

Date: 7 May 2017
 Opposition: Southampton
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Times	Telegraph	South Daily Echo
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7 May 2017

THE TIMES

Forster keeps frustrated Milner and Liverpool out

Liverpool 0 Southampton 0 Referee B Madley Attendance 53,159
 Somehow, almost in spite of themselves, Liverpool climbed to third in the Premier League yesterday, their quest for Champions League qualification still in their own hands. It was the type of result and indeed performance that can bring severe consequences at this stage of the season, but the sense of anguish that overcame Anfield at the final whistle was no doubt lifted by Manchester United's defeat in London later in the day.

Arsenal, as well as United, could yet catch Liverpool, but Jurgen Klopp's team have regained the initiative - or rather had it handed back to them. Liverpool have taken just two points from their past three home matches, against Bournemouth, Crystal Palace and now Southampton, yet the prize is still there to be claimed. Beat West Ham United and Middlesbrough and the Champions League anthem will be played at Anfield once more.

Klopp suggested afterwards that Liverpool had been frustrated by a dry pitch. If they were -- and, yes, it did look a little dry -- then he was also right to propose that nobody would want to hear such an excuse. The more significant reality is that inspiration has been running dry in their pursuit of Champions League qualification.

A team who made such a strong impression in the first half of the season with the fluency and vibrancy of their football, scoring goals in threes, fours, fives and even the odd six, have become disjointed, perhaps even inhibited, particularly when faced with opponents as compact and well organised as Southampton.

At Watford last Monday they won thanks to the goal of a lifetime from Emre Can. Yesterday there was no such act of salvation -- just a laboured performance that would nonetheless have earned a third consecutive 1-0 win had James Milner managed to convert a penalty midway through the second half.

As it transpired, Milner was frustrated by Fraser Forster, diving low to his right to make an excellent save in front of the Kop, and Southampton, largely untroubled to that point, held on impressively. This, too, irritated Klopp, who felt that Forster and his team-mates had tried every trick in the book to put Milner off the task in hand. The Liverpool manager mentioned "gamesmanship" in his post-match press conference, suggesting he would be accused of sour grapes if he went much further, but Milner accepted responsibility for the miss and the result.

Victory would have flattered Liverpool. The post-match statistics showed that they had mustered seven shots on target, to Southampton's zero, but only the penalty, plus a stoppage-time header from Marko Grujic, a late substitute, had the look of a great chance. Beyond that, it was hopeful stuff from the edge of the penalty area, much of it coming after the belated introductions of Adam Lallana and Daniel Sturridge.

Claude Puel might have struggled to deliver performances and results of the type that Southampton supporters came to expect under Mauricio Pochettino and Ronald Koeman, but he certainly seems to have Klopp's and Liverpool's numbers. This was the two teams' fourth meeting this season in all competitions.

Southampton beat them home and away in the EFL Cup semi-final and have now drawn twice with them in the Premier League. With Oriol Romeu outstanding in front of a defence that was well marshalled by Jack Stephens and Maya Yoshida, they were seldom troubled.

Liverpool dominated in terms of possession and territory, but Southampton established a degree of comfort and control from an early stage. The home team looked, as always, to Philippe Coutinho to create, but, unlike in the first half of the season, or even in the more recent victories over Everton and Arsenal at Anfield, there was so little movement around him. There have been occasions over recent weeks when a three-man midfield of Lucas Leiva, Emre Can and Georginio Wijnaldum has been a winning formula, but on this occasion it looked too cautious.

Roberto Firmino, shunted wide to accommodate Divock Origi, did his best to fashion something from nothing. After quarter of an hour the Brazilian dispossessed Romeu, but his shot was blocked by a covering defender. Then Firmino dropped deep to run at the defence, but, with no other option, his shot from 25 yards was a tame one, easy for Forster.

The expectation was of a surge in Liverpool pressure in the second half, but the game had seemed to be drifting towards a goalless conclusion when Lucas sent a hopeful cross into the Southampton penalty area and Stephens was deemed to have handled the ball under pressure from Can and Origi. There followed a lengthy hiatus in which Cedric Soares and James Ward-Prowse were booked for dissent and time-wasting respectively, but none seemed more intent on psyching out Milner than Forster, who appeared to scuff the penalty spot. Milner had scored seven penalties out of seven for Liverpool this season, but this time he was frustrated, Forster diving to his right to make an excellent save.

As Liverpool's desperation grew, Lucas and Origi made way for Lallana and Sturridge but fluency and a creative spark remained elusive. If anyone looked likely to conjure something, it was Sturridge, turning sharply away from Stephens before seeing a snap-shot saved by Forster, then flashing another effort wide.

At the other end, Southampton's threat, negligible to that point, increased with the introduction of Shane Long, who had scored a late winner at Anfield in the EFL Cup semi-final second leg in January. A sense of anxiety overcame the home crowd when Southampton embarked on a couple of counterattacks.

The one-way traffic soon resumed, but it remained slow, held up by a

Southampton roadblock. All that remains to be seen is whether they have enough left in the tank to reach their destination.

RATINGS

Liverpool (4-3-3): S Mignolet 5 -- N Clyne 5, J Matip 6, D Lovren 7, J Milner 5 -- G Wijnaldum 5 (sub: M Grujic 87min), Lucas Leiva 5 (sub: A Lallana 69, 5), Emre Can 5 -- R Firmino 6, D Origi 4 (sub: D Sturridge 69, 6), P Coutinho 6. Substitutes not used L Karius, T Alexander-Arnold, R Klavan, A Moreno. Booked Lovren.

Southampton (4-1-4-1): F Forster 8 -- C Soares 7, J Stephens 7, M Yoshida 8, R Bertrand 7 -- O Romeu 8 -- D Tadic 5, S Davis 6, J Ward-Prowse 5, S Boufal 4 (sub: N Redmond 61, 5) -- M Gabbiadini 5 (sub: S Long 69, 6).

Substitutes not used M Hassen, M Caceres, J Pied, P-E Hojbjerg, J Rodriguez. Booked Soares, Ward-Prowse, Bertrand.

the guardian

Jürgen Klopp bemoans state of pitch after Southampton deny Liverpool
 Jürgen Klopp blamed a dry pitch for [Liverpool's laboured performance](#) against Southampton while James Milner insisted their latest blank against Claude Puel's team was his responsibility.

Milner had a second-half penalty saved by the England international Fraser Forster as Liverpool failed to score against [Southampton](#) for the fourth time this season. Klopp's side have taken only two points from their last three games at Anfield, in contrast to three consecutive wins on the road, with their recent home form stalling the pursuit of Champions League qualification.

The [Liverpool](#) manager denied his team have a psychological issue on home soil but claimed their problems against Southampton stemmed from the state of the Anfield pitch, its dry condition undermining their passing game. Klopp, who claimed the wind was a factor in [Liverpool's EFL Cup defeat](#) by Southampton in January, said: "It is not what I want. To be successful you have to have a fortress at home. That is very important. We had that here for a long period. Now we have had a few results which are not that good.

"I know nobody wants to hear it but I am brave enough to say it. The pitch was really dry today. We gave it all the water we had but after 15 minutes it was really dry again with the wind. It was difficult. You could see it ... a lot passes you thought 'why are they playing this?' But it was difficult. In a possession game you need to have the best circumstances, if possible, in a home game especially, but today we couldn't have this. That is nobody's fault; it is only a description.

"It is not nice to drop points at home but now we play away and then we have another home game. We really still enjoy playing at home. It is only a mental issue if you think it is one. We don't see this. The boys like it here, they like playing in front of their crowd. That is all. Today the atmosphere was really good. People were really in the game. Everybody tried everything and it didn't work out finally." Milner had a 100% penalty record this season before Forster saved the converted left-back's eighth spot-kick of the campaign, the keeper making his first penalty save in the [Premier League](#) after interrupting his opponents' preparations.

"It's very frustrating," Milner said. "Obviously the penalty is my fault and the fact we didn't get three points is definitely my fault. I have to live with that. Fraser is a top keeper. You have to take those chances. I've been around long enough to make sure that doesn't worry me. I can't do any more than hold my hands up. Southampton are a tough team to break down.

"We didn't play as well as we would have liked. The penalty was a big chance and we didn't take it. We have to win our remaining two games [to be sure now of a top-four finish]."

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The Mail

MILNER HAS A SPOT OF BOTHER AS REDS BLOW IT AT ANFIELD AGAIN
LIVERPOOL 0 SOUTHAMPTON 0

WHEREVER Liverpool finish at the end of this strange Premier League season, Jurgen Klopp already knows he has a problem to fix. As peculiar as it sounds, this season they have made it far too comfortable for opponents at Anfield.

The days of early season -- when they scored 15 goals in defeating Leicester, Hull and Watford -- seem long ago. In recent times, Liverpool's performances at home have been characterised not by goals but by difficulty in finding a way past blanket defences fielded by unambitious visitors.

Yesterday was one for those who like statistics. The first penalty miss by James Milner for seven-and-a-half years. Liverpool's fourth game -- including a two-legged EFL Cup semi-final -- against Southampton this season without scoring a goal.

More pertinent, though, is that since the middle of January, Liverpool have taken just two points from home games against Swansea, Bournemouth, Crystal Palace and Southampton. If they do not qualify for the Champions League, that will be why. There is nothing sophisticated about what the more modest teams do when they come to Anfield. They just defend. When Liverpool play teams trying to win, they do very well. On those days there are spaces to exploit.

It is the teams with limited ambition who trouble them. Klopp's attacking football relies on his players finding space in the final third. When they cannot do so, Liverpool struggle to find another way and that leads to afternoons like this, games with hardly any chances, games that see Liverpool blunted in a way that did not seem possible in August and September. Next season, Klopp must find a cure, whether they are playing in the Champions League or not.

The Liverpool manager must get more pace into his team and he must buy a centre forward who gives his team a focal point.

Few sides in the country are more impotent than Liverpool at set-pieces and corners, for example, and Klopp must realise how important those situations can be in English football if you have the right players.

And so to yesterday's big talking point: Milner's missed penalty. As he left the field at the end, Milner raised his hand to the Kop by way of an apology.

The Liverpool left back knew the enormity of his error, if that is what it was. It was not a bad penalty and Milner last missed one playing for Aston Villa in 2009, so he knows what he is doing from 12 yards.

Equally, it was not a perfect kick -- maybe a foot inside where he would have wished -- and this is what allowed Southampton goalkeeper Fraser Forster to dive low to his right and turn the ball away with a firm hand. It was a very good save to cap what was a very good, efficient and organised display from the big goalkeeper. He looks to have everything he needs.

Forster may also feel he won an important psychological battle with Milner in the build-up to the kick, awarded for what seemed a pretty inadvertent handball by Jack Stephens.

As the arguments about Bobby Madley's decision subsided and Milner waited to take his kick, Forster twice approached him to stand almost forehead to forehead, disturbing the turf on the penalty spot on both occasions.

It was a strange, unnecessary thing to do. Had Madley seen it, Forster would probably have been booked. But Madley did not see it because he was too busy cautioning Portuguese defender Cedric for dissent and James Ward-Prowse for delaying the penalty by messing about on the goalline.

So Forster got away with it and made a good save. It was not a good look, however, and maybe it is something referees will be wise to watch for the next time he faces a penalty.

Some supporters are oblivious to gamesmanship in the modern game, but on the whole we shouldn't be. Some things cross the line and this certainly did.

It was not the reason Liverpool failed to win, however. They failed to win because they failed to create proper chances. The penalty itself came out of nothing in the 63rd minute and before that Liverpool had hardly threatened Forster's goal at all. They managed only three longrange shots in the first half -- two from Emre Can and one from Philippe Coutinho -- and only after Klopp changed formation and threw on Daniel Sturridge, Adam Lallana and 6ft 3in Marko Grujic late in the game did they look remotely dangerous.

Sturridge was particularly sharp and brought Liverpool an edge they had lacked. One turn away from defenders on the edge of the penalty area with 12 minutes left opened up space and his toe-poke may have found the net had it not been straight at the goalkeeper.

Grujic also came close, two minutes into added time. A cross from the left found the Serbian arriving from deep and his header was powerful enough to bring an athletic save from Forster under the bar.

At the end there were boos and whistles for the referee, but he did not deserve them. This was not Madley's fault, nor Milner's fault, nor even Forster's fault.

This was Liverpool's fault, a collective failure. The problem is Klopp's to solve this summer.

The Daily Telegraph

Klopp blames dry pitch for latest stumble

In the 15 years since the Premier League was handed a fourth Champions League place, only twice has a side finishing fifth reached 70 points.

That should have been a source of consolation to Jurgen Klopp as his team achieved this usually admirable landmark, returning to third place with a point against Southampton. Instead, in keeping with Liverpool's campaign since January, it was yet another cause for concern.

It looks inevitable that a third club will be added to this list of the unfortunate this season. Liverpool left Anfield knowing they have still not done enough to secure their return to the European elite, the vast improvement that has taken them to the brink still giving the appearance it is ending with a stumble. James Milner's first penalty miss for the club proved especially illtimed, ensuring Liverpool have taken just two points from their last nine at Anfield.

"To be successful you have to have a fortress," lamented Klopp, who found himself addressing an increasing number of reasons for the home discomfort.

These ranged from the delays preventing Milner taking the spotkick, the fourth official's erratic headset and - most ear-pricking of all - the state of the Anfield turf.

"Today the pitch was really dry," said Klopp. "We gave all the water we had and after 15 minutes it was really dry, a lot of passes you could say why are they playing this? In a home game, you have to have the best circumstances but we couldn't have this."

Clearly, it is going to be a busy summer for Liverpool's groundsman. The pitch is already scheduled to be relaid. The lack of penetration was hardly the fault of the soil, however. It is the seeds of doubt Liverpool need to worry about.

Liverpool are a point above Manchester City but they wanted and needed more, particularly as their rivals have games in hand.

Klopp may fear dark forces are moving against his side at the wrong moment. Milner had scored his seven previous penalties going into this game, but he failed here - Fraser Forster saving superbly, even if the Liverpool captain was entitled to ask why the penalty was struck after 65 minutes having been awarded in the 63rd. Jack Stephens was judged to have handled Lucas' hopeful ball to Emre Can and it seemed Liverpool had the gift they needed.

Forster kicked the penalty spot and whispered into Milner's ear while Cedric Soares and James Ward-Browse were booked for time-wasting and dissent.

"You saw what they did, why do you need my say on it?" asked Klopp. "On one side you say it is very smart because he missed and on the other not sportsmanship. Two yellow cards for them and with the time delay, I don't know how long Forster needed for his kicks, four minutes? Whatever I say we look like bad losers."

Having seen Manchester City score five against Crystal Palace, Liverpool's chances of finding the four needed to cancel out what may yet become a significant advantage in goal difference quickly looked forlorn. Even one proved too much.

Surprisingly, Klopp kept Adam Lallana on the bench despite his impressive return at Watford. Using Lucas in a protective role seemed odd. Daniel Sturridge must have been eager for the call as Divock Origi's movement continues to lack wit in such games.

Only when the England pair arrived from the bench did Liverpool start to threaten with consistency, Sturridge twice going close, adding much needed individual class.

Forster also produced more excellence to deny another substitute, Marko Grujic, in injury time. Southampton had what they had come for. "It is a good way against Liverpool, two draws, two wins, four clean sheets, it is a fantastic job against this team," said Claude Puel. "I hope we can continue this against other good teams like Arsenal and Manchester United."

So will Liverpool as they again find themselves hoping others fail to take advantage of their avoidable mishaps.

Foxed by Forster but did keeper deserve yellow card? Southampton's Fraser Forster used a variety of tactics to put off James Milner - including a spot of turf maintenance - which should have brought a yellow card, according to ex-referee Keith Hackett. Milner's penalty was saved - his first failure out of eight this season

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Liverpool fail to beat Southampton – again

By the end, Anfield was shrouded in the muffled anxiety of a club accepting that the struggle for the Champions League spot will go to the wire, when that had seemed the minimum expectation at the turn of the year.

Liverpool contributed substantially to the on-going struggle by failing to convert a penalty beyond the hour, though Fraser Forster's save to keep it out -- supplemented by a superb gymnastic stop from Marko Grujic at the death -- essentially made him the difference between the sides.

In the final reckoning though, Jurgen Klopp's players lacked the spark to break through the unambitious drudgery of a Southampton side defined by their Premier League goals tally. (Only five of the division's clubs have scored fewer than them.)

Liverpool were awarded their 'advanced level quality standard' by the Premier League at half time but there was, frankly, an insufficient quantity of that in their football. Shooting at range was about as good as they got.

Klopp's players hadn't scored in 270 minutes of football against Southampton this season in the league and two-leg League Cup semi-final and the Claude Puel adopted the same ultra-defensive set-up which has made his team a far more functional outfit under his management.

Liverpool needed a moment of ingenuity -- just a fragment of that Emre Can Vicarage Road quality -- to unpick the lock. From the start, they looked unlikely to find it.

A first half in which neither goalkeeper was drawn into the serious effort brought an intermittent shots on Forster's goal - two of them from Roberto Firmino, who made life awkward for the defensive shield Oriol Romeu.

But there was none of the electricity and ingenuity to surprise the men Puel banked behind the goal: too much sideways movement and very little of the lateral variety, where the home side were concerned.

Jurgen Klopp has introduced a durability to the side which makes them far more utilitarian than the fast flowing Liverpool who flourished in the season's early months but there are times when they seem side lack enough belief in their rear-guard to burst forward in numbers. They miss the presence of injured Sadio Mane desperately.

Southampton were physical, Romeu taking Firmino out in the first half's closing moments and Manolo Gabbiadini sending Joel Matip tumbling on the Liverpool by-line, and that turned the game bad tempered at times. Klopp sent a water bottle flying after Emre Can and Lucas Leiva had been penalised for dispossessing Dusan Tadic together.

The gift-wrapped opportunity arrived just beyond the hour when a smartly arced ball into the area from Lucas was elbowed away by Jack Stephens and a penalty award -- justifiably, despite the Southampton protestations which saw Cedric booked for dissent and James Ward-Prowse for time-wasting. But James Milner's spot kick brought a fine save from Forster, leaping low to his right.

Klopp immediately made a double substitution, bringing Adam Lallana and Daniel Sturridge into the equation to generate a more creative and attacking set-up and you wondered where they had been all that time.

The contribution of Lallana suggested that Klopp might have shown more ambition by fielding him in the first place. The flickering threat caused by Sturridge in yet another of the cameos which seem the limit of his capacity demonstrated what Liverpool have missed during his seemingly endless struggle for fitness.

The pair combined on 76 minutes to create an opening for Philippe Coutinho. But his effort - yet another from the fringes of the penalty area - was at comfortable catching height for Forster.

Sturridge span away from Stephens into the area with ten minutes remaining yet could not find power on his shot. Within two minutes the England international was unravelling a powerful shot into the side netting.

There was hope until the very end, when the third of the substitutes - Grujic -- brought the second top save from Forster but Liverpool are left to wonder and worry whether a place at Europe's high table will really be theirs.



FORSTER OF NATURE

Big Fraser's penalty save lit up a sloppy match as Klopp blames a dry pitch and the wind for Liverpool's failure to fire

JURGEN KLOPP turned to a new page in the excuses-for managers textbook to explain another two dropped points in the race for the Champions League.

After Liverpool struggled to create a meaningful chance against Southampton -- who have now shut them out four times this season - Klopp claimed his players struggled to click into gear because the Anfield pitch was too dry.

"I know people don't want to hear this but the pitch was really dry," he said. "We gave it all the water we had but, because of the wind, it was really dry.

"It was nobody's fault, but it made it difficult to play."

As excuses go, it was a lulu -- and will surely leave the German, an animated figure on the touchline, open to criticism.

The Reds, gritty in a 1-0 win at Watford six days earlier, looked curiously lifeless.

This was a game they had to win to keep Champions League qualification in their own hands yet their performance almost had an end-of-season feel to it.

Their fortunes were perhaps summed up by the fact it took Fraser Forster's first-ever Premier League penalty save to deny them -- from James Milner's first penalty miss since November 2009.

Maybe the fates had decided it simply wasn't a good enough display from the Reds to deserve victory.

Contender duller game of Apart from the saved nothing really happened tedious contest. It perhaps inevitable that would fail to convert worst games of season d s

Not that Klopp's team were helped by the antics of Forster and his team-mates after the spot kick was awarded on 65 minutes when Lucas, perhaps in desperation, chipped a ball forward, just as he did at Watford on Monday night for Emre Can's spectacular winner.

Jack Stephens instinctively thrust out an arm as the ball dropped beyond him and a penalty was rightly given.

Forster tried to swing the bal-g Forst sw Reds are given ance in his favour when he roughed up the spot as he towered above Milner, whispering in his ear (below).

The pressure was on Milner but, even though he struck the ball firmly enough, p ev stru fir side were & pedestrian Forster produced a fine save which Klopp (below) felt was unfairly gained.

"I really don't like to make a story of it but you saw what they did," he said.

"On the one hand they will say it was very smart because he missed, but on the other hand you say it's not sportsmanship." Cedric Soares and James Ward-Prowse were both booked and Klopp added: "The two yellow cards for them added to the delay, "And I don't know how long Forster needed for his goalkicks, but whatever I say we will look like bad losers."

Southampton's time-wasting was an issue the referee should have dealt with better, but most wasteful of all was Liverpool's approach, which simply wasn't engaged enough.

They were playing against a Saints side desperately low on form and confidence and yet it took them 13 minutes to even have a touch in the opposition penalty area, never mind fashion a chance.

In fact, it took them 34 minutes to create anything of note, Roberto Firmino finally escaping Saints shackles to spin and hit a shot from a promising position.

Alas, just like every other Liverpool shot on a depressing afternoon, it was straight at Forster.

Only when Klopp -- far too late -- threw on subs Adam Lallana and Daniel Sturridge did the game come alive, and twice Sturridge went agonisingly close.

Had he been on little longer he could even have won it for Liverpool.

The fact is, though, Liverpool have taken two points from their last three home games against Bournemouth, Palace and Saints. No matter how dry the pitch is, that is not Champions League standard, and they can have no complaint if they finish outside the top four.

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Liverpool suffer day of collective failure and must do much better as they limp towards Champions League

A crestfallen James Milner dropped to his haunches at the final whistle. Typically, Liverpool's stand-in captain fronted up to shoulder the blame at the end of a deflating afternoon at Anfield. "It was my fault," said Milner, whose penalty midway through the second half had been expertly saved by Fraser Forster. It really wasn't. To make the Milner the fall guy and focus on his inability to find the net from 12 yards in front of the Kop would be to spectacularly miss the point. In truth there should have plenty of others in the home dressing room apologising for their contribution to such a lifeless performance. For this was a day of collective failure. Within a few hours, the heartache was eased somewhat by Arsenal's triumph over Manchester United at the Emirates.

Liverpool's Champions League mission remains in their own hands. Beat West Ham and Middlesbrough and they will be back among Europe's elite but to achieve that they'll need to perform much better than this. Forget the spurned spot-kick, Liverpool simply didn't do enough to deserve victory. It wasn't pretty from Southampton boss Claude Puel, whose side didn't manage a single shot on target in the space of 90 minutes, but it was certainly effective. The Frenchman parked the bus and the Reds lacked the guile, the spark and the invention required to find a way past it. "Four games and you still don't score," crowed the away end after Liverpool's goal drought against Saints this season was extended to six hours of football. This wasn't a hard luck story and moans about the state of the pitch cut no ice. Klopp's side were toothless from start to finish. Predictably, they dominated both possession and territory but rarely looked like making it count.

There was no fluency to their play and for long periods there was little urgency either as the ball repeatedly went sideways. In truth it was the continuation of a theme with Liverpool's attacking threat having dwindled.

Those heady days of autumn when they played with such a swagger and swatted opponents aside with glorious ease are an increasingly distant memory. They are no longer the Premier League's great entertainers. Just look at the goals the Reds have fashioned over the past month. It took a moment of genius from Emre Can to win a scrappy game at Watford and prior to that Liverpool's only reward in the defeat to Crystal Palace was Philippe Coutinho's stunning free-kick.

At West Brom the contest's solitary strike came from another set-piece as Roberto Firmino provided the finish after Lucas Leiva had flicked on Milner's delivery. It's not a case of missing chances, they simply aren't creating enough. They haven't really clicked going forward since the Merseyside derby at the start of April and even then it only happened in patches. It's all been far too disjointed.

Of course the absence of key personnel hasn't helped, not least Sadio Mane's season-ending knee injury and the continued absence of captain Jordan Henderson. But a change in Klopp's approach has also served to dent the Reds' potency. This is now a Liverpool side which takes fewer risks. The manager's focus on solving the Reds' defensive frailties has meant that something further forward has been lost. There's no doubt that Klopp was far too cautious against Southampton. Why Adam Lallana and Daniel Sturridge remained on the bench until the final quarter of the contest will remain a mystery.

The changes should have come at half-time. Liverpool were crying out for something new. The difference Lallana and Sturridge made when they were belatedly introduced exposed the folly of holding them back until that point. The first half was a non-event as Liverpool huffed and puffed but never seriously threatened to breach the defensive wall in front of them.

The lack of ambition shown by Saints was staggering considering their mid-table status. They got 10 men behind the ball and rarely ventured past the halfway line as they sought to merely frustrate the hosts.

It was a strange decision not to start Lallana following his lively comeback at Watford. The midfield three of Lucas, Can and Gini Wijnaldum lacked both creativity and dynamism. There was precious little space for the Reds' frontline to operate in but Divock Origi's infuriating inconsistency continues. Coutinho was passed fit after a dead leg but remained on the periphery throughout, while Firmino was also way below his usual levels.

Klopp couldn't blame any restlessness or anxiety in the crowd for events on the field as Liverpool made it just two points out of the last nine on offer on home turf. Anfield responded to his pre-match rallying call by sticking with the players throughout but fans were left short-changed by what they received in return.

Forster wasn't seriously tested during the opening 45 minutes. Coutinho's curler sailed straight into his welcoming arms, Firmino's low drive was comfortably kept out and Can's effort was easy for the keeper.

Liverpool's cause wasn't helped by a string of bewildering decisions from Bobby Madley. Klopp vented his spleen at the official, who fell for Dusan Tadic's histrionics and then allowed Sofiane Boufal to get away with hauling back Nathaniel Clyne. But Liverpool had much bigger problems than Madley.

The second half brought more of the same. It was all too narrow and when there was some width both Milner and Clyne were guilty of wasting decent openings. With 24 minutes remaining the Reds got something out of nothing when the ball bounced off Origi's chest on to the arm of Jack Stephens.

Milner, who had netted seven out of seven penalties this season, stepped up and

hit it hard and low but Forster guessed right and pushed it to safety. Finally, the changes arrived with Lallana and Sturridge on for Lucas and Origi. Their impact was instant – Lallana picking out Sturridge, who burst away from Stephens but toe-poked straight at Forster. Young Marko Grujic, who replaced Wijnaldum, nearly won it in stoppage time but saw his header tipped over. The Champions League is in sight. But Liverpool are limping towards the finish line.

MATCH FACTS

Liverpool: Mignolet, Clyne, Lovren, Matip, Milner, Can, Lucas (Lallana 69), Wijnaldum (Grujic 87), Coutinho, Firmino, Origi (Sturridge 69).
 Not used: Karius, Moreno, Alexander-Arnold, Klavan.
 Southampton: Forster, Cedric, Yoshida, Stephens, Bertrand, Davis, Romeu, Ward-Prowse, Tadic, Boufal (Redmond 61), Gabbadini (Long 69).
 Not used: Hassen, Rodriguez, Caceres, Hojbjerg, Pied.
 Referee: Bobby Madley Attendance: 53,159 Goals: none
 Bookings: Lovren, Cedric, Ward-Prowse, Bertrand.
 Man of the match: Dejan Lovren. Solid against his old club. Didn't have much competition for the accolade.



Fraser Forster saves a James Milner penalty as Southampton draw 0-0 with Liverpool at Anfield

Saints produced a battling display to hold Liverpool to a 0-0 draw at Anfield and ease the pressure on Claude Puel.

Liverpool surrendered their advantage in the race for Champions League football once again after failing to score against Saints for the fourth time this season. James Milner's first penalty failure in more than seven years proved decisive as the Saints proved adept at denying their opponents - as they had done in the reverse league encounter and the two-legged EFL Cup semi-final in January. Liverpool's goal drought against the south-coast club now stands at 428 minutes since Daniel Sturridge scored in the 22nd minute of a 3-2 defeat at St Mary's in March last year.

A point may have lifted them back into third, above Manchester City, but it left the door open for fifth-placed Manchester United and Arsenal, who both have matches in hand.

Only two weeks ago Jurgen Klopp's side were in a similar position against Crystal Palace, knowing a win would strengthen their grip on a top-four spot with games running out, but contrived to lose.

They regained the initiative with a hard-fought 1-0 victory at Watford on Monday, after their chasing rivals dropped points, thanks to a goal-of-the-season contender from Emre Can, but there was to be no magical moment this time around.

Southampton, comfortable in mid-table, came with little ambition other than not to lose but Liverpool were the ones found wanting with the onus on them to break the opposition down.

They had 65 per cent possession - Saints failed to have a shot on target in 90 minutes - but the only time they looked like threatening in the first half was when Oriol Romeu was robbed by Roberto Firmino but the Brazilian's shot was blocked by Ryan Bertrand.

The five-across-midfield sitting-deep tactic has become a familiar sight at Anfield this season but it is employed because it is effective as Liverpool, without the pace of the injured Sadio Mane, struggle to open up teams even with Philippe Coutinho, recovered from the dead leg sustained at Watford on Monday, in their side.

Such was the success of the plan 66 minutes passed before Liverpool genuinely threatened - and then it was courtesy of referee Bobby Madley who adjudged centre-back Jack Stephens had handled in a tussle with Divock Origi.

After some delaying tactics by Fraser Forster and James Ward-Prowse, which earned the midfielder a booking, the usually-reliable Milner was thwarted by the goalkeeper's low dive to his right - his first miss in eight attempts this season and first since 2009 for Aston Villa against Bolton.

Two minutes later Adam Lallana and Daniel Sturridge, who have both had recent injury issues, were sent on in an attempt to rectify the situation and made an immediate difference.

Sturridge poked a shot straight at Forster after neatly side-stepping Stephens from Lallana's pass, with the England midfielder's vision providing a greater threat to Southampton's massed ranks.

But as they pushed for a winner the hosts left themselves open at the back and goalkeeper Simon Mignolet was lucky to escape punishment after appearing to handle just outside his area under pressure from Dusan Tadic.

However, Forster came to Southampton's rescue in added time when he tipped over substitute Marko Grujic's close-range header to leave the Saints fans singing "Four games and you still don't score" at the end.

Date: 7 May 2017
 Opposition: Southampton
 Competition: League

Times	Telegraph	South Daily Echo
Guardian	Mirror	Echo
Independent	Mail	BBC

7 May 2017



James Milner missed a second-half penalty as Liverpool's hopes of securing a Premier League top-four spot suffered a blip in a goalless draw against Southampton.

It was a terrible spectacle for the supporters inside Anfield. Liverpool rarely tested Saints keeper Fraser Forster, bar the penalty and Marko Grujic's header late in the game. The visitors, meanwhile, failed to muster even one effort on target.

The Reds' best chance to score came in the 66th minute when they won a penalty after Southampton's Jack Stephens was judged to have handled Lucas' delivery. Milner, who had not missed from the spot in the league since November 2009, saw his effort saved by Forster who dived low to his right. Seconds earlier, the England keeper approached the midfielder as he attempted to place the ball on the spot - and the tactic seemed to work.

The draw sees the Reds move up to third, above Manchester City, on 70 points. However, Pep Guardiola's side have a game in hand.

Manchester United are five points behind after [losing to Arsenal](#), who are two points further back.

It was dire. Truly dire. Was the first half of this match the worst seen in the Premier League this season?

The home sections at Anfield must have thought they were in for a treat - the sun was shining and they knew their team had to take the game to Southampton with a Champions League spot at stake.

But instead of a siege on Forster's goal, what they witnessed during that opening period were their players joining the Saints on the beach.

The first 45 minutes were slow and ponderous, and the only exertions by the Southampton keeper were three very comfortable saves.

The second half followed a similar pattern up until the penalty, which was a correct decision by referee Bobby Madley with the Stephens' arm moving up to push the ball away.

However, Milner - who last missed a Premier League penalty playing for Aston Villa against Bolton - saw his effort saved by Forster. Was he put off his stride by the keeper confronting him moments earlier?

Forster kept his concentration right up until the final few minutes of the game when he reacted brilliantly to tip over substitute Grujic's header.

The Reds have now played Southampton four times this season and failed to score against them.

Southampton boss Claude Puel appeared somewhat [surprised this week](#) when he was asked about [reports regarding his future](#).

It had been suggested that some players had become disillusioned with his style of management.

Their Premier League status was only made secure with Hull's defeat on Saturday, and they came into the match on the back of two defeats and a draw.

At Anfield, the team must have bored their travelling fans into submission.

The graphic above shows that they mostly sat in their own half for the opening 45 minutes, and for the first time since they returned to the top flight in 2012 they failed to have a single effort in the first half of a match. An angled strike by Nathan Redmond in the second half was the closest they came to scoring - although it was a few yards wide.

Having been spoilt for entertainment when their team was managed by Ronald Koeman and Mauricio Pochettino, some Southampton fans must be wondering what type of football awaits them next season if Puel stays.

Man of the match - Fraser Forster (Southampton)

'Southampton did not create anything'

Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp: "I thought our performance was good enough to win. Southampton wanted to come here and somehow get a point, or more - I'm fine with defending.

"They did not create anything and we had a hard job to do. To play against 10 deep defending Southampton players is very difficult. We could have scored, that would have opened them up a bit. It is a point more, but it doesn't feel like that.

"It is not finished yet. We all have to play our games. We go to West Ham and try to win, and that's all we can do. We try everything and we do not stop."

Saints manager Claude Puel: "I think it was a fantastic job for us. We defended very well and with quality and good organisation.

"Perhaps we could have done better with the counter-attack, but we showed good energy, spirit and organisation.

"It was difficult for them to come into our box and for me it was a harsh penalty and a good save. It was a deserved point."

Forster: 'Liverpool's nemesis' - the stats

Liverpool have drawn 0-0 home and away against the same opponent in a Premier League season for the first time since 2008-09 against Stoke.

The Reds had 32 shots in the league matches without scoring against the Saints this season.

Jurgen Klopp has never beaten Southampton in the Premier League (D3 L1) - indeed, he has now faced them more than any other opponent without winning. Forster saved his first Premier League penalty - Milner's effort was the ninth he'd faced.

Forster was the first opposition goalkeeper to save a league penalty at Anfield since Rob Green stopped Steven Gerrard's effort for QPR in May 2015.

Indeed, only Vito Mannone (13 for Sunderland in January) has made more saves against Liverpool in a Premier League game this season than Forster (eight). Only Hull (12) have conceded more Premier League penalties this season than Southampton (nine).

The Saints failed to have a single shot on target in either Premier League game against Liverpool this season.

What's next?

The Reds are at West Ham next Sunday (14:15 BST) and the Saints are at St Mary's on Wednesday to face Arsenal (19:45 BST).

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7 May 2017



Match ends, Liverpool 0, Southampton 0.
 90'+5' Second Half ends, Liverpool 0, Southampton 0.
 90'+2' Ryan Bertrand (Southampton is shown the yellow card.
 90'+2' Attempt blocked. James Milner (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked.
 90'+2' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Fraser Forster.
 90'+2' Attempt saved. Marko Grujic (Liverpool header from the centre of the box is saved in the top centre of the goal. Assisted by James Milner with a cross.
 90'+1' Attempt blocked. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Daniel Sturridge.
 89' Dejan Lovren (Liverpool is shown the yellow card for hand ball.
 89' Hand ball by Dejan Lovren (Liverpool).
 88' Attempt missed. Emre Can (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box misses to the left. Assisted by Daniel Sturridge.
 87' Marko Grujic (Liverpool wins a free kick on the right wing.
 87' Foul by Ryan Bertrand (Southampton).
 87' Substitution, Liverpool. Marko Grujic replaces Georginio Wijnaldum.
 86' Attempt blocked. Ryan Bertrand (Southampton left footed shot from the left side of the box is blocked. Assisted by Cédric Soares with a cross.
 85' Attempt saved. Adam Lallana (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom left corner. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.
 82' Corner, Southampton. Conceded by James Milner.
 81' Attempt missed. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is close, but misses to the right. Assisted by Nathaniel Clyne.
 80' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Jack Stephens.
 78' Attempt saved. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Adam Lallana.
 76' Attempt saved. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom left corner. Assisted by Daniel Sturridge.
 75' Attempt blocked. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Georginio Wijnaldum.
 74' Attempt missed. Nathan Redmond (Southampton right footed shot from the right side of the box is high and wide to the right following a set piece situation.
 73' Foul by James Milner (Liverpool).
 73' Dusan Tadic (Southampton wins a free kick in the attacking half.
 72' Foul by Roberto Firmino (Liverpool).
 72' Nathan Redmond (Southampton wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 71' Corner, Southampton. Conceded by Dejan Lovren.
 71' Attempt missed. Maya Yoshida (Southampton header from the centre of the box misses to the left. Assisted by Dusan Tadic with a cross following a corner.
 71' Corner, Southampton. Conceded by James Milner.
 70' Attempt missed. Oriol Romeu (Southampton right footed shot from outside the box misses to the left.
 69' Substitution, Liverpool. Daniel Sturridge replaces Divock Origi.
 69' Substitution, Liverpool. Adam Lallana replaces Lucas Leiva.
 69' Substitution, Southampton. Shane Long replaces Manolo Gabbiadini.
 68' Foul by Lucas Leiva (Liverpool).
 68' Manolo Gabbiadini (Southampton wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 66' Penalty saved! James Milner (Liverpool fails to capitalise on this great opportunity, right footed shot saved in the bottom left corner.
 65' James Ward-Prowse (Southampton is shown the yellow card.
 65' Cédric Soares (Southampton is shown the yellow card.
 64' Penalty conceded by Jack Stephens (Southampton with a hand ball in the penalty area.
 63' Offside, Southampton. Ryan Bertrand tries a through ball, but Manolo Gabbiadini is caught offside.
 60' Substitution, Southampton. Nathan Redmond replaces Sofiane Boufal.
 60' Attempt missed. Emre Can (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is high and wide to the right.
 60' Attempt blocked. James Milner (Liverpool right footed shot from the left side of the box is blocked.
 56' Delay over. They are ready to continue.
 55' Delay in match Oriol Romeu (Southampton because of an injury.
 47' Corner, Southampton. Conceded by Dejan Lovren.
 47' Corner, Southampton. Conceded by Emre Can.
 46' Foul by Roberto Firmino (Liverpool).
 46' Ryan Bertrand (Southampton wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 Second Half begins Liverpool 0, Southampton 0.
 45'+2' First Half ends, Liverpool 0, Southampton 0.
 43' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Oriol Romeu.
 42' Attempt saved. Emre Can (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.
 35' Joel Matip (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 35' Foul by Manolo Gabbiadini (Southampton).
 34' Attempt saved. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom left corner. Assisted by Emre Can.
 32' Foul by Emre Can (Liverpool).
 32' Dusan Tadic (Southampton wins a free kick on the right wing.
 29' Dejan Lovren (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 29' Foul by Manolo Gabbiadini (Southampton).
 28' Corner, Southampton. Conceded by James Milner.
 27' Foul by Georginio Wijnaldum (Liverpool).
 27' Ryan Bertrand (Southampton wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 25' Foul by Divock Origi (Liverpool).
 25' Maya Yoshida (Southampton wins a free kick in the defensive half.

24' Offside, Liverpool. Joel Matip tries a through ball, but Roberto Firmino is caught offside.
 24' Attempt saved. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the centre of the goal. Assisted by Emre Can.
 22' Offside, Southampton. Maya Yoshida tries a through ball, but Manolo Gabbiadini is caught offside.
 15' Attempt blocked. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked.
 13' Attempt missed. Georginio Wijnaldum (Liverpool header from the centre of the box is close, but misses to the right. Assisted by James Milner with a cross.
 12' Offside, Southampton. Cédric Soares tries a through ball, but Dusan Tadic is caught offside.
 7' Foul by Divock Origi (Liverpool).
 7' Jack Stephens (Southampton wins a free kick in the defensive half.
 First Half begins.
 Lineups are announced and players are warming up.