburg right footed shot from outside the box is too high. Assisted by Ragnar Klavan.
 90'+4' Offside, Liverpool. James Milner tries a through ball, but Roberto Firmino is caught offside.
 90'+3' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Konstantinos Stafylidis.
 90'+3' Attempt blocked. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool right footed shot from the right side of the box is blocked. Assisted by Emre Can.
 90' Foul by Emre Can (Liverpool).
 90' Dominik Kohr (FC Augsburg wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 90' Substitution, FC Augsburg. Shawn Parker replaces Christoph Janker.
 89' Attempt missed. Konstantinos Stafylidis (FC Augsburg left footed shot from outside the box is close, but misses to the right from a direct free kick.
 88' Foul by Lucas Leiva (Liverpool).
 88' Caiuby (FC Augsburg wins a free kick in the attacking half.
 87' Christoph Janker (FC Augsburg is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.
 87' Divock Origi (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing.
 87' Foul by Christoph Janker (FC Augsburg).
 85' Offside, Liverpool. Nathaniel Clyne tries a through ball, but Roberto Firmino is caught offside.
 85' Attempt saved. Divock Origi (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by João Teixeira.
 83' Hand ball by James Milner (Liverpool).
 82' James Milner (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 82' Foul by Jan Morávek (FC Augsburg).
 81' Attempt missed. Jan Morávek (FC Augsburg right footed shot from the centre of the box is close, but misses to the left. Assisted by Caiuby with a headed pass.
 80' Substitution, FC Augsburg. Jan Morávek replaces Ja-Cheol Koo.
 80' Substitution, Liverpool. João Teixeira replaces Philippe Coutinho.
 79' Hand ball by Ja-Cheol Koo (FC Augsburg).
 78' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Ragnar Klavan.
 77' Hand ball by Alexander Esswein (FC Augsburg).
 77' Attempt saved. Jordan Henderson (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the centre of the goal.
 76' Attempt missed. Ja-Cheol Koo (FC Augsburg right footed shot from outside the box is too high.
 75' Offside, FC Augsburg. Caiuby tries a through ball, but Raúl Bobadilla is caught offside.
 74' Attempt missed. Divock Origi (Liverpool right footed shot from the right side of the six yard box is high and wide to the right. Assisted by James Milner with a cross.
 72' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Dominik Kohr.
 72' Attempt blocked. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked.
 72' Substitution, FC Augsburg. Raúl Bobadilla replaces Tobias Werner.
 70' Attempt saved. Tobias Werner (FC Augsburg left footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom right corner. Assisted by Ja-Cheol Koo.
 70' James Milner (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 70' Foul by Dominik Kohr (FC Augsburg).
 69' Foul by Mamadou Sakho (Liverpool).
 69' Caiuby (FC Augsburg wins a free kick on the right wing.
 68' Delay over. They are ready to continue.
 68' Delay in match James Milner (Liverpool because of an injury.
 67' Corner, FC Augsburg. Conceded by Lucas Leiva.
 66' Substitution, Liverpool. Divock Origi replaces Daniel Sturridge.
 63' Attempt missed. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box misses to the right. Assisted by Daniel Sturridge.
 60' Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing.
 60' Foul by Dominik Kohr (FC Augsburg).
 57' Delay over. They are ready to continue.
 57' Roberto Firmino (Liverpool is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.
 57' Delay in match Dominik Kohr (FC Augsburg because of an injury.
 56' Foul by Roberto Firmino (Liverpool).
 56' Dominik Kohr (FC Augsburg wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 56' Attempt missed. Halil Altintop (FC Augsburg left footed shot from outside the box is high and wide to the left.
 55' Foul by Mamadou Sakho (Liverpool).
 55' Caiuby (FC Augsburg wins a free kick in the attacking half.
 54' Offside, Liverpool. Nathaniel Clyne tries a through ball, but Roberto Firmino is caught offside.
 54' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Christoph Janker.
 54' Attempt blocked. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool right footed shot from the right side of the six yard box is blocked. Assisted by Nathaniel Clyne.
 52' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Konstantinos Stafylidis.
 52' Attempt blocked. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.
 50' Offside, FC Augsburg. Caiuby tries a through ball, but Christoph Janker is caught offside.
 50' Attempt missed. Caiuby (FC Augsburg header from the centre of the box misses to the right. Assisted by Tobias Werner with a cross following a set piece situation.
 50' Foul by Emre Can (Liverpool).
 50' Halil Altintop (FC Augsburg wins a free kick in the attacking half.
 49' Attempt missed. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is close, but misses to the right. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.
 48' Attempt missed. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box misses to the right.

Second Half begins Liverpool 1, FC Augsburg 0.
 45'+2' First Half ends, Liverpool 1, FC Augsburg 0.
 45'+1' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Ragnar Klavan.
 45'+1' Attempt blocked. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from the left side of the box is blocked. Assisted by Jordan Henderson.
 45' Caiuby (FC Augsburg is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.
 45' Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing.
 45' Foul by Caiuby (FC Augsburg).
 45' Attempt blocked. Alberto Moreno (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.
 44' Attempt missed. Konstantinos Stafylidis (FC Augsburg left footed shot from outside the box is too high. Assisted by Dominik Kohr.
 42' Delay over. They are ready to continue.
 41' Delay in match Jordan Henderson (Liverpool because of an injury.
 40' Jordan Henderson (Liverpool wins a free kick on the right wing.
 40' Foul by Ja-Cheol Koo (FC Augsburg).
 39' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Marwin Hitz.
 39' Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool hits the left post with a left footed shot from the centre of the box. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.
 37' Foul by Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool).
 37' Ragnar Klavan (FC Augsburg wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 35' Attempt missed. Caiuby (FC Augsburg left footed shot from a difficult angle on the left is close, but misses to the left.
 32' Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
 32' Foul by Caiuby (FC Augsburg).
 31' Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
 31' Foul by Christoph Janker (FC Augsburg).
 31' Attempt saved. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from the left side of the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Roberto Firmino.
 30' Attempt blocked. Lucas Leiva (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho with a cross.
 30' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Paul Verhaegh.
 30' Attempt blocked. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.
 27' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Alexander Esswein.
 27' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Marwin Hitz.
 27' Attempt saved. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool right footed shot from the left side of the box is saved in the top left corner. Assisted by Alberto Moreno with a cross.
 26' Attempt blocked. Nathaniel Clyne (Liverpool right footed shot from the right side of the box is blocked. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.
 26' Konstantinos Stafylidis (FC Augsburg is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.
 25' Roberto Firmino (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
 25' Foul by Konstantinos Stafylidis (FC Augsburg).
 25' Attempt saved. Konstantinos Stafylidis (FC Augsburg left footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom right corner. Assisted by Halil Altintop.
 24' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Christoph Janker.
 24' Attempt blocked. Nathaniel Clyne (Liverpool right footed shot from the right side of the box is blocked. Assisted by Roberto Firmino.
 22' Attempt saved. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Daniel Sturridge.
 20' Offside, Liverpool. Roberto Firmino tries a through ball, but Daniel Sturridge is caught offside.
 19' Mamadou Sakho (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 19' Foul by Caiuby (FC Augsburg).
 18' Foul by Emre Can (Liverpool).
 18' Ja-Cheol Koo (FC Augsburg wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 17' Foul by Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool).
 17' Ja-Cheol Koo (FC Augsburg wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 16' Attempt missed. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box misses to the left. Assisted by Jordan Henderson.
 15' Alberto Moreno (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 15' Foul by Alexander Esswein (FC Augsburg).
 14' Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
 14' Foul by Alexander Esswein (FC Augsburg).
 9' Foul by Jordan Henderson (Liverpool).
 9' Ja-Cheol Koo (FC Augsburg wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 8' Attempt saved. Konstantinos Stafylidis (FC Augsburg left footed shot from outside the box is saved in the top right corner.
 8' Corner, FC Augsburg. Conceded by James Milner.
 8' Attempt blocked. Halil Altintop (FC Augsburg right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Paul Verhaegh with a cross.
 7' Attempt missed. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box misses to the right. Assisted by Roberto Firmino.
 6' Attempt missed. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box misses to the left. Assisted by Emre Can.
 5' Goal! Liverpool 1, FC Augsburg 0. James Milner (Liverpool converts the penalty with a right footed shot to the bottom right corner.
 4' Penalty conceded by Dominik Kohr (FC Augsburg with a hand ball in the penalty area.
 4' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Paul Verhaegh.
 3' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Konstantinos Stafylidis.
 1' Attempt missed. Caiuby (FC Augsburg left footed shot from outside the box is too high. Assisted by Ja-Cheol Koo.
 First Half begins.
 Lineups are announced and players are warming up.