Date: 28 April 2016
Opposition: Villarreal CF
Competition: Europa League

Times	Telegraph	Mail
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28 April 2016

THE TIMES

Liverpool are punished for late lapse in concentration

Villarreal Adrian 90+2 Liverpool Semi-final, first leg

In the space of a few seconds, the mood inside this cramped little stadium changed beyond recognition. Most of the town's population were crammed inside the Madrigal and, just when it seemed that Liverpool had frustrated the home team, Villarreal struck in stoppage time to take a slender but significant lead to Anfield for next week's Europa League semi-final second leg.

It was a sucker punch as far as Liverpool were concerned but they had invited it, appearing to tire in defence and midfield as the second half went on. A few minutes before the goal, Kolo Toure, standing in for the shamed Mamadou Sakho, seemed to be out on his feet. There was a let-off for Jurgen Klopp's team when Cedric Bakambu got behind Toure in the final minutes and forced Simon Mignolet into an excellent save, but that alarm call was not heeded. In stoppage time, Adam Lallana lost the ball, Denis Suarez escaped, down the inside-right channel, and crossed for Adrian Lopez to tap in from close range.

Klopp might wonder whether Liverpool's hopes would have been better served by pushing harder in search of an away goal. He went without a recognised centre forward, preferring Roberto Firmino to Daniel Sturridge, and while Liverpool played their way into a number of promising situations, building up steadily, there was rarely an incisive pass or a penetrative run.

By the interval, both teams could point to opportunities that had passed them by. The best chance by far for Liverpool fell to Joe Allen in the fifth minute. There was nothing wrong with his run towards the penalty area -- which meant that he was in the perfect place, just by the penalty spot, when Lallana's cross was deflected into his path -- but Allen is not the player you would want such a chance to fall to. His shot was weak, lacking conviction, and made for a comfortable save for Sergio Asenjo. That was the only shot that Asenjo had to save in the first half, but Liverpool had enough pressure deep in Villarreal territory to suggest that there was something to be had here. Allen, Lallana, Coutinho and James Milner were prominently involved in their build-up play and Nathaniel Clyne and Alberto Moreno were willing to get forward from the full-back positions. The problem was that, with Villarreal defending in a disciplined manner, Liverpool were being reduced to snap-shots. Lucas Leiva flashed one just wide of a post but Coutinho and Lallana were wasteful, guilty of trying to force the issue rather than look for the killer pass, which both of them are often astute enough to find.

The other concern for Liverpool was that, while they were keeping their opponents at arm's length for periods, Villarreal had a change of pace -- through Bruno Soriano's passing and the quick feet of Jonathan dos Santos and Suarez on the wings -- that threatened to make life difficult.

Toure was playing well alongside Dejan Lovren in central defence, standing in for Sakho after the France defender's positive drugs test, but Clyne and Moreno had their work cut out against Suarez and Dos Santos respectively. Most of Villarreal's best moments came from the two wingers. An excellent Suarez cross only narrowly eluded Bakambu, the prolific Villarreal striker, in the opening minutes. Dos Santos got away from Moreno down the right flank and picked out Tomas Pina, whose shot was saved awkwardly by Mignolet, diving low to his left. When the ball ran loose, Pina had another go, which was blocked by Milner this time.

As well as their promise in wide areas, Villarreal were capable of playing some nice stuff through the middle. Roberto Soldado, the former Tottenham Hotspur forward, should have given the Spanish team the lead when he was picked out by Bruno's free kick, which was dinked over the Liverpooldefence before either Toure or Moreno could react. Soldado waited for the ball to sit up nicely but his shot was dragged wide of the far post. Opportunity knocked for Mario Gaspar late in the first half, from another excellent Bruno pass, but the full back's cross was blocked by Toure and his shot was deflected over by Lovren.

Liverpool were defending well but they had a let-off in the opening minute of the second half. From a Suarez corner, Bakambu leapt highest on the corner of the six-yard box and sent a header against the near post. On the touchline, Klopp breathed a sigh of relief. By that stage, Klopp had sent on Jordon Ibe in place of Coutinho, who had been unwell after returning to the dressing room at half-time. That gave Liverpool more pace but less guile. They were looking to Firmino for inspiration and just after the hour mark the Brazil playmaker almost found it, his shot pushed on to the post after he was found in the penalty area by Milner.

Still, Sturridge sat on the bench, with Klopp happy with the balance of Liverpool's attacking play. There was another glimmer of an opening midway through the second half when Allen and Clyne combined down the right, but when the full back's cross pinged around the penalty area, Lallana failed to capitalise. Minutes later, the England playmaker got away from the home defence but was incorrectly flagged offside. It seemed to be coasting towards a goalless draw, but there was to be a frantic finale. At one end, Bakambu raced through for what looked certain to be a goal, only to be denied impressively by Mignolet. From the resulting corner, Toure's clearance and a slip by Suarez resulted in a breakaway for Moreno, whose pace took him clear but his shot was as erratic as you would expect of a full back who had sprinted the length of the pitch in the 89th minute.

When Klopp finally decided to throw on a striker, it was Christian Benteke, back from injury, rather than Sturridge. That seemed a move designed to eat up time more than anything, but within minutes Villarreal had scored through a substitution of their own, Adrian coming off the bench to score. Once again, Liverpool will have to do it the hard way at Anfield.

Villarreal (4-4-2): S Asenjo 7 -- Mario 7, E Bailly 7 (sub: M Musacchio, 76min), Victor Ruiz 7, J Costa 6 -- J dos Santos 7 (sub: S Castillejo, 72), T Pina 6, Bruno 7, D Suarez 7 -- R Soldado 6 (sub: Adrian, 74), C Bakambu 6. Substitutes not used: A Areloa, Samu, M Trigueros, A Rukavina. Booked: Costa.

Liverpool (4-1-4-1): S Mignolet -- N Clyne 6, D Lovren 7, K Toure 7, A Moreno 6 -- Lucas Leiva 6 -- A Lallana 6, J Milner 7, J Allen 6, P Coutinho 6 (sub: J Ibe, 46 6) -- R Firmino 6 (sub: C Benteke, 90). Substitutes not used: D Ward, M Skrtel, B Smith, P Chirivella, D Sturridge. Referee: D Skomina (Slovenia).

theguardian

Liverpool dealt sucker-punch at the last by Villarreal's Adrián López

This time Liverpool took the stoppage time sucker-punch. The Europa Leaguesemi-final had been Borussia Dortmund in reverse – devoid of the drama, incident and sense of occasion that made for that extraordinary quarter-final – when Villarreal conjured a similarity that Jürgen Klopp could have done without. Adrián López's 92nd-minute winner leaves Liverpool in need of another Anfield recovery next week. "We were lucky enough to score," said Marcelino, the Villarreal coach. "But it was not an unfair result." Klopp viewed it through a different lens. His team had produced a resolute, disciplined and patient European away display to remain on course for the final in Basel, Europa League success and qualification for the Champions League but it was undermined by one disorganised moment and precise counter-attack. In injury time, with Liverpool on the front foot, Adam Lallana lost possession and Villarreal broke through their stylish captain, Bruno Soriano. The midfielder swept a perfect pass over the exposed Kolo Touré to Denis Suárez, the former Manchester City academy prospect cut in behind and squared across Simon Mignolet for the substitute López to convert into an unguarded net. In the 91st minute against Dortmund it was Dejan Lovren who transformed the tie. The 92nd minute did not transform the semi-final, Anfield was always likely to be a decisive factor, but it has made Liverpool's task more complicated than it needed to be. The Beatles' Yellow Submarine, the nickname adopted by Villarreal as they began their remarkable rise up the ranks in Spain, replaced their traditional pre-match anthem at El Madrigal and helped to create a jovial atmosphere. Ringo does not do intimidation. A banner containing the Villarreal crest, 96 and You'll Never Walk Alone also showed how this week's inquest verdicts on the Hillsborough disaster have been felt throughout football. But the Spanish club from a town of just over 51,000 inhabitants were not so accommodating on the pitch as they pursued a first appearance in a European final. Bruno immediately began dictating play from deep in central midfield and there was a clear purpose from Marcelino's side in possession as they looked to both wide men, Suarez and Jonathan Dos Santos, to stretchLiverpool. But it was the visitors who created the first real chance of the semi-final and should have claimed a valuable away goal inside five minutes. James Milner released Lallana into space down the right and his low cross deflected perfectly off a home defender into the path of Joe Allen as he arrived in the area. Unmarked, from the penalty spot, the Wales international side-footed tamely straight at Sergio Asenjo. The Villarreal goalkeeper was not tested again before the interval. A big opportunity wasted. Klopp had started with Roberto Firmino leading the Liverpool attack and without Daniel Sturridge for the third consecutive European game. The decision to omit the England international was justified by Divock Origi's contribution against Borussia Dortmund and explained here by the need for intelligent movement in the absence of the injured Belgium international. Firmino struggled to vindicate the call in the first half, rarely featuring in the contest but, in fairness, receiving little supply too. The Brazilian's contribution and the latest demotion for a big European occasion will not have been lost on Sturridge as he looked on from the substitutes' bench.

Villarreal were sharp and inventive in possession but frequent attempts to thread a final ball through to Cédric Bakambu or Roberto Soldado were thwarted by the defensive instincts of Dejan Lovren and Touré, Klopp's preferred replacement for the suspended Mamadou Sakho. But they did have their moments in the goalless first half. Soldado dragged a difficult chance wide from Bruno's chipped free-kick and went close with a curling shot from the edge of the area. A vital challenge from Alberto Moreno deflected Mario Gaspar's shot over after Villarreal had again looked to get in behind the Liverpool left-back. Their best chance fell to Tomás Pina after Bakambu and Soldado had combined inside the box and Simon Mignolet produced a fine save from the midfielder's low drive towards the bottom corner.

It become a test of organisation and discipline for Klopp's men and the midfield trio of Milner, Lucas Leiva and Allen, while not one many would pay to watch for invention, were integral in stifling Villarreal until the final act.

Liverpool lost Philippe Coutinho to illness at half-time and their concentration seconds after the restart. Bakambu, an obvious threat with nine goals in 11 Europa League ties this season, was left unmarked at a Dos Santos corner but fortunately for the visitors the Congo international steered his header against the outside of a post. Liverpool received another reprieve when Gaspar elected to shoot from a tight angle despite Bakambu being unmarked in the six-yard box, with inevitable repercussions. The ball flew harmlessly over Mignolet's goal and the right-back got an earful from the striker.

Incident was sorely lacking but Firmino posed more problems for the home defence in the second half as he concentrated his runs on the penalty area rather than out wide. Milner picked him out with one measured pass and it required a

Compiled by Graeme Riley

fine save from Asenjo to tip the Brazil international's low drive on to the post. Lallana was also fouled inside the area by Eric Bailly but was given offside – wrongly according to Klopp.
In the closing minutes Mignolet produced a superb save to deny Bakambu and Moreno broke the length of the field following a Villarreal corner only to slice wide from 12 yards. Then, in youthful enthusiasm for the winner, Klopp lamented, Liverpool forgot the game plan for one vital, punished moment.

The Mail

ADRIAN SINKS LIVERPOOL; Last-minute strike allows Villarreal to take precious lead to Klopp's kingdom

VILLARREAL 1 Adrian 90 LIVERPOOL 0

SO it is to be the hard way again. Substitute Adrian Lopez tapped the ball into an empty net in injury time, and Jurgen Klopp was a loser in Spain again.
He has never won here, not once, as a coach, but he thought he had got away with it last night.Liverpool looked to have held strong here, in a week when their best defender Mamadou Sakho was forced out of football for 30 days, and no doubt more, after failing a drugs test. In his place, Kolo Toure, put barely a foot wrong against a team that he scored the winning goal for Arsenal in a Champions League semi-final in 2006. Yet Liverpool were overstretched in second-half injury time when Villarreal broke away, and the speed of that counter attack proved fatal. A beautiful chip out to Denis Suarez caught Liverpool flat, Simon Mignolet had no choice but to commit and that left Lopez alone in the middle, unmarked.
Villarreal, an incongruously small town for an incongruously successful football club to reside -- took off. Manager Marcelino sprinted, Jose Mourinho style, along the touchline. But the biggest test is yet to come. One of those mighty European nights at Anfield, when anything -- absolutely anything -- is possible.
The Europa League is a step down from the Champions League -- but for Liverpool it represents as pinnacle of achievement in Klopp's first season, certainly with such a lucrative prize at stake.
VILLARREAL their 24th sheet this 'Yellow have prevented opponents in 46 per their s e For Klopp to win a trophy less than a year since taking over at Anfield would be a feat; for him to win one that takes this club back to Europe's greatest competition would be beyond their wildest dreams.
LIVERPOOL were damaged goods when Klopp took charge. Somehow he has turned them into a resilient, gritty little outfit, capable of digging out results away from home, and powered by the most incredible emotions when on familiar turf. They could even have nicked it here in the 66th minute when Robert Firmino -- preferred to Daniel Sturridge but unconvincing for much of the night -- struck a post with a shot, put through by the outstanding James Milner.
There wasn't much more from Liverpool beyond the stoutest resistance, but that is the way it must be in Europe sometimes. Luck helps too, and Liverpool got some a minute after half-time when Villarreal spurned the best chance of the night. Jonathan Dos Santos took a corner from the right that was met by the imposing striker Cedric Bakambu -- part of a twoman unit with former Tottenham player Roberto Soldado. Bakambu best Simon Mignolet with his header but not the near post -- and beyond that Villarreal rarely threatened until Adrian snatched a goal in added time. In the 55th minute Soldado did well to out Mario Gaspar through, but the full-back wasted a fine position, shooting over.
By the end, the locals seemed content that Liverpool hadn't scored. It was at that moment, four minutes left, that Bakambu broke away and forced a marvellous save from Mignolet. It was a colourful game, in the literal sense. All yellow on one side, all red on the other, from a distance the players looked like rows of table football men, and often played like it, organised in banks to stifle the opposition. The Submarine' their scoring cent of games m g ca fiel Shots were mostly from distance and in the opening 45 minutes at least only Liverpool's Mignolet was significantly tested. Villarreal's most dangerous goal attempt came from midfielder Tomas Pina, and credit to the Belgian goalkeeper for his alert reflexes. He hadn't had much to do when Pina suddenly made his demand for action in the 21st minute. It was a low shot, dipping and on target, but Mignolet was its equal, diving to his left to tip the ball around the post.
Belgia ale ha Just before half-time, another effort from the home side. Villarreal captain Bruno Soriano had a shot from range blocked by his own player, Soldado -- but the former Tottenham man responded quickly and seized on the loose ball to have another game. It was an intelligent try, too, curling in at the near post -- the last place Mignolet would have expected him to put it, and seemingly coming out of nowhere through a group of covering players. All that was missing was the accuracy, and the ball travelled just wide as Mignolet scrambled.
Liverpool's response was lukewarm -- for obvious reasons missing the sheer passion and energy of the previous tie with Borussia Dortmund.
How could it hope to reach those heights? There was camaraderie between the fans, with both sides joining in and claiming ownership of the Villarreal anthem Yellow Submarine -- and a supportive banner in lurid yellow from the home fans, marking the historic Hillsborough ruling this week, but Klopp's quarter-final against his old club has set the bar unreasonably high.
Klopp set his stall out here -- as he has done for much of the season in this competition -- by leaving Daniel Sturridge on the sidelines.
It is not the first time he has preferred Roberto Firmino as his central striker but it is the most telling. Recovered from injury, with Divock Origi out for the season, he would have expected to play last night, particularly having recently returned to scoring form.
Klopp always speaks highly of him, but his actions are starting to talk a whole lot louder, and increasingly it looks as if Sturridge may need to be on the move again, certainly if he is to contest for a starting England place again.
This will have done his chances of overthrowing Harry Kane no favours at all. Sturridge's fitness was an issue when Klopp first came to Liverpool and he learned to survive without him. Even though Liverpool lacked a cutting edge in the first-half, Klopp will still have been happy with what he saw, the way his players largely contained Villarreal --- even if they didn't offer much in return. Pot shots, mostly.
In the fifth minute, an Adam Lallana cross picked out Joe Allen, who shot straight at goalkeeper Sergio Asenjo, while Lucas Leiva should have done better with a 15th-minute opportunity that he snatched at and sliced wide.
On the rare occasions Firmino was brought into the game, he failed to threaten -- indeed one attempted lay-off missed its target so poorly it almost set up a good counter-attack for Villarreal. Asenjo was more troubled by a good rightsided cross from James Milner early in the second-half, that he was required to flick out of range.

The Daily Telegraph

Liverpool pay for letting down guard as Lopez pounces;

Villarreal 1Lopez 90 Liverpool 0

It was just at that point of the night when Jurgen Klopp might have been thinking about how far hisLiverpool team have come as a force in Europe's second competition when they fell prey to the kind of trap that English teams have walked into time and again over the years. A sophisticated German manager they might have, but Liverpool made that old mistake of undoing 91 minutes of hard toil and concentration to allow Villarreal one sight of goal that the substitute Adrian Lopez took ruthlessly in the second minute of time added on at the end of the game. It changes the complexion of the return leg at Anfield on Thursday when Klopp's team will again have to come from behind if they are to reach the Europa League final in Basel next month. The ball played in behind Kolo Toure was all the more frustrating for the Liverpool manager because the left-back Alberto Moreno had earlier missed a chance to snatch victory in this semi-final first leg with a breakaway run from the halfway line as Villarreal threw everything forward. The Spanish side had only three attempts on target all night, but the third was enough to put them in control of the tie.
It was Denis Suarez, once of Manchester City who made the goal, crossing from the right to pick out the unmarked Lopez to score. Suarez was a danger all night and yet Liverpool dealt with it until that fateful final minute.
Klopp said that he chose to omit Daniel Sturridge from the team because the Englishman had never before played in the 4-3-3 system that he decided to deploy, and presented the decision to select Roberto Firmino as a central striker as the less risky option. Whether Sturridge will have seen it that way is another matter. Being left out in favour of Divock Origi for the two legs of the quarter-final against Borussia Dortmund is one thing, but being chosen second to Firmino, quite another. The England striker has scored in each of his last four Premier League games, but in Europe Klopp seems to regard him as a potential weakness.
Certainly Klopp's Liverpool side passed the ball well and opened up the space down the side of Villarreal a couple of times in the first half although they created only one really notable chance. Firmino provides more of an alternative in building moves and helping to switch the ball quickly from one side to another, rather than a final destination for the cross into the centre.
There were a couple of occasions when James Milner got himself into good advanced positions down the sides of Villarreal but his crosses into the box were the kind that Christian Benteke might find useful rather than Firmino, holding off for the cut-back. The best of all was the Milner cross that found Joe Allen completely unmarked on five minutes but the midfielder could only tamely side-foot his shot straight at goalkeeper Sergio Asenjo.
Liverpool had more of the possession in the first half and there was a period when they were well on top but Villarreal, sitting fourth in La Liga, a distant 20 points behind the runaway top three, settled soon after.
Jonathan Dos Santos, the former Barcelona winger, looked a constant threat down the right wing. Like Liverpool, however, Villarreal also lacked a central focus to their attack. Roberto Soldado, the Spain international who was such a disaster at Tottenham Hotspur, is said to be enjoying something of a rebirth at El Madrigal despite the fact he only has five league goals this season. He got one shot in on 42 minutes when the ball dropped kindly for him but his drifting, wide effort seemed pretty redolent of his days at White Hart Lane.
The threat from Villarreal came from the flank through the Mexican Dos Santos and, on the other side, the winger Denis Suarez, once of Manchester City who treated Allen to the most brazen nutmeg early in the first half.
The little Welsh midfielder was wincing at the shame of it with the ball having barely passed between his ankles. There were strong performances in midfield from Liverpool and the captain Milner was impressive in demonstrating the kind of work rate required to keep the Spanish side at bay. It was Milner's ball into Firmino on 65 minutes from which the Brazilian hit the post.
At the other end, Dejan Lovren and Toure were, until the goal, solid behind Lucas Leiva, another good performer in midfield. They denied Villarreal any space between the back four and the midfield and even as manager Marcelino made the changes, the home side struggled to get through or around Liverpool. Philippe Coutinho was replaced with Jordon Ibe at half-time after the Brazilian

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complained of feeling unwell during the first half, although his replacement had precious little effect on the game. In the end, Klopp never did call for Sturridge, preferring instead to bring on Christian Benteke for the closing stages. Simon Mignolet saved well from Bakambu before eventually the goal came.
It was a fine ball from Bruno Soriano that made the space for Suarez who squared to Lopez. At the home of the Yellow Submarine, Liverpool had that sinking feeling, and so to Anfield to see if they can turn it around once more.

THE INDEPENDENT

Reds hit with late sucker punch as Lopez scores injury-time winner

The noise from the terraces of the Madrigal was enormous and sudden. It seemed that Liverpoolhad executed another streetwise performance on foreign soil under Jrgen Klopp. Yet in injury time, the Mediterranean air changed completely.
Perhaps it was tired legs that afforded Villarreal's captain Bruno Soriano the space to steady himself and clip a raking pass over the head of Kolo Tour[c] and towards Denis Suarez, the former Manchester City midfielder.
The Spaniard's first touch was perfect because from there the pitch in front opened up for him and he was able to square for Adrian. With Simon Mignolet exposed, the substitute, on loan from Porto, was able to score the winner.
Liverpool had been caught out by the simplest of counter attacks. In just a couple of seconds, the probability of their involvement in next month''s the Europa League final reduced considerably. "It had been a professional performance," Klopp insisted. He was right about that. He was right to assert that Liverpool had contained the game for long periods too. Despite the way the defeat was confirmed, he remains confident of progression to Basel being secured.
"I saw we are in a good way," he added. "Things are still possible. One-nil is not the biggest result in the world. "Not so long ago, we were an English team with a big name and no quality. Now we are [considered] an English team with a big name and better quality. "They have to come to Anfield. We will be ready. It will be a completely different game." Klopp was attempting to drive home the idea that the tie has only reached the half time. There is a sense he knows how significant the atmosphere at Anfield can be considering its impact in the last round when his former club Borussia Dortmund were swept away in the fever of the occasion. There was a sense here, indeed, passion levels did not need to be of the uncontrolled standard that saw off Dortmund two weeks ago. Inside and outside this stadium, the drums, trumpets and balloons dyed a Spanish feria atmosphere. If a sensible and patient display was necessary, it was certainly achieved, but for the closing seconds.
Klopp's team selection was conservative. Despite being in goalscoring form, Daniel Sturridge was named as a substitute and Joe Allen was nominated from the start for the first time in an important game when there were other options. Tour[c], meanwhile, was chosen ahead of Martin Skrtel in defence; Klopp trusting that the Ivorian's experience was enough to potentially deal with the speed and hustle of C[c]dric Bakambu, who is the Europa League's second top scorer this season and is someone who might become an Atl[c]tico Madrid player in the summer. Lucas was picked in Liverpool's deepest midfield role and that gave Tour[c] protection. It took Marcelino, the Villarreal manager, half an hour to realise that it might be a good idea to occasionally switch the starting positions of Bakambu and Roberto Soldado, getting Bakambu closer to Tour[c].
Liverpool quickly settled into a pattern. Philippe Coutinho, who because of illness had to be replaced at half time by Jordon Ibe, had struggled to get involved before and yet the fight for control in midfield was being won by the away team. Villarreal were especially attack minded down on the left of the pitch and Liverpool's best opportunities consistently came from the space behind.
From that route, Liverpool should have taken a lead when Nathaniel Clyne and Adam Lallana combined to serve an unmarked Allen near the penalty spot. Despite rehearsing such situations for more than 10 minutes in the warm up, Allen's subsequent effort, however, possessed neither the placement nor power to beat Sergio Asenjo. Liverpool's problems in the first half were self-inflicted. Villarreal's best chance came when a hurried clearance from Lucas, whose discipline and common sense had otherwise contributed towards Villarreal not being able to exploit Bakambu's pace, ended up with Simon Mignolet saving Toms Pina's curling shot. There was not much for Liverpool to be worried about. Marcelino admitted taking "many precautions" because he was aware of the impact an away goal might have on the final outcome, as it ultimately did for Liverpool over Dortmund.
Though Coutinho's enforced exit came as a blow, the routine thereafter went something like this: Tour[c] to Lucas, Lucas to Allen or James Milner; then onto Clyne, only for the move to terminate when the right back's cross did not meet a teammate. In Clyne's defence, though Roberto Firmino's movement between the half way line and the 18 yard box was intelligent, having been used in different positions by Klopp over the last month, he did not seem to know where to be when there was a necessity for him to be located in the zone where maximum punishment is inflicted.
If Liverpool really wanted to win the game, Sturridge would have been used. When Christian Benteke was used instead and dispatched with an instruction to hold the ball up, it felt like Liverpoolhad settled for a draw. But for a lapse in concentration, it would have been achieved.

DAILY Mirror

LO BLOW FOR REDS; Late goal from substitute Lopez ruins the night for Klopp's Euro hopefuls

JURGEN KLOPP looked heartbroken as he saluted the Liverpool fans at the final whistle.
The Reds had been within seconds of an impressive shut-out against Villarreal, only for the Spanish club's substitute Adrian Lopez to grab a winner in the third minute of injury time.
Defeats do not come much more painful than this and the Reds are by no means out of this semi-final, but it was huge disappointment.
Up until then, they had been well organised, disciplined and on course for an unlikely appearance in the Europa League final in Basel next month.
After Lopez's late intervention they will again have to rely on the raw energy of Anfield next week to carry them through.
Klopp had gone so close to masterminding an impressive result with his unlikely band of heroes. His bit-part players - Joe Allen, Lucas and Kolo Toure - were as good as anyone as they battled, scrapped and frustrated Villarreal
The German described it as a "very difficult decision" to leave out Daniel Sturridge. It was certainly one to make the England striker think about his future if he does not start the big games.
But rather like at Borussia Dortmund in the last round, Klopp went for work-rate over invention with Roberto Firmino as a false No.9 and it was quickly evident Liverpool would need all the help they could get.
Yellow Submarine pumping out of the PA system before kick-off whipped up a fantastic atmosphere at the Madrigal.
Villarreal is famous for making ceramic tiles and the little Spanish town has, down the years, defied the odds - this was their fourth European semi-final.
And they started really well even if Liverpool had the first chance when Allen's fifth-minute shot forced an excellent save from home keeper Sergio Asenjo.
But from then on, the team in yy yellow showed why only Barcelona,Atletico Madrid and Real are above them in La Liga.
Denis Suarez, who had two years at Manchester City, was lively on the left and the prolific front pair of Cedric Bakambu and former Spurs striker Roberto Soldado stretched Liverpool's defence.
It often looked chaotic at the back for Klopp's men. Bakambu's pace and power put Liverpool on the back foot.
Allen's hurried clearance fell straight to Tomas Pina and his fierce drive was brilliantly saved byLiverpool keeper Simon Mignolet.
The visitors harried, chased and worked hard. When Reds left-back Alberto Moreno was caught out of position he raced back to thwart Soldado after Kolo Toure had made an excellent block.
Villarreal's best chance of the first half came on 43 minutes when Bruno Soriano's pass found Soldado and his curling shot from the edge of the box went just inches wide.
Klopp brought on Jordon Ibe at half-time for Philippe Coutinho who complained of feeling unwell, which explained why he was so anonymous x in the first half. But bringing on a midfielder before Sturridge showed the mindset was still to keep it tight.
Liverpool were nearly undone within a minute of the restart. Villarreal midfielder Jonathan Dos Santos's corner found Bakambu and his close range header crashed against the outside of a post.
As the game wore on, Liverpool got better and established a foothold.
James Milner's through ball found Firmino in the 65th minute and his shot on the turn was pushed onto a post by Asenjo.
Lucas and Allen just kept going, running and closing down. Dejan Lovren was equally impressive in the heart of defence.
Both sides had chances in the last five minutes. First Ibe lost possession and Bakambu raced through the middle only to be denied by a brilliant save from Mignolet.
Then Liverpool broke from the resulting corner, Moreno raced upfield only to blast high and wide.
But just as the Merseysiders seemed to have secured a draw, a Villarreal break saw Suarez cross for Lopez to tap in.

Compiled by Graeme Riley

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LIVERPOOL ECHO

Reds need Sturridge at Anfield but Villarreal's weakness is clear

Klopp goes for the grafters, and you can see why As per, the pre-match speculation was right. Daniel Sturridge benched, with Roberto Firmino chosen to lead the line. Disappointing for the England man? Most definitely. Sturridge's form has been very good, so to miss out on a place in the XI will have hurt. He's hungry, he says, and a substitute's meal will never be enough for him.

Klopp's selection here, though, was drenched in logic. This was a team to graft, to push from the front and run Villarreal all over the park. The Spaniards are a team which plays from the back, and so meeting them high up the pitch was necessary. Firmino, although not in sparkling form coming into the game, would allow them to do that, and enable them to beef up the centre of midfield, where James Milner and Joe Allen assisted Lucas. The graft was needed. Villarreal were organised, composed, willing to be patient and defended in numbers when they had to. They were happy to have possession in their own half and waited, as Klopp predicted, to pounce on any mistakes at the other end.

The surprise, though, was that Sturridge was not seen at all. Jordon Ibe replaced the ill Coutinho at half time, and did very little, and then Christian Benteke was sent on for three minutes of added time as Firmino went off.

Surely we'll see him at Anfield? Liverpool need him.

It's going to be tense again "All you need is goals," boomed the front cover of Spanish sports daily Marca on Thursday morning.

A few shots and a bit of drama would have been a start, to be honest. Though when that eventually arrived, it was at the wrong end from a Liverpool perspective. Ninety-two minutes of monotony followed by a sucker punch. Painful. This was not a game that will live long in the memory by any means, but Villarreal's late winner leaves the tie delicately poised for next week. Liverpool can afford no mistakes at Anfield. Having the second leg at home always looked an advantage, but we will see if that is the case. The atmosphere should be electric next Thursday, but you'll be able to cut the tension with a knife, one imagines. Get ready to chew those fingernails....we've been here before.

Joe 2.0 will be hard to shift

If only he'd brought his shooting boots. Aside from a tentatively-taken early chance – the best of the half where Liverpool were concerned – there was very little to criticise about Joe Allen here. Confident, composed and playing with a self-belief that stands out a mile, the Welshman continued his impressive recent form. He passed it well, covered the spaces and collected second balls, got Liverpool playing forwards and never looked flustered.

He's in the side partly because of the misfortune of others, but that's not his problem. And if he carries on like this, he'll be hard to shift from that midfield. He's a man in form, and growing in stature with each passing game.

Villarreal's weakness is clear... If Liverpool are to book their place in Basel, then they must make sure they expose Villarreal's clear weakness.

From the off, the bulk of the Reds' joy came down their right flank, where Jaume Costa was left exposed by Denis Suarez's refusal to help out defensively.

James Milner, Nathaniel Clyne and Adam Lallana managed to swarm around the Villarreal left back, creating overloads and good positions in and around the box. Had they had a more obvious target to cross to, or a bit more quality with their final pass, they would have found a way through.

Costa was preferred to Antonio Rukavina, who played under Klopp at Dortmund, but will need more support at Anfield if Villarreal are to keep the Reds out.

Liverpool, meanwhile, need to find a way to maximise the space on offer. They didn't here, which will be a real source of regret.

Villarreal is no Dortmund, but their atmosphere was a positive one

The contrast with the last round was obvious. Around 2,000 Liverpool fans made the trip for this one, but they were scattered between Villarreal itself, with many opting for short hopes in from Valencia, Castellon or even neighbouring Benidorm – the stories from those trips should last!

It meant a rather more serene atmosphere than there had been in Dortmund, where the city had been completely geared towards the game. No standstills, just a few flags and the odd pub lined with Reds. And then a mood-killing cab or bus ride to the ground.

Still, the hosts did what they could to make it a carnival atmosphere. Both teams were greeted by a brass band upon arrival at El Madrigal, where the tight surrounding streets suddenly came alive.

Pleasingly, there were also some classy gestures from the home supporters prior to kick off, including a much-appreciated tribute to the Hillsborough victims.

The mood was certainly convivial rather than confrontational, with red shirts mixing with yellow both inside and outside the ground - a welcome break from the sniping and the arguing and the point-scoring seen in other ties. The Beatles' 'Yellow Submarine' replaced the traditional Villarreal pre-match anthem.

Some may argue that the edge and the rivalry is what makes big games, but there is something good about a European away trip where steering clear of harm is not at the forefront of travelling supporters' minds.

Hopefully, the attitude of Augsburg, Dortmund and Villarreal fans will catch on...

el Periódico Mediterráneo

Adrián acerca la final de Basilea a un enorme Villarreal

Un gol de Adrián en el segundo minuto de la prolongación dio la victoria al Villarreal en El Madrigal ante el Liverpool (1-0) que acercó al equipo amarillo al sueño de acceder por primera vez en su historia a la final de la Europa League.

El Villarreal tratará en el mítico estadio de Anfield de conseguir su objetivo tras haber ganado en casa un partido muy nivelado entre dos conjuntos de un potencial muy similar y cuyo resultado deja abiertas las posibilidades de ambos para estar en la final del día 18 de mayo en Basilea (Suiza).

Tanto el técnico local, Marcelino García Toral, como el alemán del Liverpool, Jürgen Klopp, tenían claro el tipo de partido que pretendían que se jugara y consiguieron su objetivo, ya que unos y otros se neutralizaron a la perfección.

Por ello se vio un encuentro sin tregua pero marcado por la intención de unos y otros de combinar la búsqueda del gol a favor con la obligación de no recibirlo y que se resolvió cuando nadie pensaba en que iba a llegar el gol.

La primera mitad ya estuvo marcada por la igualdad y por la intensidad con la que se emplearon ambos conjuntos y aunque de entrada el Villarreal dominó más que su rival, la primera opción de gol fue para el forastero Allen en un remate centrado que detuvo sin problemas Aesnjo.

Esta dinámica continuó hasta el cuarto de hora de juego, pero a partir de entonces el Liverpool mejoró en su funcionamiento colectivo y el equilibrio de fuerzas pasó a ser mayor si cabe, aunque en esta fase del partido la opción más clara de gol fue para el equipo local en un doble remate de Pina (m.21).

A partir de ese momento se vivió un tramo final del primer tiempo muy táctico, en el que unos y otros trataron de crear sus ocasiones de gol, pero en el que era importante no perder la posición y no dar opción al rival, conscientes ambos del valor que podría tener para cualquier error propio o ajeno para el desarrollo del choque.

Con la igualdad como característica de una primera mitad nivelada, Soldado tuvo la oportunidad de abrir el marcador en una acción aislada en el minuto 42, pero la igualdad a cero que se mantuvo hasta el 45 reflejó a la perfección el desempeño de uno y otro equipo en la primera mitad del choque.

La segunda mitad dio comienzo con la entrada de Ibe por Coutinho en el equipo visitante y un remate de cabeza al poste de Bakambu a la salida de un córner en el primer minuto de juego.

Tras esa acción, el encuentro mantuvo la tónica del primer periodo en cuanto a equilibrio de fuerzas, pero pasó a ser mucho más abierto con constantes alternativas ante una y otra portería y con una ocasión clara para el Liverpool ya que el segundo balón al poste del partido llegó en un remate de Firmino (m.65).

El choque entró en su recta final sin apenas variaciones y con el convencimiento por parte de ambos conjuntos de que restan los noventa minutos que se disputarán en Anfield la semana que viene.

A cuatro minutos del final, Mignolet desbarató una aproximación muy peligrosa de Bakambu, pero de inmediato una contra de Alberto Moreno pudo haber abierto el marcador para el equipo inglés.

Por entonces, todavía no había llegado la jugada que resolvería el encuentro con un balón de Bruno que le llegó a Denis Suárez, quien tras una gran jugada, cedió el balón a Adrián para que empujara el balón e hiciera el 1-0 en el segundo minuto de la prolongación.

Ficha técnica:

1 - Villarreal: Asenjo, Mario, Bailly (Musacchio, m.76), Víctor Ruiz, Jaume Costa, Pina, Bruno Soriano, Jonathan dos Santos (Samu Castillejo, m.72), Denis Suárez, Soldado (Adrián, m.74) y Bakambu.

0 - Liverpool: Mignolet, Clyne, Touré, Lovren, Alberto Moreno, Allen, Lucas, Lallana, Milner, Coutinho (Ibe, m.46) y Firmino (Benkeke, m.89).

Gol: 1-0, m.90+: Adrián.

Árbitro: Damir Skormina (SLV). Amonestó por el Villarreal a Jaume Costa.

Incidencias: partido de ida de las semifinales de la Liga Europa disputado en el campo de El Madrigal ante 20.000 espectadores.

Compiled by Graeme Riley

Date: 28 April 2016
Opposition: Villarreal CF
Competition: Europa League

Times	Telegraph	Mail
Guardian	Mirror	Echo
Independent	Mediterráneo	BBC

28 April 2016

BBC

Liverpool's ambitions of reaching their first European final in almost a decade suffered a blow as Villarreal netted an injury-time winner in the first leg.
After a first half of few chances, Cedric Bakambu's header clipped the Reds upright shortly after the break. Liverpool went closest when Roberto Firmino's low shot hit the post. The Reds looked set for a creditable draw in Spain until they switched off to allow substitute Adrian Lopez to tap in Denis Suarez's low cross.
Despite the dramatic winner, the Europa League semi-final still remains delicately poised before next Thursday's return leg at Anfield. The winners will face either Spanish holders Sevilla or Ukrainian side Shakhtar Donetsk, who drew 2-2 in their first leg, in the Swiss city of Basel on 18 May.
Could late defensive lapse prove costly?
Liverpool have not reached a European final since losing to AC Milan in the 2007 Champions League showpiece, but a stoic display at La Liga's fourth-placed team looked set to leave them a home win away from ending that barren run.
However, the Premier League side lost their defensive discipline in the final few seconds - and it could prove crucial. Left-back Alberto Moreno wandered up field, leaving the space for former Manchester City youngster Suarez to exploit before squaring to Lopez for the easiest of finishes. BBC Radio 5 live summariser and former Reds defender Mark Lawrenson said: "Where did the left-back disappear to? Injury time at 0-0 in a Europa League semi-final - and he's probably 70 metres up the pitch. "0-0 would have been a very good result. All of a sudden because of one aberration you're under pressure for the second leg." Liverpool will have to score at least twice to go through in 90 minutes at Anfield, but Villarreal know an away goal would mean the Reds then need a minimum of three.
Reds lack attacking threat
Jurgen Klopp's Liverpool side were installed as favourites to win Europe's secondary club competition after their thrilling quarter-final win against Bundesliga club Borussia Dortmund. Publicly the 48-year-old German insists there has been no thought about the possibility of reaching the final - but winning the trophy will cap an encouraging debut season with a place in next season's Champions League. His predecessor, Brendan Rodgers, named an inexperienced side in the Reds' opening two matches in the competition, but Klopp has chosen stronger teams since arriving in early October. However, he decided to play without a recognised striker at Villarreal, leaving England international Daniel Sturridge on the bench throughout - and the Reds offered little attacking threat.
Wales midfielder Joe Allen wasted the best chance in a tight first half, side-footing straight at home keeper Sergio Asenjo early on. Further opportunities were rare, although Brazil forward Firmino - playing as Liverpool's most advanced player - thumped an angled 12-yard drive against the base of the right post.
Villarreal pay Hillsborough tribute
Liverpool were playing their first match since inquests concluded 96 Reds supporters who died as a result of a crush in the 1989 Hillsborough disaster were unlawfully killed.
Villarreal paid tribute to the victims by providing a banner - bearing the number 96 and Liverpool club slogan 'You'll Never Walk Alone' - for their fans to hold up before kick-off.
"We were very saddened by the Hillsborough tragedy and we planned events to show the solidarity and support which our club and our fans have with Liverpool and those who were affected," said the Spanish club.
'This race is not over'
Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp:
"Of course I'm not too happy with the goal we conceded in the last second. Counter-attacking in the 92nd minute makes not much sense - but it is only the first leg.
"It is 1-0 and they have to come to Anfield where we know how strong we are. We had our moments, we defended really good. This race is not over.
"If we had enough players around the box it was no problem but they played this one chip ball over Kolo [Toure], I don't know where Alberto [Moreno] was in this moment but that was the only big mistake we made in this game and they scored with it."
Villarreal manager Marcelino:
"Until the final whistle you can score or concede a goal and this time we were lucky enough to score in the very last minute.
"We managed a good result but we don't know if it will be enough or not until the end of the tie.
"It was not an unfair result and we didn't beat Liverpool by being lucky."
Man of the match - Denis Suarez (Villarreal)
What's next?
Seventh-placed Liverpool return to Premier League action with a visit to 15th-placed Swansea on Sunday.
The Reds look unlikely to earn Champions League qualification through the Premier League, sitting nine points behind fourth-placed Arsenal with four matches left, although they do have a game in hand on the Gunners.
Villarreal are better positioned to earn La Liga's final qualifying spot, holding a four-point advantage over Celta Vigo with three matches remaining.

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Match ends, Villarreal 1, Liverpool 0.
90'+4' Second Half ends, Villarreal 1, Liverpool 0.
90'+2' Goal! Villarreal 1, Liverpool 0. Adrián (Villarreal right footed shot from the centre of the box to the centre of the goal. Assisted by Denis Suárez.
90' Substitution, Liverpool. Christian Benteke replaces Roberto Firmino.
88' Attempt missed. Alberto Moreno (Liverpool left footed shot from the left side of the box is high and wide to the left.
88' Corner, Villarreal. Conceded by Dejan Lovren.
87' Corner, Villarreal. Conceded by Simon Mignolet.
87' Attempt saved. Cédric Bakambu (Villarreal left footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom left corner. Assisted by Denis Suárez.
86' Attempt missed. Nathaniel Clyne (Liverpool header from the centre of the box misses to the right. Assisted by Jordon Ibe with a cross.
85' Foul by Nathaniel Clyne (Liverpool.
85' Samu Castillejo (Villarreal wins a free kick in the defensive half.
79' Foul by Joe Allen (Liverpool.
79' Adrián (Villarreal wins a free kick in the attacking half.
78' Offside, Liverpool. Alberto Moreno tries a through ball, but Jordon Ibe is caught offside.
76' Delay over. They are ready to continue.
76' Substitution, Villarreal. Mateo Musacchio replaces Eric Bailly because of an injury.
75' Delay in match Eric Bailly (Villarreal because of an injury.
74' Offside, Liverpool. Joe Allen tries a through ball, but Adam Lallana is caught offside.
74' Substitution, Villarreal. Adrián replaces Roberto Soldado because of an injury.
74' Offside, Liverpool. Kolo Touré tries a through ball, but Roberto Firmino is caught offside.
73' Alberto Moreno (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
73' Foul by Roberto Soldado (Villarreal.
72' Substitution, Villarreal. Samu Castillejo replaces Jonathan dos Santos.
70' Lucas Leiva (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
70' Foul by Roberto Soldado (Villarreal.
69' Dangerous play by Kolo Touré (Liverpool.
69' Roberto Soldado (Villarreal wins a free kick in the defensive half.
67' Foul by Lucas Leiva (Liverpool.
67' Tomás Pina (Villarreal wins a free kick in the attacking half.
65' Attempt saved. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool right footed shot from the right side of the box is saved in the bottom right corner. Assisted by James Milner with a through ball.
64' Delay over. They are ready to continue.
63' Delay in match Jaume Costa (Villarreal because of an injury.
61' Attempt blocked. Adam Lallana (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is blocked.
60' Jaume Costa (Villarreal is shown the yellow card.
59' Foul by Lucas Leiva (Liverpool.
59' Roberto Soldado (Villarreal wins a free kick in the defensive half.
55' Attempt missed. Mario (Villarreal right footed shot from the right side of the box is too high. Assisted by Roberto Soldado.
52' Foul by Dejan Lovren (Liverpool.
52' Roberto Soldado (Villarreal wins a free kick in the defensive half.
52' Attempt saved. Dejan Lovren (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Alberto Moreno.
52' Attempt missed. Alberto Moreno (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box misses to the right. Assisted by Jordon Ibe following a corner.
51' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Eric Bailly.
51' Attempt blocked. James Milner (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Jordon Ibe.
48' Lucas Leiva (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
48' Foul by Jaume Costa (Villarreal.
47' Corner, Villarreal. Conceded by Lucas Leiva.
46' Cédric Bakambu (Villarreal hits the right post with a header from the right side of the six yard box. Assisted by Jonathan dos Santos with a cross following a corner.
46' Corner, Villarreal. Conceded by Alberto Moreno.
Second Half begins Villarreal 0, Liverpool 0.
45' Substitution, Liverpool. Jordon Ibe replaces Philippe Coutinho because of an injury.
45'+2' First Half ends, Villarreal 0, Liverpool 0.
45'+2' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Jaume Costa.
45' Kolo Touré (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
45' Foul by Roberto Soldado (Villarreal.
42' Attempt missed. Roberto Soldado (Villarreal right footed shot from outside the box is close, but misses to the right. Assisted by Bruno.
40' Attempt missed. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is too high. Assisted by Adam Lallana.
40' Attempt blocked. Nathaniel Clyne (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.
36' Corner, Villarreal. Conceded by Alberto Moreno.
36' Attempt blocked. Mario (Villarreal left footed shot from the right side of the box is blocked.
34' Alberto Moreno (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
34' Foul by Cédric Bakambu (Villarreal.
31' Joe Allen (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
31' Foul by Eric Bailly (Villarreal.
29' Attempt missed. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is high and wide to the right. Assisted by Alberto Moreno.
29' Delay over. They are ready to continue.
28' Delay in match Jonathan dos Santos (Villarreal because of an injury.
21' Attempt blocked. Tomás Pina (Villarreal left footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Mario.
21' Attempt saved. Tomás Pina (Villarreal right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom right corner. Assisted by Jonathan dos Santos.
18' Attempt blocked. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from the left side of the box is blocked.
15' Attempt missed. Adam Lallana (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box misses to the left.
15' Attempt missed. Lucas Leiva (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box misses to the right following a corner.
14' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Jaume Costa.
12' Offside, Liverpool. James Milner tries a through ball, but Adam Lallana is caught offside.
12' Foul by Jaume Costa (Villarreal.
12' Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
12' Corner, Villarreal. Conceded by Kolo Touré.
11' Attempt missed. Roberto Soldado (Villarreal right footed shot from the right side of the box misses to the left. Assisted by Bruno following a set piece situation.
10' Jonathan dos Santos (Villarreal wins a free kick in the attacking half.
10' Foul by Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool.
6' Corner, Villarreal. Conceded by Nathaniel Clyne.
5' Attempt saved. Joe Allen (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the centre of the goal.
First Half begins.
Lineups are announced and players are warming up.

Compiled by Graeme Riley