

Date: 25 January 2017
 Opposition: Southampton
 Competition: League Cup

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25 January 2017

THE TIMES

Anfield left reeling after Southampton create cup history

Liverpool 0 Southampton 1 Long 90+1

Finally, Southampton have prised something from Liverpool's grasp.

A place in the EFL Cup Final next month belongs to Claude Puel and his jubilant side, and the club's long wait for a first major Wembley showpiece since 1979 was reflected in the sheer effort they expended to seal their passage.

Shane Long's breakaway goal in injury time was no more than Southampton deserved during a performance in which they initially passed up the chance to embellish the slender lead they had brought to Anfield and turned to defensive discipline to repel Liverpool during a second-half siege.

Whether they face Manchester United or Hull City on February 26, they will do so having yet to concede in the competition.

Yet Long's accomplished finish, expertly created by substitute Josh Sims, added a layer of gloss on a night to remember for Southampton's supporters. They have grown accustomed to a one-sided relationship in recent years, the Merseysiders cherry-picking five of their star players, messrs Lambert, Lallana, Lovren, Clyne and Mane, since the summer of 2014, but here they refused to hand everything over. For Liverpool and Jurgen Klopp, the grumbles will simply intensify as the momentum of autumn has stuttered and stalled. Over two legs, there was no hard luck story for them to fall back on.

The rhetoric in Klopp's programme notes underlined how Liverpool, in seeking to progress, were also searching for the rhythm and menace that has remained elusive since the turn of the year.

"We punch back and punch back hard," spat a message that referenced the damaging weekend defeat to Swansea and demanded a reaction as his players endeavoured to overturn the 1-0 deficit from St Mary's a fortnight previously when Southampton had spurned several opportunities. As it was, the opening half passed with the hosts barely able to lay a glove on their rivals. On a bitterly cold evening when the wind chill bit hard, and confronted by opponents who sensibly dropped deep, denying space, Liverpool struggled to warm to their task. Without Sadio Mane, who is at the Africa Cup of Nations with Senegal, they lack pace to penetrate in behind defences, the passing felt all too predictable and territorial dominance was not translated into clear-cut openings.

It was telling that the first opportunity came when Adam Lallana pounced out of the shadows to dispossess Nathan Redmond, both hero and villain from the first leg given the goal he plundered and the chances he missed, and fed Philippe Coutinho.

Impetus was added by Daniel Sturridge, who cut inside Maya Yoshida on the edge of the penalty area and unleashed a low shot which brought a save, albeit a comfortable one, from Fraser Forster. Roberto Firmino tried his luck from distance soon after. Yet Puel, who had never lost in four games against Liverpool prior to this, having previously frustrated them while in charge at Lyons, did not spend the opening half an hour as anxiously as he might have feared. Timing is everything and Virgil van Dijk's absence through injury, just days after Jose Fonte had been sold to West Ham United, had left the centre of Southampton's rearguard with an unfamiliar look as England youth international Jack Stephens partnered Yoshida. This was only the youngster's fourth start but, aside from a wayward backpass which went out for a corner, he was unfazed and, in that sense, reflected the visitors as a whole.

Content to play on the break and counter through the jet-heeled Redmond, Southampton had mustered fleeting moments of threat -- a Steven Davis shot was blocked by the foot of James Milner -- before their profligacy kicked in again as Liverpool were repeatedly sliced open.

It was no surprise that Redmond reprised the role of tormentor-in-chief, ghosting beyond Joel Matip and picking out Dusan Tadic unmarked, central and seven yards from goal in the 36th minute. Tadic shot first time, but his effort was straight at Loris Karius and, while the goalkeeper produced an outstanding save in smothering his attempt, it was, at the same time, a poor miss.

Three minutes later, Southampton repeated the move and the finish. This time Redmond teed up Davis after leaving Matip, starting for the first time since early December, in his slipstream, but the midfielder skied his shot into the Kop. Puel recoiled in horror. Next to him, assistant Eric Black muttered under his breath. They were right to expect a response and Liverpool, more ambitious as they clicked through the gears, belatedly obliged.

When Emre Can lined up a shooting chance eight minutes after the break from 25-yards, there should have been no real danger. Yet Forster allowed a stinging shot to slip through his butterfingers only to show brilliant reactions and redeem himself by clawing the ball away before it crossed the line. TV replays showed his split-second response saved the equaliser.

More panic ensued when Yoshida and then Long failed to clear Milner's cross only for Sturridge to acrobatically scoop the loose ball over the crossbar from inside the six-yard box.

Liverpool kept probing for the telling blow. Sturridge met Jordan Henderson's in-swinging cross on the half-volley but his attempt was a yard too high.

Coutinho, the ink on his new PS150,000-a-week contract just dry, failed to connect with Firmino's centre.

The home supporters sang for the introduction of Divock Origi, but by the end it was those away fans, chilled to the bone, who found their voice.

It is the Saints who go marching on all the way to Wembley.

the guardian

Shane Long drives superb Southampton past Liverpool into EFL Cup final

For [Southampton](#), it was a night they will cherish for a long time and a victory that will go straight into the list of great occasions in the club's history. Liverpool, the eight-times winners, had been knocked out and over two legs what a tribute to Claude Puel's disciplined, talented players that they made it feel like a trick of the mind their opponents were actually the Premier League's highest scorers.

The prize is a Wembley final on 26 February and, on this evidence, Southampton will fancy their chances even if the likely opponents are Manchester United and a modern-day re-enactment of the 1976 FA Cup final. Why, after all, be afraid after this kind of heroic performance? Southampton had not conceded a goal in 180 minutes against a team that apparently wants to be thought of as title challengers. [Liverpool](#) simply ran out of ideas before the final, decisive blow from Shane Long in stoppage time, scoring from a break-away attack that started all the way back in his own penalty area.

By the end, it was difficult to remember Southampton were having to make do without their best defender, Virgil van Dijk, and still adjusting after their previous captain, [José Fonte, defected to West Ham](#). Everything was in place for Jürgen Klopp's team -- under the floodlights, with the volume turned up -- for a classic Liverpool comeback only to come up against a team that defended stoically, counterattacked to great effect and, more than anything, showed the force of personality that might not usually be expected for a team with their limited experience of the big occasion.

Klopp had shoehorned Daniel Sturridge, Philippe Coutinho, Roberto Firmino and Adam Lallana into the same forward line but the most impressive attacker was actually Nathan Redmond, [scorer of the only goal in the first leg](#). Liverpool were not short of effort but they did lack creative ideas and that has been a familiar theme in their encounters with Southampton this season. Three times they have played one another and on each occasion Liverpool have failed to score. Klopp, to give him his due, accepted Southampton deserved to be in the final.

The winning team were clapped off by the fans who hung around at the end of a bone-chilling night and it would have been immensely cruel if Divock Origi's exaggerated fall had persuaded the referee, Martin Atkinson, to award a penalty just before Long, a half-time substitute, delivered the most important kick of the night. Shortly before, Long had blocked a shot at the other end with his upper arm and perhaps Klopp had a point when he argued it ought to have been a penalty. Otherwise, the closest Liverpool came to a goal stemmed from a mistake by Fraser Forster nine minutes into the second half. Forster made a terrible hash of Emre Can's 20-yard shot before the goalkeeper rescued himself with a brilliant, one-handed save, clawing the ball away from his goal-line.

Liverpool could also reflect on the volleyed chance that Sturridge put into the Kop just at the point of the second half when the home team finally appeared to remember there was a Wembley final at stake. For the most part, however, it was not the onslaught that might have been anticipated. There was a good balance to the way Southampton defended in numbers and broke at speed. They were the better team in the opening 45 minutes and, similar to the first leg, could have made the night a lot easier for themselves with some better finishing. Dusan Tadic had the outstanding chance of the first half, requiring a fine save from Loris Karius, and Redmond's direct running was a prominent feature.

There was one awkward moment early on when Jack Stephens, playing the biggest game of his professional life, tried to play the ball back to Forster and succeeded only in kicking it out for a corner. Stephens, a 22-year-old whose career has been largely taken up with loan spells at Swindon Town and Coventry City, was playing because of Van Dijk's ankle injury. Yet he quickly recovered and can reflect on a fine night. Oriol Romeu and Steven Davis, both vastly underrated players, were operating just in front of Southampton's defence and there were some splendid performances as well from Cédric Soares, Maya Yoshida and Ryan Bertrand.

"Attack, attack, attack," was the plea from the Kop and Liverpool pinned back their opponents during the last half an hour. Southampton had to ride their luck at times. Yet nobody could say it was a lucky victory. It was a triumph for organisation, resilience and togetherness, culminating in the decisive moment, 91 minutes in, when everyone inside the stadium knew it was over. Josh Sims, one of their substitutes, carried the ball upfield, running at a thinly-manned defence. Long took aim with his right boot, firing a diagonal shot past Karius, and Southampton had reached their first final in this competition since 1979.

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The Mail

Ragged Reds are running out of ideas

AT FULL time Jurgen Klopp interrupted his chuntering in the ear of the fourth official to congratulate Southampton manager Claude Puel and many of the visiting players.

He was correct to do so because this was a two-legged victory that the team from the south coast very much deserved.

As this season develops, a pattern of how to play against Klopp's Liverpool is emerging. It will not always work. Liverpool will overcome this barren spell of form sooner or later.

For now, though, there is a method.

It involves defending, a lot of defending, and as such an awful lot of hard work. But if you can squeeze Liverpool into almost suffocatingly small areas, then you can break and wait for your chances. They will come, too. This Liverpool team will always allow you chances.

Last night the possession was all Liverpool's, especially in the second half. The run of the ball didn't always go their way and neither perhaps did a couple of tight refereeing calls.

But over the course of the two legs, the really good chances were largely Southampton's. Puel's team should have won the first leg 3-0 and could easily have been two goals ahead by half-time here.

Liverpool, for their part, have morphed from a team who always looked likely to score into one who have forgotten how to do so; no goals over two legs of this semi-final and just one over two FA Cup games against Plymouth of League Two. Klopp said last night that his team could have scored 'maybe five times' in the second half and also suggested two penalty decisions could have gone Liverpool's way. That was a very generous way of looking at his team's performance.

Liverpool did have chances as they swarmed towards the Kop after the interval. They did not have many, though. Daniel Sturridge should have scored, while Emre Can may have done thanks to a mistake from Southampton goalkeeper Fraser Forster.

That was about it, though, and as for the penalty calls, referee Martin Atkinson may well have given one, a handball, but was right to deny Liverpool the other. Liverpool have lost the confidence and cohesion of early season. To play the way they do, as thrilling as it can be, needs instinct and imagination to hold sway over thought. That is not the way it is at the moment. Frankly, Liverpool look short of ideas.

Southampton, meanwhile, stuck to their own plan, created their own good opportunities and Liverpool reserve goalkeeper Loris Karius was already cemented as his team's best player of the two games by the time he was beaten by a rapier Southampton thrust in added time.

This always looked like a big week in Liverpool's season and it feels even more so after this outcome.

A six-day stretch in the EFL Cup, FA Cup and Premier League ends with a game here against Chelsea on Tuesday and Klopp's players must find improvement if their pursuit of the best team in the country is not to be effectively over before we have emerged from winter.

Southampton, meanwhile, have something brilliant to anticipate, a first major final since 2003, and it is easy to feel pleased for a club who have continued to move forwards despite steadily losing players and managers in recent years.

There was certainty and direction to much of what Puel's team did at Anfield. The same, peculiarly, could not be said of a Liverpool team who, all of a sudden, look ragged.

The Daily Telegraph

Long's thrilling finish propels Saints into final

The Saints go marching on; marching on to a first major final at Wembley since 1979 and a chance to end decades of hurt thanks to a stirring League Cup semi-final victory over Liverpool.

Southampton thoroughly deserved it. After gaining a slender one-goal lead from the first leg, they protected it here with guile and guts. Led by a magnificent performance from their young forward Nathan Redmond, they scored in injury-time through substitute Shane Long, just moments after Liverpool were denied claims for a penalty.

The triumph sets up a final against either Hull City or, more probably, Manchester United, whom Southampton beat to win their only significant trophy, the FA Cup in 1976.

Liverpool can have no complaint. They were flawed. This was not going to be one of those famous Anfield cup nights. Given their recent patchy form, their season is suddenly in the balance.

A biting wind whipped around the stadium and Jurgen Klopp demanded a similarly sharp response beforehand. "We come out and we punch back hard," he said.

This was a semi-final that resonated. Liverpool have owned this competition in years gone by and now it offered them an opportunity to regain momentum. They received a boost yesterday morning with the announcement that Philippe Coutinho had signed a new five-year deal.

How would Southampton respond as they strove to reach their first major final since losing in the 2003 FA Cup showpiece? Their prematch news had not been good. They lost their defensive linchpin Virgil Van Dijk to an ankle injury that may force him out for some time. With Jose Fonte sold, 22-year-old Jack Stephens was thrust into the centre of defence, having yet to start a Premier League match. Some test, then. Liverpool inevitably dominated possession but also appeared nervousness. Southampton's 4-3-3 rapidly morphed into 4-5-1 with the quicksilver Redmond, scorer in the first leg, joining the attack when they broke forward. He almost wriggled through in the opening minutes.

Liverpool produced the first shot, a Daniel Sturridge effort that Fraser Forster easily dealt with. The goalkeeper then fielded another from Roberto Firmino. Liverpool sparred rather than delivered heavy blows early on, creating an edge of frustration in the crowd, even if their encampment in the Southampton half gradually became entrenched.

Southampton did break out, with Redmond again involved, and the ball falling to Steven Davis from a half-clearance. James Milner blocked the midfielder's first-time, goal-bound shot before Loris Karius could be tested.

A pattern was set. Southampton sat deep and were disciplined, marshalled by their canny midfield, and threatened on the counter. Jay Rodriguez ran on to a through-ball to fire in a shot that Karius dealt with. They should have scored when Redmond glided easily past Dejan Lovren and cut the ball back to Dusan Tadic. Given a clear shot at goal, six yards out, his side-footed effort was smothered by Karius.

Then there was another, almost identical chance. Redmond this time beat Joel Matip and found Davis, who steadied himself but woefully blazed his shot way over the crossbar. A second glorious opportunity was spurned.

Claude Puel's game-plan looked spot on and was being executed excellently. Surely, Liverpool had to offer more. They certainly should have posed more of a threat when Adam Lallana was afforded an opportunity to shoot but checked back inside the six-yard area, before a Coutinho effort was deflected into Forster's grasp.

The goalkeeper then made a horrific blunder as he fumbled Emre Can's drive but, just as it appeared as if the ball had spun beyond his reach and would cross the goal-line, Forster produced an extraordinary recovery to claw it out.

Liverpool pushed again, with Can turning James Milner's cross back for Sturridge to leap acrobatically and volley over the bar from close range when he should have converted.

With Klopp sensing some momentum, finally, and demanding a response from the home supporters, Sturridge reached a Jordan Henderson cross but, at full stretch, again volleyed over from only a few yards out.

Coutinho miscued as he reached a cross and then went agonisingly close as he cut in and whistled a powerful shot just the post, with Forster stranded. Liverpool demanded a penalty after the ball struck Long on the shoulder and Divock Origi went down under Stephens challenge. It looked a fair challenge. And then it was over as Southampton broke and two substitutes combined, thrillingly, with Josh Sims releasing Long, who calmly slid the ball past Karius and into the net to cap a brilliant performance from his club.

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Long strikes late to seal Saints Wembley date
 A fabulous few days for Southampton. A dreadful few days for Liverpool. Following resounding victory over champions Leicester City on Sunday, Southampton reached their first major cup final in 14 years with Shane Long scoring in injury time and fans invading the pitch. Following the misery of defeat in the league to bottom-placed Swansea on Saturday, Liverpool's January became that bit darker.
 Unstoppable in September and October, Liverpool suddenly appear vulnerable. Southampton's progress to Wembley was achieved thanks to an organised defensive performance but not a heroic one.
 Southampton's third clean sheet of the season against Liverpool came without much of a shake. That Maya Yoshida was Southampton's third choice centre back until last week and that he was untroubled here said everything about Liverpool's threat.
 Liverpool now have not won any of their four most recent League Cup semi-finals at home. Considering Jurgen Klopp has repeatedly mentioned the impact a crowd can have on a result without the need for a question, could this sequence reflect a greater mood?
 Liverpool's players arrived at the stadium, though, amidst a frenzied scene: photographs showing masses of people lining Anfield Road, waving their scarves, chanting and setting off flares in the freezing night air.
 Southampton's players arrived via the same route, meanwhile, knowing Virgil Van Dijk was injured and would not be available. He is their captain and their most influential player.
 Southampton's manager, Claude Puel, had not experienced defeat in his four games against Liverpool while in charge of Lyon and, indeed, Southampton. He has not won plaudits for his team's style since arriving in England from Nice but he appreciates how to set up a defence. Surely it must have concerned him that because of Van Dijk's absence, he was forced to call on his fourth choice centre back Jack Stephens as a replacement. Stephens will be 23 on Friday and he had never started even a Premier League game so this represented the most important sporting moment in his life.
 Perhaps it was a measure of how little is known about Stephens that Southampton's supporters sang about him being "one of our own," when the reality is, he grew up in Torpoint, Cornwall, and was -- in fact -- signed from Plymouth Argyle in 2011 when he was 17-years-old, having already made five appearances in League One.
 It would be tempting to conclude that this was a bigger game for Southampton than it was for Liverpool, bearing in mind their last final was in the FA Cup and that experience ended in defeat in 2003; bearing in mind as well, the final before that was in the League Cup of 1979 when Brian Clough took his Nottingham Forest team out the night before, got many of them drunk and still won.
 And yet, it is easy to forget that Liverpool have won only one trophy in 11 years. With their hopes of an involvement in the Premier League title race seemingly draining, this was an even more important for them. In bad form, though, the lack of confidence was evident, as Southampton -- with Stephens marshalling Daniel Sturridge without disturbance -- passed two hundred minutes of football against Liverpool this season without conceding a goal without any threat being posed.
 The visitors' had the better chances of the first half and they were identical; Nathan Redmond slaloming past Trent Alexander-Arnold on both occasions, and then spinning beyond Joel Matip before having the presence of mind to toe poke a pass to someone else in a better position. Loris Karius saved brilliantly from Dusan Tadic's first opportunity then Steven Davis made a mess of the second, ballooning his shot high into the Kop.
 Liverpool simply had to be more aggressive after the break because they could not have been any more passive. Fraser Forster nearly brought the tie level by fumbling Emre Can's stinging drive before recovering well to claw it away. Sturridge then found himself unmarked in the box twice but was not quite balanced enough to score. But Liverpool were hardly battering down the door. Southampton deserved their place at Wembley. It was guaranteed thanks to Long.
 Liverpool (4-3-3): Karius; Alexander-Arnold, Matip, Lovren, Milner; Can (Origi 78), Henderson, Lallana; Firmino, Sturridge, Coutinho (Wijnaldum 87).
 Subs not used: Mignolet, Klavan, Moreno, Lucas, Woodburn.
 Southampton (4-1-4-1): Forster; Cedric, Stephens, Yoshida, Bertrand; Romeu; Redmond (Sims 81), Ward-Prowse (Hojbjerg 59), Davis, Tadic; Rodriguez (Long 45).
 Subs not used: Lewis, Clasie, Martina, McQueen.
 Referee: M Atkinson
 Attendance: 52,238



KLOPP CAN'T HANDLE IT
 JURGEN KLOPP was fuming as he claimed a chance to lift his first trophy with Liverpool was sunk by a handball in the box going unpunished. The Reds have won just once in seven games this year, and the Kop boss insisted after this defeat by Southampton that decisions are going against his team "week by week by week".
 He pointed to what he described as "an obvious handball" by Shane Long that could have put his side ahead on the night and taken this tie into extra-time. Roberto Firmino's effort appeared to hit the Saints striker high on the arm. Reds sub Divock Origi also claimed a spot-kick following a challenge by Jack Stephens, who appeared to take the ball.
 But an angry Klopp said: "The handball was clear. Maybe it's not interesting but it is really hard to accept week by week by week."
 "Manchester United scored a goal three yards offside. Is my job to get a fine? The handball was obvious, 100 per cent obvious."
 "I don't know about the Origi moment, but if it was a foul that makes it even harder to bear. We have a lot of these situations and nobody comes and says they are sorry. Two penalties and we're through and nobody says anything about our performance."
 "But that explains the performance, we really stuck to our usual plan, and immediately we had chances - we would normally take them, but we didn't and we're out and we have to accept it, the show must go on."
 Long scored in injury time to seal Southampton's place in the EFL Cup Final. Klopp admitted "they won both games, they deserved it" but Claude Puel's side would not have set up a potential Wembley date with Manchester United but for the incredible reactions of Forster.
 He spilled Emre Can's shot but as the ball headed towards goal he somehow twisted his body round to hook it away with his right hand Forster said: "I thought I did enough to get there but the footballing gods were with me in the end."
 "Luckily it didn't go in and we'll take that. We did enough in both legs, we created a lot of chances."
 Of his team's performance, boss Puel said: "It wasn't bad eh?
 "It's fantastic to be in a final, but its not finished now, we're not going to just participate. We have shown against a great club like Liverpool we can win."

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No complaints for wilting Reds as Klopp's men deliver same sinking feeling Jurgen Klopp had promised a stirring response but all Liverpool delivered was that same sinking feeling. "We punch back and we punch back hard," vowed the Reds boss in his programme notes. But it was those in the home dressing room who needed to be picked up off the canvas after a bruising night at Anfield. There will be no Wembley trip for Liverpool next month, no EFL Cup final showdown with Manchester United. That golden opportunity was squandered as Southampton marched on to the capital. Liverpool could have no complaints. After being comprehensively outplayed in the narrow first leg defeat at St Mary's a fortnight earlier, they simply didn't do enough on home turf to turn the tie around. It was a tale of what might have been. The Reds were left to rue the gilt-edged chances that went begging during a one-sided second half.

A sense of injustice lingered after a couple of penalty shouts went against them prior to substitute Shane Long's stoppage time winner sealing their fate. But the bottom line is Liverpool didn't deserve to go through over the two legs and that's a damning indictment of how standards have slipped in recent months. Make no mistake, what was a blip is now most definitely a slump. Since the turn of the year the Reds have won just one of their seven matches and that was an unconvincing FA Cup triumph against League Two opposition.

Their Premier League title challenge has floundered after taking just two points out of the last nine on offer and now their best hope of silverware this season has gone up in smoke. Saturday's FA Cup tie with Wolves just took on much greater significance. Klopp is wrestling with the first alarming downturn of his Liverpool reign. The absence of Sadio Mane due to the Africa Cup of Nations has undoubtedly hurt the Reds but there's more to it than that.

Their attacking spark and swagger of the autumn has gone AWOL. Energy levels have dipped. A wretched run has clearly dented belief and a lack of activity in the January transfer window has cost the Reds. A day which had started so brightly with news of Philippe Coutinho penning a new five-year contract ended in crushing disappointment. Having gone a year unbeaten at home, Liverpool have now been left red-faced at Anfield twice in the space of five days.

Klopp had rung the changes in a bid to trigger an improvement at both ends of the field following the damaging setback against Swansea last weekend.

There was the welcome sight of centre-back Joel Matip making his first start since December 11. How Liverpool have missed his presence and composure.

At the other end Daniel Sturridge was handed the opportunity to lead the charge with Gini Wijnaldum missing out as Adam Lallana reverted to the central midfield role when he's been so effective this season.

Having bemoaned the flat atmosphere against Swansea, Klopp could have no complaints about the noise levels as Anfield did its best to inspire those in red. However, the fireworks which greeted the team coach on its arrival weren't replicated on the field. The early blitz Kopites craved failed to materialise.

Liverpool looked nervy and unable to get out of first gear as they battled in vain to cancel out Nathan Redmond's goal from the first leg. Dejan Lovren and James Milner were both guilty of playing the hosts into trouble by conceding possession cheaply. Southampton's game plan was no different to the one at St Mary's as they sat deep and looked to frustrate before hitting the Reds on the counter.

Belatedly, Liverpool came to life as they finally started to ask some questions of a Saints rearguard missing the injured Virgil van Dijk. Lallana picked Ryan Bertrand's pocket and Coutinho fed Sturridge but his low strike was straight at Fraser Forster. It was another big night in the blossoming career of Trent Alexander-Arnold after Nathaniel Clyne was ruled out. The teenage right-back got forward well and whipped in a couple of quality deliveries but the Reds were unable to take advantage. Firmino tested Fraser as Coutinho's influence started to grow but momentum wasn't maintained. Liverpool lost their way with the midfield axis of Jordan Henderson and Emre Can wasteful and unable to provide any semblance of control. Southampton's threat grew and only the heroics of Loris Karius – coupled with some woeful finishing – kept the Reds in the tie before the break.

Redmond skipped past Matip and squared for Dusan Tadic. The Serbian looked destined to score but Karius spread himself and expertly kept it out.

Liverpool were ragged. Levels of angst in the stands rocketed and the Reds were exposed again as Redmond's pace continued to wreak havoc. This time his pull-back found Steven Davis, who lashed wastefully into the Kop.

James Ward-Prowse then drilled narrowly wide with the Reds fortunate to retreat to the dressing room unscathed. Whatever was said at half-time did the trick.

There was much greater urgency in the second half as Liverpool attacked the Kop with renewed vigour. They moved the ball quicker with the front four of Lallana, Coutinho, Sturridge and Firmino starting to prur. Suddenly, it was Saints clinging on. Forster made a hash of Can's sweetly struck 20-yarder but recovered brilliantly to claw it off the line as Sturridge looked to pounce. When Sturridge volleyed over from close range after Milner's cross sparked panic, Klopp turned to the fans behind him on the touchline and gestured wildly for them to pump up the volume. Lallana's relentless pressing and challenge on Bertrand sparked more fist pumping. Pressure was maintained but the goal Liverpool craved continued to elude them. It should have arrived when Henderson crossed from the left but Sturridge couldn't provide the finish. Coutinho was the next to be left holding his head in his hands

after failing to capitalise on Firmino's vision. The little Brazilian went much closer after drifting across the face of the penalty box, curling a right-footer just wide with a relieved Forster rooted to the spot. 'Attack, attack, attack,' bellowed the Kop as they demanded one final push. They had been calling for Divock Origi and they got their wish when the Belgian striker replaced Can. Martin Atkinson waved away penalty appeals when Firmino's overhead kick struck Long on the arm. The pleas were louder still when Jack Stephens slid in on Origi but the referee wasn't interested. Saints broke away and Long delivered the killer blow. Liverpool are wilting. A season which promised so much is in danger of yielding very little.

MATCH FACTS

Liverpool: Karius, Alexander-Arnold, Lovren, Matip, Milner, Henderson, Can (Origi 78), Lallana, Coutinho (Wijnaldum 87), Firmino, Sturridge
 Not used: Mignolet, Klavan, Moreno, Lucas, Woodburn.

Southampton: Forster, Cedric, Stephens, Yoshida, Bertrand, Romeu, Davis, Ward-Prowse (Hojbjerg 59), Tadic, Redmond (Sims 80), Rodriguez (Long 45).
 Not used: Lewis, Clasie, Martina, McQueen.

Referee: Martin Atkinson **Attendance:** 52,238 **Goals:** Long 90+1 **Bookings:** none
Man of the match: Adam Lallana. Gave everything and didn't deserve to be on the losing side.



For all the ups and downs of this season, and all the harsh words and frustration that have accompanied some of the football, what a magnificent pay-off, and what a moment for Claude Puel. His reception has been lukewarm from sections of the fans that have sometimes felt a little let down by what has been offered up by Saints this season. Whether that is fair or not is a matter for debate, but now Puel will, in just his first season with the club, go down in history with Saints' most legendary managers. [Lawrie McMenemy](#) will forever be remembered for what he did in 1976. [Gordon Strachan](#) came close in 2003, but, despite defeat, will always retain a special place in Saints hearts. And now, in 2017, we can add the name of Claude Puel. He will have the honour of leading Saints out at Wembley on February 26, for a first major cup final for the club in 14 years.

The rarity of the occasion for Saints only amplifies its magnitude. And they did it against the odds too. They beat Arsenal in the quarter-final and, remarkably, Liverpool over two legs in the semis. What's more they deserved it too. This was no lucky break. If anything, they might have won by a more comfortable margin than 2-0 on aggregate.

The second leg being away just made it an even more amazing achievement. Anfield was set for one of its classic midweek matches, an electric atmosphere under the floodlights. It had all the feeling of a massive game even a few hours before kick-off, and the red hot heat of the crowd noise made it intimidating. Well, it could have made it intimidating, but Saints' players didn't seem particularly intimidated, not even Jack Stephens, making a rare start in place of the club's talisman Virgil van Dijk. Even that couldn't derail Saints, who got what they deserved having not conceded a goal in the competition up until now. What was remarkable about the first half was just how eerily similar it was to the game at St Mary's. Any thoughts that Liverpool might go a little more direct early in order to fly out of the traps and put Saints under pressure from the off were dispelled as Jurgen Klopp's side opted for patience.

Just as at St Mary's they were happy to keep possession deep, to probe, to often go very narrow in their attack. That suited Saints just fine. They were disciplined, organised and motivated. They worked tirelessly to keep their shape and with Liverpool playing so centrally they had a containment job they could more than manage. And, just like the first leg, it was they who had the best chances on the counter. While the best Liverpool could manage in the first 45 was shots from around the edge of the box by Daniel Sturridge and Roberto Firmino that were both straight at [Fraser Forster](#), Saints were rampant. They could have, and should have, extended their advantage as they created two golden openings in the space of three minutes. Both came from quick counter attacking runs from Nathan Redmond down the left. For the first he cut back to [Dusan Tadic](#), whose finish was stopped at his feet by Loris Karius as he charged off his line.

The second, six minutes before the break, was a cut back to [Steven Davis](#), who held onto the ball despite a challenge but then fired over the bar from eight yards out. With the misses from the first leg it was five and counting from Saints and they were desperately hoping it wouldn't cost them. The second half finally brought about the Liverpool onslaught most had anticipated from the moment the draw was made. Even with Claude Puel bringing on [Shane Long](#) for [Jay Rodriguez](#) to offer his side more legs up top, it was much more about a rear-guard effort. Saints' goal lived a charmed life as the pressure slowly but surely was turned up notch by notch by notch. There was a real heart in mouth moment on 53 minutes as Emre Can fired in a shot from 20 yards out that Forster looked to have under control but spilled. It looped back towards the goal but the big keeper recovered magnificently to paw it away, with goalline technology showing only part rather than the whole of the ball had crossed the line.

Sturridge had two great chances, firing over an acrobatic effort from inside the six yard box when he should have scored before putting over again, this time when getting between Jack Stephens and [Ryan Bertrand](#) to meet James Milner's left

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wing cross. Philippe Coutinho was the next to get a sniff of goal but barely made any contact with Firmino's right wing centre before the Brazilian made a great connection with a long range shot that whistled just wide. The decisive minutes came in the dying seconds. Liverpool had a huge appeal for a penalty waved away by Martin Atkinson – having already been denied for a handball shout against Long - as Divock Origi went down under the challenge of Stephens. Even numerous replays proved inconclusive as to whether he got much of the ball or the man. Saints were weathering the Liverpool storm well still, but in injury time they wrapped it up. Another quick counter attack did the job, with Steven Davis finding Josh Sims, who pushed on and fed it to Long, who produced a brilliant finish into the far corner to send the Saints fans directly in front of him into ecstasy. What a remarkable season this is.



Southampton reached the EFL Cup final at Wembley with a fully deserved victory over two legs against Liverpool - crowned by Shane Long's late winner at Anfield. Claude Puel's side, defending a 1-0 lead from the first leg, should have put the tie out of Liverpool's reach inside the first 45 minutes but Dusan Tadic's close-range shot was blocked by keeper Loris Karius and captain Steve Davis blazed another great chance wildly over. Liverpool raised the tempo in front of the Kop in the second half but Daniel Sturridge wasted their two best chances, Fraser Forster acrobatically hooked an Emre Can shot off the line and the hosts also had a late penalty appeal turned down when substitute Divock Origi tumbled under Jack Stephens' challenge. But Southampton broke clear in the closing moments and Long finished convincingly from Josh Sims' pass to send them into the their first final in this competition since 1979, where they will meet either Manchester United or Hull City - a feat achieved without conceding a goal. Saints superior over two legs Southampton's date at Wembley on 26 February is a rich tribute to this brilliantly run club and their understated French manager Claude Puel. Saints were vastly superior over two legs against Liverpool and, despite the home side's complaints about that late penalty claim, no-one could seriously begrudge them their victory. And it was all done without their talisman and key defender Virgil van Dijk, out through injury. Southampton were dangerous on the break in the first half and then, when they needed to be, were superbly organised, disciplined and determined defensively before breaking for Republic of Ireland international Long to strike the killer blow. Southampton have once more demonstrated their ability, as a club, to take the blows of key departures and still achieve. They lost manager Ronald Koeman to Everton in the summer - as well as important components such as Victor Wanyama and Sadio Mane to Spurs and Liverpool respectively - and have carried on undisturbed with a Wembley appearance as their reward. Liverpool lose their way - one win in seven matches Liverpool's laboured performance was in stark contrast to the all-action attacking displays that briefly took them to the top of the Premier League earlier this season. Jurgen Klopp's side looked jaded and have lost their way, with only one win in seven games this year, a third-round FA Cup replay victory at League Two Plymouth Argyle. Liverpool look shorn of threat without £34m summer signing Mane, away at the Africa Cup of Nations with Senegal, and lacking an alternative plan when teams as disciplined as Swansea and Southampton have been in inflicting two successive home defeats. Sturridge felt the frustration of Liverpool's supporters for a poor performance and two missed chances, while substitute Origi looks short of confidence. Klopp's decision to play Can and Jordan Henderson together in midfield backfired badly and his decision to leave out Georginio Wijnaldum was questionable. Saints profit from fine margins Southampton's players enjoyed every second of their celebrations with their fans in the Anfield Road end as they looked forward to the chance to win their second major trophy, following an FA Cup triumph over Manchester United at Wembley in 1976. Saints had several anxious moments in the second half, especially when goalkeeper Forster dropped Can's shot behind him then recovered miraculously to claw it off the line as Sturridge closed in. They also survived two penalty appeals - for handball against Long and that fall from Origi - but this was a glory night for Southampton and one they fully deserved. Man of the match - Southampton's Oriel Romeu Analysis - 'Southampton totally outplayed Liverpool' BBC Radio 5 live pundit Mark Lawrenson: "Absolutely, totally and utterly deserved. They always, always carried that goal threat. They played with so much pace, so much directness. Over the two legs they have totally outplayed Liverpool. They thoroughly deserve the Wembley appearance." A first for Klopp - the stats you need... This is the first time Jurgen Klopp has lost a semi-final as a manager, progressing from the previous six. Southampton have reached the final without conceding a single goal. Liverpool have failed to score in all three games v Southampton this season in all competitions. Claude Puel is unbeaten in six games against Liverpool as a manager (W3 D3). This is just the second time Liverpool have been

eliminated in six League Cup semi-finals (the other v Chelsea in 2014-15). The last time Liverpool failed to score in either leg of a semi-final was in the 1970-71 Fairs Cup v Leeds. 'Seven good chances' - what the managers said Southampton manager Claude Puel: "It is fantastic for all the squad and a good reward for their hard work. It was difficult to find this opportunity to play a final at Wembley. In the two legs we deserved the win. We were fantastic in the first leg at home and tonight we had chances in the first half. "In the second half it was difficult but now we go to Wembley, not just to participate but to win this cup. I have been there once, just to watch France beat England." Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp: "They won both games, they deserved it. We did really well. We cannot create more chances than we did in the second half - we were dominant. It is difficult because you have to take risks but too many risks plays to their strengths. "We had seven good chances. You have to score, and we didn't do, so we lost. I'm fine with the performance but not the result." What's next? Liverpool host Championship side Wolves in the FA Cup fourth round on Saturday at 12:30 GMT, while Southampton travel to Arsenal in the same competition at 17:30.

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90'+5" Second Half ends, Liverpool 0, Southampton 1.
 90'+1" Goal! Liverpool 0, Southampton 1. Shane Long (Southampton right footed shot from the right side of the box to the bottom left corner. Assisted by Josh Sims following a fast break.
 90'+1" Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Jack Stephens.
 89' Foul by Adam Lallana (Liverpool).
 89' Oriol Romeu (Southampton wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 88' Attempt missed. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool right footed shot from the left side of the box is too high. Assisted by Trent Alexander-Arnold with a cross.
 87' Substitution, Liverpool. Georginio Wijnaldum replaces Philippe Coutinho.
 87' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Cédric Soares.
 84' Foul by Jordan Henderson (Liverpool).
 84' Pierre-Emile Højbjerg (Southampton wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 83' Attempt blocked. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked.
 83' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Oriol Romeu.
 81' Substitution, Southampton. Josh Sims replaces Nathan Redmond.
 78' Substitution, Liverpool. Divock Origi replaces Emre Can.
 78' Attempt missed. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is close, but misses to the right. Assisted by Adam Lallana.
 75' Attempt blocked. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Emre Can.
 71' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Jack Stephens.
 68' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Dusan Tadic.
 66' Corner, Southampton. Conceded by Dejan Lovren.
 66' Attempt blocked. Pierre-Emile Højbjerg (Southampton right footed shot from the right side of the box is blocked. Assisted by Nathan Redmond.
 64' Attempt missed. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box misses to the left. Assisted by Roberto Firmino with a cross.
 63' Attempt missed. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is too high. Assisted by Jordan Henderson with a cross.
 59' Attempt missed. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool left footed shot from very close range is too high.
 59' Substitution, Southampton. Pierre-Emile Højbjerg replaces James Ward-Prowse because of an injury.
 59' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Ryan Bertrand.
 58' Delay over. They are ready to continue.
 57' Delay in match James Ward-Prowse (Southampton because of an injury).
 57' Attempt missed. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool header from the centre of the box misses to the right. Assisted by Emre Can with a cross.
 54' Attempt saved. Emre Can (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.
 52' Attempt blocked. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Adam Lallana.
 50' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Maya Yoshida.
 49' Foul by Trent Alexander-Arnold (Liverpool).
 49' Shane Long (Southampton wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 46' Corner, Southampton. Conceded by Roberto Firmino.
 Second Half begins Liverpool 0, Southampton 0.
 45' Substitution, Southampton. Shane Long replaces Jay Rodriguez because of an injury.
 45'+2" First Half ends, Liverpool 0, Southampton 0.
 45' Attempt missed. James Ward-Prowse (Southampton right footed shot from outside the box is close, but misses to the left. Assisted by Dusan Tadic following a corner.
 44' Corner, Southampton. Conceded by Emre Can.
 39' Attempt missed. Steven Davis (Southampton left footed shot from the centre of the box is high and wide to the left.
 39' Attempt blocked. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked.
 36' Attempt saved. Dusan Tadic (Southampton left footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Nathan Redmond.
 35' Attempt blocked. Jay Rodriguez (Southampton right footed shot from the right side of the box is blocked. Assisted by Dusan Tadic.
 32' Foul by Trent Alexander-Arnold (Liverpool).
 32' Nathan Redmond (Southampton wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 30' Attempt blocked. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Daniel Sturridge.
 29' Attempt blocked. Steven Davis (Southampton right footed shot from outside the box is blocked.
 28' Roberto Firmino (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
 28' Foul by Jay Rodriguez (Southampton).
 22' Corner, Southampton. Conceded by Dejan Lovren.
 22' Joel Matip (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 22' Foul by Jay Rodriguez (Southampton).
 19' Foul by Emre Can (Liverpool).
 19' Nathan Redmond (Southampton wins a free kick on the left wing.
 19' Attempt saved. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Trent Alexander-Arnold.
 17' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Jack Stephens.
 16' Attempt saved. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.
 14' Foul by James Milner (Liverpool).
 14' Nathan Redmond (Southampton wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 10' Foul by Emre Can (Liverpool).
 10' Ryan Bertrand (Southampton wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 10' Foul by Emre Can (Liverpool).

10' Steven Davis (Southampton wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 4' Offside, Southampton. Cédric Soares tries a through ball, but Jay Rodriguez is caught offside.
 First Half begins.
 Lineups are announced and players are warming up. 0