

Date: 28 February 2016
Opposition: Manchester City
Competition: League Cup

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THE TIMES

City celebrate after saving best for last in shoot-out drama
Liverpool Coutinho 83 Manchester City Fernandinho 49 1 (aet; City win 3-1 on pens) Referee: M Oliver Attendance: 86,206
Yaya Toure went one way, racing off towards the jubilant Manchester City fans, celebrating his penalty that settled this remarkable Capital One Cup final. His team-mates, though, sprinted in another direction, towards Willy Caballero, the unlikely headline-maker who saved three Liverpool penalties in the shoot-out to write his name in Wembley legend. Pablo Zabaleta won the race to congratulate Caballero, shortly followed by Sergio Aguero, Nicolas Otamendi and Bacary Sagna. Toure quickly joined in and soon all the City players were leaping on their plucky 13. He was eventually lifted on to the strong shoulders of Wilfried Bony. Caballero is a popular character in the dressing room. It is understood there would have been concern among his fellow-Argentinians in particular if he had been stood down after starting all City's games en route to Wembley. Manuel Pellegrini kept his word and Caballero started ahead of Joe Hart.
The decision was undeniably controversial, given Hart's quality, and was certainly not greeted with rapture by the City fans but from the moment he dropped low to cut out Alberto Moreno's cross after two minutes, Caballero impressed. His performance, not simply in the shoot-out but also in normal time when he denied Divock Origi, was a vindication of Pellegrini's decision.
Whatever happens next in Caballero's career, when Pep Guardiola arrives this summer at the Etihad, the Argentinian will always be revered for events in the shoot-out here. He had no chance with Liverpool's first penalty, Emre Can's nerveless Panenka. When Fernandinho, who had given City a second-half lead, swept his kick against the base of the post it was advantage Liverpool. They defeated Carlisle United and Stoke City in shoot-outs on the road to the 56th League Cup final. They had not accounted for Caballero. These are the moments when memories are made. Lucas Leiva hit his kick hard enough, and it was rising towards the net until Caballero pushed out a hand and forced it away. Jesus Navas made it 1-1 and it was back on with the Caballero show. Philippe Coutinho, whose equaliser forced extra time, tried to deceive Caballero, pausing during his run-up, but City's goalkeeper guessed correctly, diving to his left and saving. Aguero made it 2-1 to City, their fans shouted in delight, and the focus was back on Caballero. His save from Adam Lallana was truly exceptional, throwing himself to his right and tipping the ball away. Caballero jumped up and punched the air. Toure applied the coupe de grace and the City party started. It seemed a Blue Moon was rising over Wembley until it became clear that the stadium's famous arch had been lit in City colours. The last to join the throng around Caballero was Vincent Kompany, confirming he is a man of substance as well as a centre half of great authority by immediately heading over to the distraught vanquished, consoling them. Liverpool contributed fully to the occasion. Lucas, Can and Coutinho all shone for Jurgen Klopp's side during the 120 minutes. City, though, were deserved winners. The final took time to get going.
Raheem Sterling, the City winger who kept running at Nathaniel Clyne, was relentlessly booed by the fans he forsook last year. Mamadou Sakho departed after a sickening collision with Can, wisely withdrawn by Klopp. Mignolet pushed an Aguero shot against a post. Fernando and Lucas escaped with reckless challenges on Coutinho and Aguero respectively. Michael Oliver was a model of leniency. For a long period, the only card on view was the one belonging to the competition's ubiquitous sponsor. Liverpool fans had, as usual, their own banners, including "We are Wembley Wizards" and "Klopp und der Kop Uber Alles". City's art department had been less busy but their support was hugely vocal as they contested their fifth League Cup final, especially when Fernandinho struck four minutes after the break. Memories of their 1976 victory were revived moments earlier with a half-time parade of six players from Tony Book's side, including Dennis Tueart, whose overhead kick accounted for Newcastle United. City fans saluted them royally. They were soon celebrating events here. Aguero held the ball up and then released it into the path of Fernandinho, who struck his shot firmly at Mignolet. The Belgium goalkeeper suffered one of his occasional howlers, letting the ball pass under him and into the net. Then came a three-minute period around the hour mark that should have ended the tie as a contest in City's favour. Pellegrini's side first failed to take a glorious chance. Yaya Toure played the ball right to David Silva, whose cross deflected off Sakho's replacement, Kolo Toure, and progressed temptingly to Sterling. Somehow, he side-footed wide. City should then have been awarded a penalty. Aguero turned Moreno, who responded by pushing out his left leg, catching the City striker. No penalty decreed Oliver. City fans bayed in anger. Not only would they have had a penalty but Moreno, the last man, would have walked.
Sterling fired wide again and his profligacy, and Oliver's clemency, proved expensive when Liverpool equalised with seven minutes remaining.
Football League officials were touring the press box, collecting votes for man of the match. But Sterling failed to clear properly and Daniel Sturridge drilled the ball across the box. Lallana hit the post and the ball rebounded out to Coutinho, who was so calm, so composed, as he guided the ball past Caballero.
Liverpool fans were now the ones celebrating manically, setting off red flares, revelling in the moment as Coutinho ran towards them, ripping off his shirt. Coutinho, inevitably, was booked. The sooner this pen-pushing, killjoy rule gets overturned the better. The game is about goals after all. Making light of his howler, Mignolet then kept Liverpool in it, making a magnificent save at close

range from Fernando and Yaya Toure. It was now intense, breathless stuff. When Silva got away with a handball, Klopp was almost consumed by the moment. The arrival of Divock Origi as Liverpool's third substitute can hardly have filled Christian Benteke with much confidence in his Liverpool future. Just before the end of the first period of extra time, Aguero dribbled through and tried to flick the ball with the outside of his right boot past Mignolet, who read his intentions and flung out his left hand to save. The second period of extra time featured another remarkable save, this time from Caballero to repel Origi's header. Tempers then spilled over. Yaya Toure went in high on Lallana. The pair squared up, not a contest which would sell many tickets at Madison Square Garden. Oliver soon blew the final whistle, Pellegrini and Klopp embraced, and it required penalties to separate the sides in this memorable final. After City's delirious players threw themselves on top of Caballero, a chant arose from the fans behind the goal, their song in praise of Pellegrini. The Chilean has remained dignified despite the gradual investiture of Pep Guardiola as his successor. Guardiola will need to bring some silver polish with him. The party continued on the field. Players embraced Bernard Halford, the club's life-president resplendent in a flat cap. City came well-prepared with players handed "WINNERS" flags. The City fans cheered each player as he lifted the trophy, turning up the volume higher when Caballero held it.

the guardian

Willy Caballero shootout heroics help Manchester City past Liverpool
When the penalties were done, a fifth trophy had been added to Manchester City's collection from the Abu Dhabi era, Yaya Touré was twirling his shirt on his personal victory run and a swarm of photographers was heading for Willy Caballero. Caballero's selection had been risky after his erratic performances as Joe Hart's understudy but it was his goalkeeping that meant the first silverware of the season would be heading to Manchester and those were the moments when we saw why Manuel Pellegrini had placed his trust in him. Caballero could not keep out Emre Can's impudent little pitch-wedge to get the penalties underway but thereafter he was unbeatable, diving to his left to turn away a decent attempt by Lucas Leiva, a hesitant one from Philippe Coutinho, and then the other way to beat out Adam Lallana's effort for his third successive save. Fernandinho had struck the post with City's first penalty but Jesús Navas and Sergio Agüero were both on target and when Touré buried the next attempt it decided the game without having to go to Wilfried Bony and James Milner for the final round. Liverpool, trying to win this competition for a ninth time, had already beaten Carlisle United and Stoke City this way, but while Caballero was hoisted on to the players' shoulders, with the Wembley arch illuminated in blue and white and Daniel Sturridge reduced to tears, the final will be remembered as a personal ordeal for Simon Mignolet bearing in mind the unremarkable shot from Fernandinho that opened the scoring. It was a wretched goal to concede and the unfortunate truth for Mignolet is that moment reminded us why many Liverpool supporters are perplexed he has been awarded a new five-year contract. Mignolet made some fine saves either side of that mistake but, unfortunately for him, they will quickly be forgotten in the context of the one he let through his arms. Ahead early in the second half, City should probably have been spared extra time but for some poor officiating and their own wastefulness given the number of chances they passed up to make it 2-0. Raheem Sterling had a difficult day against his former club and turned the ball wide with two golden opportunities, the first from six yards out, and there was another reprieve for Liverpool when Agüero ran into the penalty area and Alberto Moreno flicked out his leg to bring him down. It was a clear penalty and the referee Michael Oliver's decision to wave play on was bewildering, to say the least, with potentially serious ramifications for City when Coutinho equalised in the 83rd minute with Liverpool's first shot on target. Until that point Liverpool had seen plenty of the ball without making enough use of it to examine whether Caballero might be vulnerable. Pellegrini had stayed true to his word – "I'd rather lose a final than my word," he said afterwards – and resisted any temptation to bring Hart into his team but Liverpool threatened only sporadically in the opening hour and Vincent Kompany's considerable presence helped to ensure Caballero was well protected for the most part. Coutinho's goal came on the rebound, after two of the substitutes had linked up and Lallana turned Divock Origi's low cross against the post, but Kompany was excellent and Caballero's fine work was not all reserved to the shootout. In extra time, there was a key save from Origi's header. Midway through the opening half Liverpool had lost Mamadou Sakho, replaced by Kolo Touré after clashing heads with Can and clearly distraught that the club's medical staff would not let him play on. That meant Touré teaming up with Lucas in the centre of Liverpool's defence and if that gave their back four a slightly vulnerable look there was only one moment in the first half when City put together a move that exposed their opponents. On that occasion Mignolet turned Agüero's shot against the post. It was one of several fine saves but that is part of the Mignolet conundrum – outstanding at times but far too error-prone. Four minutes into the second half City had the ball on the left when David Silva lofted a long, crossfield pass over to Agüero on the opposite side. Agüero held up play, waiting for Fernandinho to overlap on the right and there did not seem to be a great deal of danger for Mignolet when the shot came in. Fernandinho made a clean connection but the ball was not struck with venomous pace and the Brazilian was taking aim from a difficult angle.

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Mignolet appeared to have it covered but the shot somehow found a gap, somewhere between his knees and gloves, that should not have existed. The collective groan from Liverpool's supporters when the mistake was replayed on the large screens told the rest of the story. In fairness to Mignolet, he did not let it affect him throughout the rest of the match, denying the impressive Yaya Touré a winner approaching the 90th -minute mark and keeping out Agüero when the Argentinian burst through in the first period of extra time. Agüero was a constant menace, with Fernandinho excelling in his new position on the right, but City were starting to look ragged in the final quarter of an hour.

They might still have spared themselves a nerve-shredding finale if Agüero had been able to turn James Milner's misplaced header beyond Mignolet but it went to a contest from 12 yards, three saved penalties, Liverpool's first shootout defeat in six finals when it has reached that stage – and Caballero's finest moments in City's colours.

Man of the match: Vincent Kompany (Manchester City)

The Mail

CABALL-HERO SPOT ON! City's No 2 goalkeeper repays his boss's faith
LIVERPOOL 1 Coutinho 83 MAN CITY Fernandinho 49 1 (After extra time; City win 3-1 on pens)

WILLY Caballero was the hero. Willy Caballero, of all people. Maybe this will turn out to be a glorious farewell season for Manuel Pellegrini after all. If he can take the biggest of gambles on his old ally and be rewarded, who knows what the future may hold? It is fair to say Caballero was not a popular pick after his performance against Chelsea at Stamford Bridge last week. The polite criticism was that Pellegrini had faith in his second-choice goalkeeper that was not widely shared. The coarser view was that the manager was at best indulgent, and at worse, crackers, with Joe Hart fit and available. Yet Pellegrini stayed loyal and Pellegrini was rewarded. Not only was Caballero solid in the 120 minutes of open play, he was quite magnificent in the shoot-out that followed.

He saved three penalties, from Lucas rom Lucas Leiva, Philippe Coutinho and Adam Lallana, as Manchester City won 3-1. That is no mean feat against a team with Liverpool's record from the spot. They had won two shootouts to get to Wembley, against Carlisle and Stoke City, and 14 of the 17 in the club's history preceding this. It is fitting they have a German coach in Jurgen Klopp as that is rather a Teutonic record of efficiency. -e he sd Yet Liverpool were playing to Caballero's strengths, too. He has never been the worst shotstopper. Crosses, corners, the bread and butter of English goalkeepers, that is where he struggles. Here, he was in his element. He went right and tipped round from Lucas, psyched out Coutinho who staggered and stopped his run before being thwarted to the right, and got the better of the one Englishman entrusted with the job by either side, Lallana. No surprise , ge d g-ther, really. Typically, after Fernandinho had missed for Manchester City, and Jesus Navas and Sergio Aguero had scored, it fell to Yaya Toure to take what proved to be the winning kick. He walked slowly towards the City end, slowly to retrieve the ball, and slowly back to place it on the spot, coolness personified. Yet the outcome was never in doubt. Low and to the left. It leaves Liverpool facing an uphill task to qualify for Europe next season. Yes, after this, it is highly likely that sixth place is in play for the Europa League, but Liverpool are ninth and currently trail occupants West Ham by five points.

They have a game in hand, but it is against Everton. Never easy. Nor was this for Manchester City, although it should have been. They missed a succession of chances, Simon Mignolet made three great saves to keep Liverpool in touch and referee Michael Oliver missed a clear penalty award for a foul on Aguero. City really should have been out of sight by the end of normal time, instead they allowed Liverpool to equalise on 83 minutes and looked spent during extra time. Pellegrini's first trophy was the League Cup and if it proves his last -- the Champions League and Premier League will be considerably more difficult to win -- at least he lays down a marker for Pep Guardiola in his first season. True, a shoot-out victory in a competition that is fourth on City's wish list when the season starts is hardly nirvana, but it means Pellegrini will at least depart a winner in May. He's a decent sort, and nobody will begrudge him. It should have been less torturous than this, though, and his players -- in particular Raheem Sterling -- and the referee could have helped him out. Oliver found time to book 10 players, but missed one of the most obvious penalties this ground will have seen -- and one that could have wrapped up the game, too. City were leading 1-0 when Alberto Moreno committed a defensive atrocity, attempting to tackle Aguero with his back to the man, stretching out a leg behind him, blind. Aguero was tripped, observers were mystified at the foolishness, Oliver inexplicably waved play on. Sterling was equally culpable, missing several important chances, to the delight of the red end. In the 60th minute, Toure found David Silva on the right, his cross clipping brother Kolo Toure and sending the ball into Sterling's path. It was the clearest chance of the game, but he put it wide. In the 80th minute, another good opportunity came, this time from an Aguero cross. Once again, his aim was off. When City were not missing, Mignolet was saving. From Aguero in the 23rd minute, Fernando in the 85th, Aguero again in the final moment of first-half stoppage time. It almost made up for the absolute calamity that was Manchester City's 49th-minute goal. Almost. Was it a shot? Was it a cross? We cannot say. Whatever it was, Mignolet made a mess of it and City cashed in. Silva picked up the ball in front of about 1,000 empty seats, the occupants unable to tear themselves away from the half-time prawn sandwiches, and hit a crossfield ball for Aguero.

He held it up neatly and delayed his pass until Fernandinho flew past on the overlap. Aguero released it into the path of the Brazilian, who struck it across goal, the ball flying under Mignolet's body, and diverting into the net. Liverpool, at that point, had disappointed. They had suffered rotten luck after 16 minutes when Emre Can and Mamadou Sakho went for the same ball and clashed heads, brutally. It left them with a makeshift central defensive partnership of Lucas and Kolo Toure -- Sakho was furious at being hauled off, but he was clearly groggy and Klopp was right to take no chances -- and in the circumstance one might have imagined the best form of defence would be attack. Yet Liverpoolbarely threatened, and their equalising goal with seven minutes remaining was a rare shot on target. It showed the simple value of bodies in the box. Sterling failed to clear, Daniel Sturridge crossed, Lallana lashed the ball against the far post and it came out perfectly for Coutinho who returned it smartly, with Caballero having no chance. At a time when City should have been raising the trophy, they were instead battling through extra time. Caballero saved very well from a Divock Origi header with 11 minutes to go and the fates decided to smile on Pellegrini from that point. Emre Can scored the first penalty for Liverpool, and Fernandinho missed, but after that Caballero took charge. His name means gentleman in Spanish, horseman in the south-western American states. Will gentleman Pellegrini ride into the sunset a City hero? This is his third trophy in as many seasons, and the locals aren't blase about the little cups just yet. There is every possibility.

The Daily Telegraph

Caballero seals City's cup triumph to reward Pellegrini loyalty
Liverpool 1 Coutinho 83 Manchester City 1 Fernandinho 49 (City win 3-1 on penalties after extra-time) Att: 86,206

In the end, and it was right at the end, Manuel Pellegrini had the sweetest of vindications as the player he kept faith in when everyone else doubted him won Manchester City the Capital One Cup. Privately, Pellegrini might regard his decision as an object lesson in loyalty - given he is being pushed out of Manchester City to make way for Pep Guardiola - but the manager was unwavering in his faith that Willy Caballero is, and should remain, his cup goalkeeper. Pellegrini had his own way of putting it afterwards. He would, he said, rather keep his word than win a title. It was a heartfelt sentiment as he was able to do both. Joe Hart, the first choice, stayed on the bench, despite vociferous pre-match calls for him to play, as Caballero saved no fewer than three of the four Liverpool penalty kicks he faced in a dramatic shoot-out after an incident-strewn final. Caballero said those saves were "all about the intuition" but it was Pellegrini's intuition that was proven right. And so he will leave City with at least one trophy this season. That it went to a shoot-out was also partly due to Caballero, who made a superb point-blank stop from substitute Divock Origi in extra time as Liverpool threatened to complete an extraordinarily courageous comeback after a superior City had squandered chance after chance. Caballero was not the only goalkeeper to figure prominently. It had seemed that Liverpool's Simon Mignolet would go from hero to zero and back again as he pulled off a string of fine saves to deny City, having been at fault for Fernandinho's goal. City were also denied a clear penalty in regulation time when Alberto Moreno brought down Sergio Aguero with his trailing leg. An Argentinean was the hero for City but it was not, for once, their star striker. Instead it was their second-string goalkeeper, a 34-yearold journeyman who had declared this occasion the biggest match of his career.

The emotion as Caballero celebrated - as he was chaired by Yaya Toure, who had netted his spot-kick to seal the trophy success - in front of the City fans was clear. There was also a hug for Pellegrini. Liverpool will feel that Toure maybe should not have been on the pitch to take his kick after he clashed with Adam Lallana following his ugly foul on the Liverpool midfielder, but the City midfielder escaped with just a caution from referee Michael Oliver.

Liverpool fans, as they deal with the emotion and disappointment of their team losing their first penalty shoot-out in a final, having won their previous five, including to win European Cups, will also wonder why striker Daniel Sturridge was not listed to take one of the shootout kicks. Sturridge went down with cramp in extra time but surely he should have stepped up ahead of, say, Lucas Leiva? James Milner was due to take the fifth kick. Leiva missed his effort, which was cruel on the Brazilian, who was the man of the match following a brilliant display as Liverpool's makeshift centre-half in a makeshift defence that ended with Milner at left-back. There was also Kolo Toure alongside Lucas - therefore creating history as it was the first time two brothers had been in opposition in a League Cup Final - after Mamadou Sakho went off early apparently suffering from concussion following a clash of heads with Emre Can. Even that was dramatic as Sakho reacted angrily, throwing a water bottle and storming down the tunnel as he was nevertheless rightly replaced. It was a good save by Caballero to deny Lucas in the shoot-out and an even better one, diving one-handed, to thwart Lallana, while Philippe Coutinho also missed with a weaker effort. In a final full of twists and turns it was, of course, Coutinho who had scored the goal to take this contest into extra-time in the first place - with what was Liverpool's first shot on target, in the 83rd minute. All the drama unfolded after a forgettable first-half - apart from a fine save by Mignolet, who threw himself full-length to tip a pinpoint Aguero shot against a post. That came after the striker had turned Lucas and Sakho, with the latter stumbling over, prompting his substitution by manager Jurgen Klopp, who

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was understandably concerned about his defender's ability to carry on. For Klopp this final could have been a launchpad, and still can be, but a return to Wembley after losing the 2013 Champions League Final, when Borussia Dortmund were beaten by Bayern Munich, ended in more disappointment.

It is also, cruelly, a third successive domestic cup final defeat for Klopp, whose team had made such an effort to get back into it. There was little comfort for him in that his substitutions - particularly bringing on Origi - made a difference. It was as much a surprise for a German to lose a penalty shoot-out as Liverpool (although Liverpool's one German, Can, did score his) but it did not look like it would go that far when City went ahead, with David Silva lofting the ball forward for Agüero to collect. He waited for Fernandinho to overlap and the Brazilian drove a low, angled shot that Mignolet should have covered but allowed to squirm underneath him. As Liverpool poured forward they should have been picked off. Twice Raheem Sterling - against his former team, whose fans booed him remorselessly - fluffed his chance. He side-footed wide and then scuffed a shot across goal before Mignolet brilliantly blocked Fernando's poked effort and stopped Toure's goalbound header. Before that Liverpool had equalised. It came when the ball was worked across the area but broke to Sterling, whose attempted clearance cannoned off Nathaniel Clyne for Sturridge. His cross was met by Lallana, whose shot, from a tight angle, came back off the post, only for Coutinho to drive the ball past Caballero. Both goalkeepers excelled in extra time, with Mignolet instinctively thrusting out a hand to divert away Agüero's flicked shot after he had ghosted through to collect Silva's pass. Agüero went through one last time - only to lift his shot over the bar, so it would go to a penalty shoot-out.

THE INDEPENDENT

Caballero the unlikely hero as City hold penalties nerve

What a difference a week makes. Seven days after being derided as a calamity goalkeeper following a 5-1 FA Cup hammering at Chelsea, Willy Caballero was carried aloft around Wembley by his team-mates after his penalty shoot-out heroics claimed the Capital One Cup for Manchester City.

Having kept faith in the Argentine for this final against Liverpool ahead of England No 1 Joe Hart in order to extend Caballero's run in the competition, City manager Manuel Pellegrini's faith was repaid with three saves - from Lucas Leiva, Philippe Coutinho and Adam Lallana - before Yaya Tour[c] won the cup with his successful spot-kick. Pellegrini will now hand over the reins at City to Pep Guardiola this summer having won at least three major trophies in three seasons at the Etihad Stadium - more could yet follow in the Premier League and Champions League.

But Pellegrini's decision to retain Caballero was a big one which could have backfired had Liverpool denied his team arguably their best chance of silverware this season. It paid off, though, and the understated Chilean cradled the League Cup at the end of the game as Jrgen Klopp was left to contemplate a rebuilding job at Anfield without the benefit of an early trophy to accelerate his plans.

Raheem Sterling, who left Liverpool in an acrimonious [pounds sterling]49m transfer last summer, will certainly have enjoyed Caballero's performance after missing two clear chances to win the game for City prior to Coutinho's second-half equaliser. But it was a trophy City deserved to win as Liverpool, having lifted their last three major trophies via penalty shoot-outs, experienced the other side of the coin. For all the American-style pre-match razzmatazz of ear-piercing music and pitchside pyrotechnics, the first-minute raid forward by Liverpool, when Alberto Moreno forced Caballero to smother the ball in the six-yard box, proved something of a false indicator as to how the opening period would play out.

Perhaps it was down to European fatigue that the first half proved such a slow-burner. Liverpool had been in Europa League action less than 72 hours earlier against Augsburg at Anfield, while City's players touched down at Manchester Airport at 4.20am on Thursday following their 3-1 Champions League victory against Dynamo Kiev in the Ukrainian capital.

With the added tension of this being the most likely piece of silverware for both clubs, the two sets of players struggled to ignite the first major final of the season. So after Moreno had sprinted down the left before unleashing his cross-shot towards goal after 40 seconds, the game became a battle for territorial dominance and it was 22 minutes before the next chance materialised.

It was a good one too and Liverpool were indebted to Mignolet for denying Sergio Agüero the opening goal for Pellegrini's team. Agüero, so often the man who delivers on the big occasion for City, had raced towards the Liverpoolpenalty area before rounding Mamadou Sakho, who had stumbled to the ground suffering the after-effects of an earlier clash of heads with Emre Can. With only Mignolet to beat, Agüero shot towards the far corner, but the Belgian goalkeeper produced a fine fingertip save to push the ball on to the post. Moments later, Klopp replaced Sakho with Kolo Tour[c] as the centre-half was unable to continue. But while Mignolet's save was a moment for the cameras, it did not set the game alight and chances continued to prove elusive. Roberto Firmino shot wide and Sterling, predictably jeered by the Liverpool supporters whenever he touched the ball, saw a goal-bound shot blocked by David Silva as the Spaniard ran across goal. But they were half-chances and the game carried the air of a boxing bout between two fighters reluctant to move on to the front foot.

Yet just as the first half drifted into stoppage time, Coutinho spurned a clear chance to score when he volleyed across the face of goal after Daniel Sturridge's header had put him clear 12 yards out. It was a rushed effort and Liverpool were to pay for the miss when Fernandinho put City ahead four minutes into the

second half. Although Mignolet's mistake proved the key moment, it was Silva's pass to Agüero which stretched the Liverpool defence, enabling the City forward to hold the ball long enough for Fernandinho to receive it on the overlap.

The Brazilian spotted his opportunity and struck a crisp, right-foot effort towards the near post. Mignolet appeared to have it covered, but the ball squirmed under his body and into the net in front of the City supporters.

A hero in the first half with his save from Agüero, Mignolet was now the fall guy. Such is the unenviable lot of the goalkeeper and, having taken the lead, City grew in stature. Liverpool did not have the energy, zip and creativity to force their way back into the game and Sturridge's lack of fitness began to tell as the injury-ravaged forward struggled to escape the formidable City defensive pairing of Vincent Kompany and Nicolas Otamendi. City, in contrast, gathered momentum and a second goal appeared an inevitability. Sterling should have delivered the killer blow on 60 minutes, but having been picked out unmarked by Silva on the edge of the six-yard box, the 21-year-old somehow scuffed his shot wide.

Liverpool then survived a strong City penalty claim when Moreno tripped Agüero, who was felled by the Spaniard's trailing leg. Sterling then missed another simple chance after being freed by Agüero. Liverpool appeared dead on their feet but the missed chances kept them in the game. When City failed to clear danger in the 83rd minute, Coutinho equalised after substitute Adam Lallana had struck the post. Extra time was a tense exchange of half-chances, with Mignolet and Caballero both producing crucial saves, most notably Caballero's stop from Divock Origi's header in the 118th minute. Inevitably the game drifted towards penalties and, after Fernandinho had struck the post, Jesus Navas, Agüero and Yaya Tour[c] converted successfully to win the game. City's challenge now is to ensure an even more glittering exit for Pellegrini by claiming a bigger pot before the season is out.

DAILY Mirror

Klopp's added spirit.. now he needs quality; rebuild is biggest test

IF hiring a German manager is supposed to guarantee one thing, it is the winning of penalty shootouts. Yet while it was a choker for the Red Army, losing on spot-kicks didn't actually matter all that much to Jurgen Klopp's long-term prospects as Liverpool boss. Because winning the League Cup never really matters to any manager's job prospects. Kenny Dalglish was sacked months after winning it for Liverpool four years ago. In the past decade, that same fate has befallen League Cup-winning bosses Jose Mourinho (twice), Michael Laudrup and Juande Ramos, while Alex McLeish also left Birmingham after relegation.

No true judgements will be made on Klopp's Anfield reign until deep into next season after the German has overseen a major overhaul of a lop-sided Liverpool squad which lacks sufficient quality in all except forward areas. And then, nobody will be looking back on whether or not Klopp won the League Cup. What yesterday did prove was that he has engendered enough spirit into his squad for Liverpool to go the distance with a vastly superior City team.

Adam Lallana, very much a man of peace before Klopp's arrival, ended up calling out the mountainous Yaya Toure for an extra-time street brawl.

The Reds finished with two midfielders and a virtual pensioner in a makeshift back four and yet somehow dragged City into a shootout. And this final proved again that, despite all the Banana Splits smiles and the prattling about, Klopp is a deeply serious and decisive operator - always capable of making calls which are neither popular nor obvious. Within 25 minutes Klopp was volubly ordering off Mamadou Sakho, with apparent concussion after a clash of heads with team-mate Emre Can. The big defender, a cult hero on the Kop, chuckled an almighty tantrum, kicking over a bottle on the touchline and burying his head beneath a coat when he returned to the dugout. But Klopp wasn't doing sentiment and he sent on ancient warrior Kolo Toure in his place - he and 'little' brother Yaya becoming the first siblings to contest a major Wembley cup final on opposite sides.

Klopp is also adamant that Liverpool's PS32.5million striker Christian Benteke is not for him, even in extratime in a cup final. And the Liverpool manager was hard-headed enough to insist on playing Simon Mignolet, ahead of the previous 'Cup keeper' Adam Bogdan - a call which was hardly an unqualified success with the Belgian allowing Fernandinho's opener to pass straight through him.

Klopp (right) has dodgy goalkeepers, average defenders and unremarkable midfielders. Only in attacking areas do Liverpool look anything like Champions League contenders, yet even there Klopp faces question marks - with Daniel Sturridge's physical frailties leaving him unable to take a spot-kick.

Sturridge was the first offender in a string of cynical dives which infested the first hour - Nicolas Otamendi and Philippe Coutinho were also guilty and so too was Sergio Agüero, even though the majority of football sages who want 'dangling a leg' classified as a capital offence would have awarded the City striker a penalty for his tangle with Alberto Moreno. While City thoroughly deserved their lead, there was a resilience about Liverpool and a profligacy about Raheem Sterling's finishing which fuelled belief the final was still alive. And when Liverpool's little Brazilian Coutinho equalised seven minutes from full-time, thumping home after Lallana had struck the post from a Sturridge cross, half of Wembley was euphoric and engulfed in the red smoke of warning flares. Predictably the Liverpool fans gave dog's abuse to 'greedy b*****d' Sterling, who flopped after a lively start.

Sterling, like the cramped-up Sturridge, was absent when it came to the penalties - and Willy Caballero, City's performing seal of a keeper, was the unlikely hero for Manuel Pellegrini. Having cajoled and roused his players in animated fashion before the shootout, Klopp retired to the dugout to watch the decisive action

Date: 28 February 2016

Opposition: Manchester City

Competition: League Cup

Times	Telegraph	Echo
Guardian	Mirror	MEN
Independent	Mail	BBC

impassively and in glorious isolation.
He is rarely predictable, Klopp. And his unpredictability will improve Liverpool, just as soon as he has some better players.



Spot of bother as Reds lose Capital One Cup final on penalties

Liverpool suffered Wembley heartache as they were beaten on penalties by Manchester City in the Capital One Cup final.

Misses from Lucas Leiva, Philippe Coutinho and Adam Lallana cost Jurgen Klopp's side dearly in a shootout in which they had held the advantage following Fernandinho's miss for City. Willy Caballero, the backup goalkeeper, was City's hero with three saves.

Earlier, Simon Mignolet's error had allowed Fernandinho to give City a second-half lead, which was cancelled out seven minutes from time by Coutinho to force extra time.

Mignolet made a string of important saves to keep the Reds in the game, with Caballero saving Divock Origi's late header to ensure it went to the lottery.

Both sides had made a bold call in their starting XI, with Liverpool opting for Lucas Leiva at centre back ahead of Kolo Toure.

Manuel Pellegrini, meanwhile, kept faith with second-choice goalkeeper Caballero, who had started every game on City's road to Wembley this season.

Liverpool started the game brightly, Alberto Moreno's cross-shot forcing Willy Caballero into action inside the first minute, and Coutinho almost putting Nathaniel Clyne clean through on goal soon after.

But as City settled, Liverpool needed Mignolet to make a brilliant save, tipping Sergios Agüero's effort onto the post after the Argentine had beaten Lucas and Sakho.

A groggy-looking Sakho was immediately forced off to be replaced by Toure. The Frenchman was angered by Jurgen Klopp's decision, but the manager's call was surely the correct one.

Moreno had a penalty shout ignored by referee Michael Oliver when he was challenged by Fernandinho in the area, as neither side really took control.

City, though, found a way through four minutes after the break courtesy of a Mignolet error.

Agüero reached a Silva pass and held the ball up well before feeding Fernandinho, whose angled strike went under the goalkeeper's body. Groans went up from the Liverpool supporters as the mistake was replayed on Wembley's big screen.

James Milner had Liverpool's first clear sight of goal on 56 minutes, but shot off target from Daniel Sturridge's pass.

Sterling, booed relentlessly by the travelling Kop, then missed a sitter from six yards to make it 2-0, and Moreno escaped punishment after hanging a leg out in the box on Agüero.

Klopp brought on Lallana and Origi as Liverpool chased the game, and Liverpool were rewarded for their bravery seven minutes from time as they found a leveller.

Sturridge created it, his ball across the face of goal smacked against the post by Lallana with Coutinho on hand to sidefoot the rebound into the net from 10 yards to send the travelling Reds into ecstasy.

Mignolet, to his eternal credit, preserved parity in the dying stages of normal time, saving from first Fernando and then Yaya Toure to get the Reds to extra time.

Once there, they needed Mignolet to once again save from Agüero who was clean through. Origi had a header well saved by Caballero, and Agüero hooked an effort off target after Milner's risky back header.

The game went to penalties, and when Fernandinho missed City's first kick Lucas had the chance to ram home the advantage. Caballero saved, though, and then repeated the trick from Coutinho and then Lallana, as City scored all their remaining penalties.

Toure's was the clincher, leaving the Reds to rue a missed chance, though they were given a rapturous reception from their devastated supporters at the end.

Manchester Evening News

Willy Caballero the penalty shootout hero as Blues win League Cup

Manchester City have won the 2016 League Cup - beating Liverpool on penalties after a dramatic match at Wembley, with Willy Caballero the unlikely hero.

The first half was a disjointed affair, with neither side finding any rhythm. Passing was slow and mistimed - a nervousness was restricting the quality on display.

The highlight came when Sergio Agüero was played in by a wonderful pass from David Silva. The Argentine skipped past two defenders before unleashing a curling shot that was saved superbly by Simon Mignolet.

Other than that, it was fairly uninspired stuff.

After the break, City found an extra gear. Agüero flashed one over the bar in the first few minutes, and moments later, Fernandinho, who was superb for much of the game, scored from from a tight angle. Mignolet will be bitterly disappointed with his effort to save it, but the Brazilian deserved his luck after running so far to overlap Agüero and receive his pass.

City looked the more likely to add another from that point on. Raheem Sterling missed a sitter from a few yards out – a goal that would have silenced the hostile Liverpool fans who barracked him throughout – and Agüero was denied a clear penalty when he was brought down by Alberto Moreno. Michael Oliver, looking right at the incident, bottled it and waved play on. Unbelievable decision.

Sterling missed another chance with just over 10 minutes remaining, scuffing a first-time shot wide after superb work from Agüero.

But Philippe Coutinho equalised with eight minutes left after Sturridge's cross found Lallana at the back post and his shot cannoned off the post for the Brazilian to smash home.

In the second period of extra time, Caballero made an excellent save from Divock Origi's header, followed by a mix up in the Liverpool backline that saw Agüero nip in and shoot over. City, who were clearly the better side for much of the match, were going to need penalties to win it.

And win it they did. Caballero, the subject of so much criticism, made three world-class penalty saves and Yaya Toure, so often City's Wembley hero, scored the winner. Cue delight in the City end.

This, surely, is the boost they needed to begin a run of form that will drag them back into contention for the Premier League title.

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	Independent	Mail	BBC		

87' Vincent Kompany (Manchester City is shown the yellow card. 87' Divock Origi (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half. 87' Foul by Vincent Kompany (Manchester City. 86' Attempt saved. Fernando (Manchester City right footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by David Silva. 86' Attempt missed. David Silva (Manchester City header from the centre of the box misses to the right. Assisted by Raheem Sterling with a cross. 86' Attempt missed. Fernando (Manchester City header from the centre of the box misses to the left. Assisted by Yaya Touré with a cross following a set piece situation. 85' Emre Can (Liverpool is shown the yellow card for a bad foul. 85' Foul by Emre Can (Liverpool. 85' Gaël Clichy (Manchester City wins a free kick in the attacking half. 84' Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool is shown the yellow card for excessive celebration. 83' Goal! Liverpool 1, Manchester City 1. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box to the centre of the goal. 83' Adam Lallana (Liverpool hits the left post with a left footed shot from the left side of the six yard box. Assisted by Daniel Sturridge. 82' James Milner (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing. 82' Foul by Vincent Kompany (Manchester City. 80' Substitution, Liverpool. Divock Origi replaces Roberto Firmino. 80' Attempt missed. Raheem Sterling (Manchester City right footed shot from the centre of the box is close, but misses to the left. Assisted by Sergio Agüero. 79' Adam Lallana (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half. 79' Foul by Vincent Kompany (Manchester City. 76' Offside, Liverpool. James Milner tries a through ball, but Roberto Firmino is caught offside. 76' Fernando (Manchester City is shown the yellow card for a bad foul. 75' Adam Lallana (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half. 75' Foul by Fernando (Manchester City. 75' Attempt saved. Sergio Agüero (Manchester City right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Raheem Sterling. 72' Offside, Liverpool. Jordan Henderson tries a through ball, but Roberto Firmino is caught offside. 72' Substitution, Liverpool. Adam Lallana replaces Alberto Moreno. 70' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Fernandinho. 70' Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half. 70' Foul by David Silva (Manchester City. 69' Attempt saved. Sergio Agüero (Manchester City left footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom left corner. Assisted by Raheem Sterling. 67' Foul by Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool. 67' Bacary Sagna (Manchester City wins a free kick in the defensive half. 66' Attempt missed. David Silva (Manchester City left footed shot from outside the box is too high from a direct free kick. 65' Alberto Moreno (Liverpool is shown the yellow card for a bad foul. 65' Foul by Alberto Moreno (Liverpool. 65' Fernandinho (Manchester City wins a free kick in the attacking half. 61' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Gaël Clichy. 60' Attempt missed. Raheem Sterling (Manchester City right footed shot from the centre of the box is close, but misses to the right. 58' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Raheem Sterling. 57' Offside, Liverpool. James Milner tries a through ball, but Roberto Firmino is caught offside. 56' Attempt missed. James Milner (Liverpool left footed shot from the left side of the box misses to the left. Assisted by Daniel Sturridge with a through ball. 55' Foul by Emre Can (Liverpool. 55' David Silva (Manchester City wins a free kick in the defensive half. 53' Nathaniel Clyne (Liverpool is shown the yellow card for a bad foul. 53' Foul by Nathaniel Clyne (Liverpool. 53' Raheem Sterling (Manchester City wins a free kick on the left wing. 49' Goal! Liverpool 0, Manchester City 1. Fernandinho (Manchester City right footed shot from a difficult angle on the right to the bottom left corner. Assisted by Sergio Agüero. 48' Attempt missed. Sergio Agüero (Manchester City right footed shot from the right side of the box is too high. Assisted by David Silva. 47' Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool wins a free kick on the right wing. 47' Foul by Gaël Clichy (Manchester City. Second Half begins Liverpool 0, Manchester City 0. 45'+2' First Half ends, Liverpool 0, Manchester City 0. 45'+1' Foul by Roberto Firmino (Liverpool. 45'+1' Fernando (Manchester City wins a free kick in the defensive half. 45'+1' Attempt blocked. James Milner (Liverpool left footed shot from the left side of the box is blocked. 45' Attempt missed. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from the right side of the box misses to the left. Assisted by Daniel Sturridge with a headed pass. 43' Corner, Manchester City. Conceded by James Milner. 42' Foul by Lucas Leiva (Liverpool. 42' Sergio Agüero (Manchester City wins a free kick in the attacking half. 41' Foul by James Milner (Liverpool. 41' Yaya Touré (Manchester City wins a free kick in the defensive half. 41' Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing. 41' Foul by Fernando (Manchester City. 39' Corner, Manchester City. Conceded by Kolo Touré. 38' Corner, Manchester City. Conceded by James Milner. 37' Offside, Liverpool. Daniel Sturridge tries a through ball, but James Milner is caught offside. 36' Foul by Lucas Leiva (Liverpool.	36' Sergio Agüero (Manchester City wins a free kick on the right wing. 35' Attempt blocked. Raheem Sterling (Manchester City right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by David Silva. 33' Attempt missed. Lucas Leiva (Liverpool header from very close range misses to the right. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho following a set piece situation. 33' Attempt missed. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from the left side of the box misses to the right. Assisted by James Milner from a direct free kick. 32' Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing. 32' Foul by Fernandinho (Manchester City. 28' Jordan Henderson (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half. 28' Foul by Yaya Touré (Manchester City. 27' Attempt missed. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is high and wide to the left. 25' Substitution, Liverpool. Kolo Touré replaces Mamadou Sakho because of an injury. 24' Delay over. They are ready to continue. 24' Delay in match Mamadou Sakho (Liverpool because of an injury. 23' Offside, Liverpool. Mamadou Sakho tries a through ball, but Daniel Sturridge is caught offside. 23' Attempt saved. Sergio Agüero (Manchester City right footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the bottom right corner. Assisted by David Silva. 23' Offside, Liverpool. Nathaniel Clyne tries a through ball, but James Milner is caught offside. 22' Alberto Moreno (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing. 22' Foul by Fernandinho (Manchester City. 20' Foul by Jordan Henderson (Liverpool. 20' Raheem Sterling (Manchester City wins a free kick on the left wing. 17' Delay over. They are ready to continue. 16' Delay in match Mamadou Sakho (Liverpool because of an injury. 11' Roberto Firmino (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half. 11' Foul by Fernando (Manchester City. 10' Foul by Nathaniel Clyne (Liverpool. 10' Raheem Sterling (Manchester City wins a free kick on the left wing. 10' Foul by James Milner (Liverpool. 10' Gaël Clichy (Manchester City wins a free kick in the defensive half. 8' Attempt missed. Fernandinho (Manchester City right footed shot from outside the box is too high following a set piece situation. 7' Foul by Nathaniel Clyne (Liverpool. 7' Raheem Sterling (Manchester City wins a free kick on the left wing. 7' Foul by Jordan Henderson (Liverpool. 7' Fernando (Manchester City wins a free kick in the defensive half. 6' Attempt blocked. James Milner (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Roberto Firmino. 2' Alberto Moreno (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half. 2' Foul by Fernandinho (Manchester City. First Half begins. Lineups are announced and players are warming up.
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