

Date: 23 April 2017 Opposition: Crystal Palace Competition: League	Telegraph	Mirror	BBC		23 April 2017
	Guardian	Mail	Standard		
	Independent	Echo			

THETIMES

the guardian

Christian Benteke shocks Liverpool to lift Crystal Palace’s hopes

Grudgingly but sportingly the Kop gave Christian Benteke a well-earned round of applause when he exited Crystal Palace’s latest Anfield triumph. The striker had bruised, battered and beaten his former club on his return to Merseyside and may well have done the same to their top-four prospects. “I know people will think: ‘The Champions League slips through our fingers again,’” said Jürgen Klopp. “But only if we let it slip. Our job is to squeeze everything we can out of this season.” Klopp remained defiant in the face of Liverpool’s first defeat in eight games. Defiance is only a fleeting virtue in his Liverpool defence, however, and their top-four rivals will draw encouragement from how Sam Allardyce exposed weaknesses in recording his first league win at Anfield in 14 visits as manager. His Palace team are almost certainly secure in the Premier League after a third consecutive win at Liverpool and adding Klopp’s team to a recent list of scalps including Chelsea and Arsenal.

“You must be sick of us,” the Palace fans chanted after Benteke scored twice, forced Dejan Lovren off after an accidental collision, dominated in the air and capitalised on another Liverpool lapse at a set-piece to decide the outcome. Allardyce targeted Liverpool’s flaws both at corners and behind their full-backs, and took great satisfaction afterwards in detailing how he did so, but a ponderous attack and a lack of options amid a growing injury list will also trouble Klopp. Anfield was a nervous place and with good reason, it transpired.

“I told the boys after the game that it was frustrating, disappointing and we made mistakes,” the Liverpool manager said. “We have to feel it today. We don’t like it but defeats always make sense and there is a reason not only for what happened in the game but how you react. There is one wonderful month to go, four matches, and we will not give up. 100% not. We all need to get more used to it than we are, a game like this, when it’s not the biggest excitement. I could see it in a few faces, in the body language. I could hear it a little bit too. The boys have delivered a lot of excitement but now it’s about serious football, do what you have to do, and we will do it.”

Philippe Coutinho had ignited a slow-burning contest with a touch of brilliance, sweeping a free-kick from at least 25 yards over the Palace wall and just inside Wayne Hennessey’s right-hand post, though the goalkeeper’s positioning invited trouble in the presence of the gifted Brazilian. It was an exquisite strike regardless. “I couldn’t criticise my players for that goal,” said Allardyce. “They had to rely on Coutinho with a wonder goal to get in front.”

Liverpool had required something special to break a strong Palace side and lift their own uncertain start. It was, therefore, infuriating for Klopp when the home side conceded a cheap but well-worked equaliser just as they appeared to be taking the game under control.

Coutinho was central to Liverpool’s brightest moments. His perfect return ball to James Milner sent the left-back through on the Palace goal and it took an excellent challenge by Jason Puncheon to halt him. Emre Can then squandered a clear opportunity to double Liverpool’s lead when Milner released Georginio Wijnaldum to the byline and he cut the ball back for his fellow midfielder. Can arrived on cue but his mis-hit shot veered towards the corner flag.

Allardyce’s team had offered little in the final third aside from a mazy run and low shot from Benteke that sailed wide of Simon Mignolet’s left-hand post. Their performance and threat improved considerably once Wilfried Zaha and Andros Townsend reverted to their natural wings, having started on the right and left respectively, and in Benteke they had a forward with the awareness and motive to capitalise on the nerves that crept into the Liverpool display.

The Belgium international, booked for diving under slight contact from Lovren inside the area, brought Palace level when the home defence was caught out by a simple clearance down the right from Joel Ward. Yohan Cabaye reacted quicker than Lovren to the defender’s ball and steered an inviting first-time cross along the face of Mignolet’s goal. The unmarked Benteke found the roof of the net with a controlled finish.

Benteke grabbed his second when Liverpool’s weakness at defending set pieces, corrected to good effect at West Bromwich Albion a week ago, reared its ugly head once more. Townsend’s second-half corner evaded both Roberto Firmino and Puncheon at the near post, sailed behind Joël Matip and in front of the Palace centre-forward, who converted with a diving header.

Anxiety was palpable around Anfield before Benteke struck, with Palace displaying greater composure in possession and Liverpool toiling in attack. James Tomkins blocked a goal-bound shot from Coutinho after the Brazilian had stayed on his feet after a clumsy challenge from Martin Kelly inside the penalty area. Lucas Leiva sliced over and Klopp did all he could to bolster Liverpool’s forward options, but to no avail.

Date: 23 April 2017 Opposition: Crystal Palace Competition: League	Telegraph	Mirror	BBC		23 April 2017
	Guardian	Mail	Standard		
	Independent	Echo			

TheMail

Benteke back to put double dent in Klopp top-four bid

LIVERPOOL 1 Coutinho 24

CRYSTAL PALACE 2 Benteke 42, 74

HIS celebrations were muted. After the first goal he allowed his team-mates to engulf him. After the second he just pointed to heaven and let others get carried away.

The significance of Christian Benteke's goals, however, was enormous. He used to be viewed as a PS32.5million misfit in these parts but today locals will simply see him as the man who has put Liverpool's Champions League aspirations in jeopardy. Suddenly, they are in a spot where their chances of finishing in the top four could slither through their fingers as Crystal Palace recorded a third straight win at Anfield. Bar a moment of brilliance from Philippe Coutinho, Jurgen Klopp's Liverpool got what they deserved. Nothing.

Palace, on the other hand, reaped the rewards their endeavours merited and while Benteke was reluctant to show his feelings, he did not disguise his determination to prove a point as he bullied Liverpool into submission.

'I said to myself if I have a chance to score, I won't celebrate,' said Benteke, who was moved to Selhurst Park 13 months after he became the second biggest signing in Liverpool history. 'I was motivated.' It showed. Dejan Lovren and Joel Matip, Liverpool's central defenders, could not get to grips with his physicality or his presence.

Benteke unsettled them to the point that Klopp's back four malfunctioned at the most inopportune point, leaving the Liverpool manager bewildered by the goals his side shipped.

This always had the potential to be one of those awkward afternoons when fans become agitated if an early goal fails to arrive. With Palace set up in typical Sam Allardyce fashion -- organised, obdurate, uncompromising -- they were not going to bear gifts.

'As the underdog, you set out a game plan,' said the Palace boss. 'This league is so exciting because when you set out a game plan it can turn over the opposition when it's not expected. We did that. From start to finish, we were tactically exceptional.' Everything went to plan for the first 24 minutes for Allardyce. The crowd were quiet, Liverpool were limited and Palace showed ambition of their own, Benteke going close from 20 yards.

But then Luka Milivojevic clattered into Coutinho and the dynamic changed briefly. The Brazilian placed the ball 30 yards from goal before whipping his shot into the top corner.

The free-kick was so good that Graeme Souness, Liverpool's former captain and manager, described it as 'almost perfect'. It should have given Liverpool impetus but what followed was anything but perfect.

Palace responded with a deserved goal just before half-time. James Tomkins, who later left Anfield on crutches with an ankle problem, fed Joel Ward, who in turn found Yohan Cabaye.

Lovren tried to nip in front of Cabaye only to be hoodwinked as the France international delivered a cross for Benteke to apply an emphatic finish. 'One long ball, one cross and Benteke across the box,' Klopp lamented. 'There is nothing good to say.

'Benteke's an outstanding striker but if you leave him alone like we did I'm not sure he needed to show all those skills. Their confidence grew immediately.'

Palace began the second half with a team huddle and their efforts eventually left Liverpool in a muddle. The only opportunity the hosts fashioned came when Coutinho had a shot charged down by Tomkins.

Palace realised the game was there to be taken and they should have done so in the 70th minute when Cabaye shot over.

The winner arrived four minutes later but Liverpool's poor defending did not help, Roberto Firmino failing to clear Andros Townsend's corner and Benteke squeezing in front of Lovren to head home his fifth goal in five games.

It was Allardyce's first win here in the league and means Palace are now almost certainly safe from relegation. But Liverpool have never looked more vulnerable.

'This feels bad but already I want to strike back,' said Klopp. 'We have to try everything and we will. Our job is to squeeze everything out of this season.'

LIVERPOOL (4-3-3) Mignolet 6; Clyne 6 (Grujic 84min), Matip 5, Lovren 4 (Alexander-Arnold 79), Milner 6 (Moreno 82); Wijnaldum 6, Lucas 6, Can 5; Firmino 5, Origi 5, Coutinho 7. Subs not used: Karius, Gomez, Brewster, Woodburn.

CRYSTAL PALACE (4-5-1) Hennessey 7; Ward 7, Kelly 7, Tomkins 8, Schlupp 7; Zaha 6 (Van Aanholt 78), Cabaye 7.5 (Delaney 83), Milivojevic 6.5, Puncheon 7, Townsend 7.5; Benteke 8.5. Subs not used: Speroni, Flamini, Campbell, McArthur, Sako.

Booked: Benteke Man of the match: Christian Benteke. Referee: Andre Marriner 7.

The Daily Telegraph

Christian Benteke returns to haunt Anfield with brace

Christian Benteke did not have much fun playing for Liverpool, but it is carnival time every time he faces the Merseyside club.

The Crystal Palace striker took his career tally against his former club to seven as the latest Sam Allardyce survival act edged closer to another successful climax. The last time Benteke scored against the Anfield side he was defeating them in an FA Cup semi-final, precipitating the beginning of the end of Brendan Rodgers' reign.

His two goals here have the potential to scupper Jürgen Klopp's Champions League ambitions. Those previous five had involved embarrassing Martin Skrtel. This time, Liverpool's Dejan Lovren seamlessly adopted the Skrtel role.

There was no frenzied celebration from the Belgian as he accepted some respectful applause when substituted late on. He opted for a statuesque 'here I am' pose, first in front of the Kop when he equalised in the first half, and then after a winning close-range header in front of his own fans. His point was made as Palace won at Anfield for a third consecutive year. "I was motivated, I would say," Benteke said. "I respect Liverpool but what happened when I was here is behind me and I was really looking forward to helping my team-mates."

Rodgers was so accustomed to seeing Benteke bully his side that he paid £32.5 million for the Belgian in his last truly meaningful act as Liverpool manager. Klopp took over and promptly decided the striker was a poor fit for his vision of high-octane football, barely starting him in the Premier League.

Pair Benteke with Palace – who have mastered the art of achieving results against Liverpool at stages in the season that inflict the most psychological harm – and this result bordered on the inevitable.

Palace were the first club to beat Liverpool in the Klopp era last season. They also wrecked Steven Gerrard's farewell league appearance in this stadium, and they are still singing about that 3-3 draw at Selhurst Park in 2014 – the night Luis Suárez was in tears as the title race ended.

Liverpool's top-four hopes are not yet extinguished, but there is as much chance of Klopp's side finishing sixth as third if they cannot find some immediate cures to persisting ailments.

"On the corners, everyone knows Liverpool are pretty weak, they conceded six off corners which we told the lads about. It's now seven," said Allardyce of the winning goal.

"With our limited possession, we exposed Liverpool's weaknesses time and time again and I give the players huge amount of credit for the way they defended and how they exposed the weaknesses of Liverpool defensively which in the end they couldn't cope with. If I could have had a bet then I would have bet on him [Benteke] scoring.

"Liverpool at home play a superb attacking style in terms of football which means that both full-backs will go right up the pitch. It is very similar to Arsenal which means [Joel] Matip and [Dejan] Lovren are very exposed.

"Because they are very exposed in that position, if you get the right runners in behind then they are two big men that don't like turning and going back to goal. Liverpool certainly looked vulnerable at the only hints of pressure.

The equaliser was a consequence of the first time Palace had gone beyond Liverpool's backline, with a looped pass from Joel Ward to Yohan Cabaye enabling the Frenchman to pick out Benteke in the 43rd minute.

Benteke's second began with a mishit corner by Andros Townsend which somehow fell to the striker six yards out for an easy header 16 minutes from the end.

"Christian Benteke is an outstandingly good striker, especially if you leave him like we did," said Klopp. "But if you leave him alone like we did for the first goal I am not sure he needed all his skills for this goal. It makes no sense to leave him alone."

Liverpool had led thanks to Philippe Coutinho's 24th-minute free-kick, a rare moment of home excellence in another of those scruffy, difficult games that Klopp had predicted when his injury list expanded four weeks ago. This was an afternoon where the manager's clenched fists were welcoming feisty tackles and interceptions from his side rather than free-flowing moves.

Playing 'ugly football' is not so easy with Coutinho in this mood, but Liverpool managed it. Having been tripped by Cabaye, the Brazilian stepped up to dip his 25-yarder past Wayne Hennessey.

The Liverpool fear of being struck by a series of counter-attacks subsided. They then contrived to surrender a position of relative control.

Coutinho was trying his best to rouse the Kop. But as the nerves grew, Palace waited for the mistake and – as has so often been the case here – Liverpool obliged.

They may now have made one too many to return to Europe's elite. "I know a lot of people think the Champions League slips through our fingers again. Only if we let it slip," said Klopp.

"We have to squeeze everything we can from this season. I am used to nothing more in my life than getting up after a knock. I spoke to the boys after the game and said we have to feel it today and now we have to recover from this. There is one month to go, four games, and we will not give up."

23 April 2017

Telegraph

Mirror

BBC

Guardian

Mail

Standard

Independent

Echo

THE

INDEPENDENT

Benteke hurts top-four hopes on Anfield return

On an afternoon where Christian Benteke and Mamadou Sakho celebrated Crystal Palace's equaliser by seeking out each other before having what appeared to be a game of paper, scissors or stone-like secret handshake while trying not to smile, Liverpool's pursuit for a finishing position inside the Premier League's top four skidded against the rocks.

Including Benteke and the ineligible Sakho, there were six people involved at Palace with Liverpoollinks. When Benteke scored for a second time, Dr Zaf Iqbal, fitness coach Ryland Morgans and physiotherapist Chris Morgan, remained firmly to their seats while Benteke casually walked in the direction of the Palace supporters, not getting carried away.

It was Sammy Lee who could not hold back, winner of two European Cups with his home-town club, returning to Anfield as assistant of the visiting team. His face revealed the reality: this victory for Palace will probably keep them up; this defeat for Liverpool makes you doubt them all over again. Is this a team that really deserves to play in the Champions League next season?

Liverpool's victories at Stoke and West Brom had convinced some they were capable of overcoming the type of opponents they have struggled to beat for years; those that defend in numbers and use muscle and bone to stop them. At half-time the doubts about Liverpool's credentials had already returned, with Benteke's goal in front of the Kop his eighth against Liverpool since 2012.

Klopp decided to sell Benteke last summer because he demands his forwards act as the first line of defence. That was not Benteke's responsibility here, with Palace's tactical plan involving ten players not including Benteke standing behind the ball, affording Dejan Lovren and Joel Matip as much time in possession as they wanted.

Liverpool's play was not quick enough to unsettle Sam Allardyce's team but a lead was fashioned because of Philippe Coutinho's brilliance from set-pieces. His thirteenth Premier League goal from a free-kick was delivered from twenty-five yards out. It was one that lifted over the wall, dipping slightly before racing past Wayne Hennessey, who had no chance of saving it.

Palace would need to be more adventurous. The sight of Yohan Cabaye appearing on the right wing was a sign they were prepared to be, and from his perfect cross, Benteke thumped a shot high into Simon Mignolet's net.

The concern for Liverpool was, Palace's bench was stronger than theirs. If it was Klopp's substitutions who won the game at Stoke, here it would probably need to be the starting eleven. Rhian Brewster was included amongst Liverpool's replacements for the first time having trained with the first team squad all week at Melwood. Aged seventeen, Klopp described Brewster in a pre-match interview as a "natural striker," warning, though, he was unlikely to feature and in the end he didn't. Brewster was one of four teenagers sitting behind Liverpool's manager - the most experienced player being Alberto Moreno, the twenty-four year-old left back who has only started two league games this season.

Liverpool's form was reasonable and their position in the table good and so, it is easy to forget they have been missing their captain, their leading scorer and their leading maker of goals for weeks. Throw Daniel Sturridge into that group of Jordan Henderson, Sadio Mane and Adam Lallana and you also have the would-be leading goalscorer if he wasn't unavailable most of the time. Ultimately, when a squad is as thin as Liverpool's, you are hoping for luck with injuries otherwise it will catch up with you eventually.

Liverpool should have been awarded a penalty in the second half when Martin Kelly - deputising in the centre of defence for Sakho - kicked Coutinho from behind but because the Brazilian stayed on his feet -- even though it knocked him off balance -- he was punished for his determination not to go down.

Klopp needed to try something else but he did not have the options. Palace, in truth, did not have to do very much at all to win. Their clinching goal came when Liverpool did not deal with Andros Townsend's corner and Benteke nodded in. It prompted the Palace fans to sing, "You must be sick of us." This was their third victory at Anfield in as many seasons. Suddenly, Manchester United and Arsenal see a door opening. Suddenly, perhaps Hull City and Swansea see a door closing.

Liverpool (4-3-3): Mignolet; Clyne (Grujic 87), Lovren (Alexander-Arnold 78), Matip, Milner (Moreno 83); Wijnaldum, Lucas, Can; Firmino, Origi, Coutinho.

Substitutes not used: Karius, Gomez, Brewster, Woodburn.

Crystal Palace (4-2-3-1): Hennessey; Ward, Kelly, Tomkins, Schlupp; Cabaye (Delaney 83), Milivojevic; Zaha, Punccheon, Townsend; Benteke (Campbell 90).

Substitutes not used: Speroni, Van Aanholt, Flamini, McArthur, Sako.

Referee: Andre Marriner

Attendance: 53,086

DAILY

Mirror

KLOPP IS CLOCKED BY BIG BEN; And time is running out for Reds

LIVERPOOL 1

Coutinho 24

CRYSTAL PALACE 2

Benteke 42, 74

NEVER can Jurgen Klopp have felt more alone.

The sight of fans streaming out of Anfield even before 90 minutes were up underlined the inevitability of defeat and the inadequacy of his side's performance.

That the damaging setback was so heavily influenced by Anfield old boy Christian Benteke made his isolation complete.

It was against Palace 17 months ago that the German manager berated his own fans for giving up on the team during another 2-1 defeat. This time, though, he can have few complaints despite a similar exodus because it seemed it was his own side who gave up on a result.

On that day, in November 2015, Benteke was one of the Liverpool players who looked shell-shocked by the defeat against Palace.

Clearly he took much from that experience because he knew exactly how to exploit the nerves of the crowd and the inexperience of his former team under similar circumstances.

The big striker is all too familiar with their weakness on set-pieces and vulnerability to the counter-attack. He saw it often enough at close quarters in his 42 games in a red shirt. He also knows a thing or two about both forms of attack.

Had it not been so serious for their top four-hopes, this defeat would have been laughable for how closely Liverpool stuck to their stereotype.

Defenders out of position and turned? Check. Sleeping at corners? Check. You could add Emre Can failing to do his job once more at a set-piece too, but singling out the German midfielder would allow too many other culprits off the hook.

As Palace boss Sam Allardyce said afterwards, Liverpool are "pretty weak" on corners and can be "exposed on the counter," which means many aren't doing their job properly. And yet it had all started so well.

Philippe Coutinho, wearing boots with a hole cut out of the heel (below), won a 24th-minute free-kick with a smart turn and, from almost 30 yards, curled it quite superbly into the top corner to confirm he has stepped up from promising to outstanding.

It's a pity the rest of the Liverpool team don't always follow suit.

They managed the game well enough for long periods, restricting Palace to a few halfchances and even fewer set-pieces, and looked as though they were in control.

Until, that is, the inevitable mistake.

It came when a long ball caught Dejan Lovren flat-footed and out-run by Yohan Cabaye and Benteke was left alone to convert at the far post.

Liverpool responded with pressure from Coutinho, who should have had a penalty when he was clearly tripped by Martin Kelly but opted to stay on his feet.

Referees need to rethink their reaction to these fouls because they are encouraging diving.

But that can be no excuse for what was to follow.

From an Andros Townsend corner, James Milner missed an easy near-post ball, Lovren slept, and Can went AWOL when he should have been marking Benteke, who stooped to nod home his second.

The goal came after 74 minutes, giving Liverpool plenty of time to respond, but there seemed no spark in them at all... and the disappointed crowd knew it.

That must hurt, and Klopp's only hope is the pain produces a response in the remaining four games which Liverpool surely now need to win to make the Champions League.

Date: 23 April 2017
Opposition: Crystal Palace
Competition: League

Telegraph	Mirror	BBC
Guardian	Mail	Standard
Independent	Echo	

23 April 2017



The stuff of nightmares for Jurgen Klopp as Liverpool can't afford any more slip-ups

Christian Benteke had just delivered the killer blow when the away end broke into song. "You must be sick of us," they crowed. Right to the back teeth.

For the third successive season, Crystal Palace stormed Anfield.

Not content with wrecking Steven Gerrard's farewell and inflicting the first defeat of Jurgen Klopp's reign, they completed the hat-trick by putting a sizeable dent in the Reds' Champions League hopes. For Klopp, this was the stuff nightmares are made of. If the triumphs of recent weeks pointed to a more resilient, more streetwise Liverpool, they reverted to type on a demoralising afternoon.

The defensive frailties which have dogged the Reds throughout this rollercoaster campaign reared their ugly head once again. Old habits really do die hard.

Predictably, Benteke was the man who took full advantage as the former Liverpool striker returned to haunt Klopp. The big Belgian frontman, who was shown the door last summer after an underwhelming stint with the Reds, struck twice after Philippe Coutinho's stunning free-kick had broken the deadlock.

To rub salt into gaping wounds, there was the sight of on-loan Reds defender Mamadou Sakho joining in the celebrations with Benteke both during the game and after the final whistle. Sakho's Anfield career maybe effectively over after his fallout with Klopp but the fact remains that he's still a Liverpool employee.

It was unprofessional and disrespectful – the same failings which got him into hot water with the German coach last summer.

Sakho's decision making on the day was about as clever as Dejan Lovren's. The Croatian centre-back was a glaring weak link as Palace preyed on the hosts' weaknesses. Rash and poor positionally, Lovren was found wanting in the build up to both of Benteke's goals. At times this season some scintillating attacking displays from the Reds have managed to paper over the cracks at the back. Not this time.

Liverpool rarely spluttered into life going forward with Roberto Firmino worryingly off the pace. Divock Origi was a pale shadow of the frontman who was so bright and purposeful against West Brom. Coutinho's free-kick was majestic and he was always the biggest threat, but he still spent far too much of the afternoon on the periphery. Remarkably, the Reds didn't fashion a single shot on target from open play in the space of 90 minutes. It was a contest which laid bare the current limitations of Klopp's squad and will re-ignite the debate about the club's failure to strengthen during the January transfer window. With Daniel Sturridge having aggravated a hip problem in training, the Reds boss was down to the bare bones.

Of the six outfield players on the bench, there were four teenagers, along with 21-year-old Marko Grujic, who hadn't played first-team football since November, and the much maligned Alberto Moreno, who is surely on borrowed time at Anfield.

When Klopp introduced Trent Alexander-Arnold, Moreno and Grujic in search of a late equaliser, it smacked of desperation rather than any coherent plan to salvage a point. It wasn't a great surprise that Liverpool became even more disjointed.

The last time the Eagles won at Anfield in November 2015, Klopp was still turning the air blue about the outcome a month later.

"I can't forget this ****ing loss against Crystal Palace," Klopp said at Melwood when asked about the progress made in his first 10 matches at the helm.

The fear is that Liverpool will be left counting the cost of this latest setback at the hands of Palace come May 21. Just how damaging it turns out to be, only time will tell, but the Reds' fate is no longer in their own hands. Klopp's men remain third but they squandered a glorious chance to put daylight between themselves and the chasing pack. Manchester City are just two points behind and Manchester United are three adrift, but they both have two games in hand.

This was a result which will also give encouragement to Arsenal, who are nine points off Liverpool but have played three matches fewer.

Liverpool have the kinder run-in but after such a lifeless, error-strewn performance against Palace those trips to Watford and West Ham suddenly look that bit tougher. The imminent return of Adam Lallana will provide a timely boost.

These final four matches will have major implications for the club this summer. Klopp recently spoke about the Reds' greater pulling power and "very positive" transfer talks but landing his top targets will prove impossible if he doesn't have the Champions League carrot to dangle. Liverpool should have been buoyant after gutsy back-to-back wins over Stoke and West Brom but they were horribly flat from the off. Liverpool dominated both possession and territory but were lacking a cutting edge in the final third. Too often the ball went sideways rather than forwards with the Reds' build up play lacking the tempo required to really stretch Sam Allardyce's side. Palace were happy to sit back and soak up what little pressure there was before hitting the hosts on the counter through the pace of Andros Townsend and Wilfried Zaha. Finally, midway through the first half Coutinho brought the contest to life. Picking himself up after being brought down 25 yards out, the little Brazilian whipped an unstoppable free-kick over the wall and beyond the despairing dive of Wayne Hennessey for his 11 goal of the season. It should have been 2-0 when Gini Wijnaldum teed up Emre Can but the German midfielder made a mess of it. That miss proved costly as three minutes before the break Palace were level. Lovren allowed Yohan Cabaye to get away from him down the right and his mistake was punished as a pin-point cross put it on a plate for Benteke.

Liverpool were better in the early stages of the second half. Coutinho surged into the penalty box, opting to stay on his feet after being clipped by Martin Kelly, only for James Tomkins to make a goal-saving block. Firmino then drilled narrowly wide but as the Reds ran out of ideas, belief ebbed away and the anxiety levels in the stands grew. With 16 minutes to go Palace took the lead in shambolic fashion.

Liverpool failed to deal with Townsend's corner at the near post and Benteke was gifted a free header from close range. It was his seventh goal in eight appearances against the Reds. There was no late cavalry charge from the hosts. Both players and fans alike looked resigned to their fate.

Just when the Champions League looked within sight, Liverpool's campaign is back in the melting pot. There can be no more slip-ups.

MATCH FACTS

Liverpool: Mignolet, Clyne (Grujic 84), Matip, Lovren (Alexander-Arnold 79), Milner (Moreno 82), Lucas, Can, Wijnaldum, Coutinho, Firmino, Origi

Not used: Karius, Gomez, Brewster, Woodburn.

Crystal Palace: Hennessey, Ward, Tomkins, Kelly, Schlupp, Cabaye (Delaney 83), Milivojevic, Townsend, Punccheon, Zaha (Van Aanholt 78), Benteke (Campbell 88).

Not used: Speroni, Flamini, McArthur, Sako.

Referee: Andre Marriner Attendance: 53,086 Goals: Coutinho 24, Benteke 42, Benteke 74 Bookings: Benteke, Milivojevic, Grujic

Man of the match: Philippe Coutinho. Classy free-kick and showed flashes of brilliance.

EVENING STANDARD

Eagles soar towards safety as Christian Benteke blows open top four race

Crystal Palace all but secured their Premier League survival as Christian Benteke inspired a remarkable 2-1 comeback victory against Liverpool at Anfield.

Palace went behind to a stunning Philippe Coutinho free-kick, but Benteke struck either side of half-time against his former club as Sam Allardyce's Eagles claimed another big win after beating both Chelsea and Arsenal in recent weeks.

Anfield has been a happy hunting ground for Benteke, who has now scored seven times in eight matches against the Reds and has one more goal at the home of the Merseysiders as an opposition player (five) then he managed during the 12 months he played for them there last season. His performance overshadowed that of Philippe Coutinho, whose brilliant free-kick had given Liverpool the lead, and virtually ensured Palace's top-flight status for another season having reached 38 points in a remarkable turnaround under Sam Allardyce.

Conversely it has opened up Liverpool, still in third, to the unpalatable prospect in these parts of being caught by Manchester United in the race for a top-four spot.

Jose Mourinho's side won at Burnley earlier in the day to move to within three points of the Reds with two matches in hand - which is the same number as fourth-placed Manchester City have with only a two-point deficit.

It has even left the door ajar for seventh-placed Arsenal, nine points behind with three matches in hand, and all because Liverpool yet again failed to deal with a team who were intent to sit back and soak up possession.

Coutinho took a while to warm up but when he did it was worth waiting for. Felled by Luka Milivojevic he picked himself up to curl a inch-perfect free-kick over the wall and just inside Wayne Hennesey's right post.

It was the Brazil international's 10th Premier League goal of the season, the first time he has reached double figures since arriving in England and - since his Premier League debut in February 2013 - only Yaya Toure (14) has scored more goals from outside the penalty area than his 13. But, for all the plaudits heading Coutinho's way, the sub-plot involved Benteke, a man who now has six more goals for Palace this season than the 10 he managed in his solitary year at Anfield.

Having signalled an early warning by rolling one shot just wide of the post and then being booked for diving in the penalty area, his inevitable goal arrived two minutes before the break. Full-back Joel Ward's ball down Palace's right flank capitalised on the space left by James Milner and centre-back Dejan Lovren got caught the wrong side of Yohan Cabaye, allowing the Frenchman to cross first-time for Benteke to blast home from close range.

The striker's celebration with another Reds misfit Mamadou Sakho, ineligible against his parent club but sat among the substitutes, did little for any remaining goodwill Anfield may have had for either.

Coutinho appeared to take the equaliser as a personal affront and in the second half set about trying to restore Liverpool's lead with a darting run past several Palace players, only ending when James Tomkins threw himself in the way of a shot destined for the back of the net.

The rarest of things, a Coutinho header, was inadvertently deflected into the arms of Hennessey by Divock Origi while Roberto Firmino just failed to get a touch to divert Lucas Leiva's through-ball past the goalkeeper from their next attack.

Entering the final 20 minutes the game became scrappy, exactly the way Palace like it, and from one scramble in the penalty area Yohan Cabaye blazed over. Benteke spared his blushes, and embarrassed his former employers, by stooping to head in a corner - needlessly conceded when Lovren gave away possession on halfway - five yards out with 16 minutes to go.

Reds boss Jurgen Klopp had few game-changing options - he named 17-year-old Rhian Brewster, born in April 2000 on the bench because of injury to Daniel Sturridge - and Liverpool failed to threaten in what was left of the game.

Date: 23 April 2017 Opposition: Crystal Palace Competition: League	Telegraph	Mirror	BBC		23 April 2017
	Guardian	Mail	Standard		
	Independent	Echo			

BBC

Christian Benteke came back to haunt his former club as Crystal Palace beat Liverpool at Anfield to take a giant stride towards Premier League survival and dent their opponents' top-four aspirations. Benteke scored in either half as Sam Allardyce's Eagles mounted a brilliant fightback after Liverpool took the lead through Philippe Coutinho's fine free-kick. Liverpool sold Benteke to Palace last summer for £5m less than they paid for the Belgium striker a year earlier, but it was his burly presence in the final third that proved the difference in an entertaining contest. His first was a well-taken strike high into the net from Yohan Cabaye's low cross, his second a poacher's header from six yards after some lax Liverpool defending at a corner. Palace - who also earned a brilliant win at leaders Chelsea on 1 April - have won six of their last eight league games to move on to 38 points, seven clear of danger and are all but assured of another season of top-flight football. They have now triumphed on their last three league visits to Anfield - the first team to achieve that feat since Chelsea in October 2005. Jurgen Klopp's Reds stay in third place, but they have played two games more than both Manchester City in fourth place and fifth-placed Manchester United, who are two and three points back respectively. Labourer Liverpool lack cutting edge On a day when one of their former players put on a striking masterclass, Liverpool's shortcomings in front of goal will be acutely felt. Klopp's side racked up 72% possession, but just one shot on target in more than 90 minutes of play was scant return on that perceived dominance. Coutinho's brilliant 30-yard strike aside, Wayne Hennessey in the Palace goal had few scares, with the players in front of him performing superbly, particularly when they were called on to crowd out Coutinho when the Brazilian threatened to weave a path to goal in the second half. A woeful mis-hit by Emre Can after good approach work by James Milner and Roberto Firmino summed up Liverpool's performance in the final third, and their manager conceded they had been guilty of failing to make the most of their possession. "We dominated the game," Klopp said. "You have to be ready for the one moment. In the second half we had a really good period when everything was OK apart from the goal. "We did a lot of good things but we could not finalise it. That's the most important thing in football." Eagles soaring to safety To say Anfield has become a happy hunting ground for Palace in recent years would be something of an understatement. Palace were famously thumped 9-0 in the league there in 1989, but those days are now long gone, with the club from south-east London enjoying a sequence of three straight wins at the famous old ground. They [spoiled Steven Gerrard's Liverpool farewell](#) with their first win in 2015, while the following season they inflicted a first defeat for Klopp in his seventh game at the helm. This latest win was perhaps in part down to the confidence gleaned from those performances, as well as a superb run of form during April that also brought a one-sided win over Arsenal at Selhurst Park. Palace had just seven shots on goal and three on target - but that was all they needed. What chances they created were far more clear-cut than those of their opponents, and in Benteke they had the perfect target man to finish off the job. Man of the match - Christian Benteke (Crystal Palace) Allardyce wins at Anfield at 14th attempt - stats Liverpool lost at home in the Premier League after opening the scoring for the first time since May 2015, also against Crystal Palace (1-3). Sam Allardyce won his first Premier League match at Anfield as a manager, in what was his 14th attempt with the fifth different club. Allardyce has now guided the Eagles to seven league wins in 2017 - one more than they managed under predecessor Alan Pardew in the whole of 2016. Since Philippe Coutinho made his Premier League debut in February 2013, only Yaya Toure (14) has scored more goals from outside the box than the Brazilian (13). Coutinho is the fifth Brazilian player to score 10 or more goals in a single Premier League season after Gilberto Silva, Juninho, Robinho and team-mate Roberto Firmino. Christian Benteke has scored five goals in his previous three Premier League games at Anfield as an opposition player - at no away venue has he scored more in the competition (five). Benteke (11) is one of only four players to register 10 or more away goals in the Premier League this term (Alexis Sanchez 13, Sergio Aguero 12 and Zlatan Ibrahimovic 10). No Premier League side has conceded more direct free-kick goals this season than Crystal Palace (three - level with Everton). "We have to squeeze everything out of this season" Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp: "I have no idea how Crystal Palace are in the situation they are. We knew it was difficult. We were dominant, you cannot create 20 chances in a game like this, you have to work and that is what we did. "We scored a fantastic goal and more interesting situations and then out of nothing let them score. After you could see their confidence grew and in the second half we were dominant.

"They had counter-attack threat but again out of nothing we gave them an opportunity from a corner. The decisive one we missed the ball at the front post. "It is frustrating, disappointing of course. Everyone thinks the Champions League has slipped through our fingers but we have one more month to stay positive. We have to try everything to squeeze everything out of this season." We targeted Liverpool's corner vulnerability - Allardyce Crystal Palace manager Sam Allardyce: "Some goals you can't stop and that one we couldn't stop. But the recovery from that is good. Out of possession we frustrated Liverpool today so much that they had little opportunity to have a clean shot on goal. "Liverpool were only as good as we allowed them to be. They had a lot of possession as did Chelsea and Arsenal. We did more with our possession than Liverpool and that is why we won. "We finished our analysis with how many goals Liverpool have conceded from corners. We showed that it might not be the first ball in but the second or third if we make runs in the right areas. "It has been hard work but we are looking up. We have five games to go but Tottenham on Wednesday will come too early. We will have to change the side to get fresh legs into the side. It is a big result today, it makes life so much easier." What's next? Palace do not have long to prepare for their next match with Tottenham, who visit Selhurst Park on Wednesday (20:00 BST). For Liverpool, the wait is far longer as they travel to Watford on Monday, 1 May (20:00 BST).

Date: 23 April 2017 Opposition: Crystal Palace Competition: League	Telegraph	Mirror	BBC		23 April 2017
	Guardian	Mail	Standard		
	Independent	Echo			

BBC

Match ends, Liverpool 1, Crystal Palace 2.
90'+7' Second Half ends, Liverpool 1, Crystal Palace 2.
90'+5' Foul by Emre Can (Liverpool).
90'+5' Andros Townsend (Crystal Palace wins a free kick in the defensive half.
90'+4' Attempt missed. Marko Grujic (Liverpool header from the centre of the box misses to the right. Assisted by Roberto Firmino.
90'+3' Foul by Divock Origi (Liverpool).
90'+3' Fraizer Campbell (Crystal Palace wins a free kick in the defensive half.
90'+2' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Martin Kelly.
90'+1' Delay over. They are ready to continue.
89' Delay in match James Tomkins (Crystal Palace because of an injury.
89' Marko Grujic (Liverpool is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.
89' Foul by Marko Grujic (Liverpool).
89' James Tomkins (Crystal Palace wins a free kick in the defensive half.
88' Substitution, Crystal Palace. Fraizer Campbell replaces Christian Benteke.
87' Attempt missed. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is high and wide to the right. Assisted by Emre Can.
85' Attempt blocked. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked.
84' Substitution, Liverpool. Marko Grujic replaces Nathaniel Clyne.
84' Offside, Crystal Palace. Andros Townsend tries a through ball, but Christian Benteke is caught offside.
83' Substitution, Crystal Palace. Damien Delaney replaces Yohan Cabaye.
82' Substitution, Liverpool. Alberto Moreno replaces James Milner.
79' Substitution, Liverpool. Trent Alexander-Arnold replaces Dejan Lovren because of an injury.
78' Substitution, Crystal Palace. Patrick van Aanholt replaces Wilfried Zaha.
78' Delay over. They are ready to continue.
77' Delay in match Dejan Lovren (Liverpool because of an injury.
77' Delay in match (Crystal Palace).
74' Goal! Liverpool 1, Crystal Palace 2. Christian Benteke (Crystal Palace header from very close range to the high centre of the goal. Assisted by Jason Puncheon following a corner.
73' Corner, Crystal Palace. Conceded by James Milner.
71' Attempt missed. Yohan Cabaye (Crystal Palace right footed shot from the centre of the box is too high. Assisted by Christian Benteke following a set piece situation.
71' Attempt missed. Christian Benteke (Crystal Palace right footed shot from the right side of the box misses to the left. Assisted by James Tomkins with a headed pass following a set piece situation.
71' Attempt blocked. Jason Puncheon (Crystal Palace left footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Christian Benteke with a headed pass.
70' Foul by Nathaniel Clyne (Liverpool).
70' Wilfried Zaha (Crystal Palace wins a free kick in the attacking half.
65' Attempt missed. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool right footed shot from the right side of the box misses to the left. Assisted by Georginio Wijnaldum.
61' Emre Can (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
61' Foul by Luka Milivojevic (Crystal Palace).
60' Luka Milivojevic (Crystal Palace is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.
60' Emre Can (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
60' Foul by Luka Milivojevic (Crystal Palace).
57' Hand ball by Jeffrey Schlupp (Crystal Palace).
56' Nathaniel Clyne (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
56' Foul by Christian Benteke (Crystal Palace).
56' Attempt missed. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool header from the centre of the box misses to the right. Assisted by Nathaniel Clyne with a cross.
55' Lucas Leiva (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
55' Foul by Yohan Cabaye (Crystal Palace).
53' Attempt missed. Lucas Leiva (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is too high following a corner.
52' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Wilfried Zaha.
52' Attempt blocked. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked.
51' Attempt blocked. Divock Origi (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Roberto Firmino.
50' Attempt missed. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is too high. Assisted by Lucas Leiva.
47' Corner, Crystal Palace. Conceded by Dejan Lovren.
Second Half begins Liverpool 1, Crystal Palace 1.
45'+3' First Half ends, Liverpool 1, Crystal Palace 1.
45'+2' Foul by Roberto Firmino (Liverpool).
45'+2' Wilfried Zaha (Crystal Palace wins a free kick in the defensive half.
45'+1' Attempt saved. Christian Benteke (Crystal Palace right footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Jason Puncheon with a cross.
42' Goal! Liverpool 1, Crystal Palace 1. Christian Benteke (Crystal Palace left footed shot from the centre of the box to the top left corner. Assisted by Yohan Cabaye with a cross.
42' Delay over. They are ready to continue.
41' Delay in match Divock Origi (Liverpool because of an injury.
40' Christian Benteke (Crystal Palace is shown the yellow card.
39' Christian Benteke (Crystal Palace has gone down, but that's a dive.
39' Attempt missed. Emre Can (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box misses to the left. Assisted by Georginio Wijnaldum.
34' Corner, Crystal Palace. Conceded by Joel Matip.
33' Foul by Emre Can (Liverpool).
33' Luka Milivojevic (Crystal Palace wins a free kick in the defensive half.

31' Hand ball by Christian Benteke (Crystal Palace.
29' Foul by Lucas Leiva (Liverpool).
29' Wilfried Zaha (Crystal Palace wins a free kick on the right wing.
26' Foul by Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool).
26' Luka Milivojevic (Crystal Palace wins a free kick in the defensive half.
24' Goal! Liverpool 1, Crystal Palace 0. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool from a free kick with a right footed shot to the bottom left corner.
23' Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
23' Foul by Luka Milivojevic (Crystal Palace).
23' Attempt blocked. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Roberto Firmino.
21' Attempt missed. Christian Benteke (Crystal Palace right footed shot from outside the box is close, but misses to the right.
20' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Joel Ward.
20' Attempt blocked. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Georginio Wijnaldum.
17' Offside, Crystal Palace. Andros Townsend tries a through ball, but Wilfried Zaha is caught offside.
12' Roberto Firmino (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
12' Foul by Jason Puncheon (Crystal Palace).
4' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Jeffrey Schlupp.
3' Attempt blocked. Georginio Wijnaldum (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by James Milner with a cross.
2' Offside, Crystal Palace. Yohan Cabaye tries a through ball, but Christian Benteke is caught offside.
1' Foul by Jason Puncheon (Crystal Palace).
1' Lucas Leiva (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
First Half begins.
Lineups are announced and players are warming up.