

Date: 6 December 2017  
 Opposition: Spartak Moskva  
 Competition: Champions League

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6 December  
2017

## THE TIMES

Liverpool's Fab Four send out ominous warning

Liverpool Coutinho 4 (pen), 18, 50 Firmino 18, Mane 47, 76, Salah 86 Spartak Moscow

Philippe Coutinho hid the match-ball under his shirt at the final whistle, but there could be no concealing his brilliance. Or Liverpool's. They were as sensational as Spartak Moscow were supine. Anfield was treated to Liverpool at their irresistible best. The quality of the build-up play was breathtaking, and the finishing a mix of the refined and the ruthless. Liverpool have never scored this many goals in the Champions League group stage. When the draw for the knockout stage is made on Monday, few will look forward to being paired with Jurgen Klopp's entertainers. This is why supporters love Klopp's approach, that all-out attack, players interchanging at speed, bewildering the opposition. Klopp does not understand the concept of caution, the idea that Liverpool would progress with a draw. He wanted to arrive in the knockout stage in style, flying forward, scoring goals and he delivered. That is why he had told his players this was a "final all or nothing". Within 18 minutes, it was three-nothing. Within five minutes of the second half, it was five-nothing.

Anfield responded thunderously, applauding every move, every pass, every goal, especially the components of Coutinho's fine hat-trick. Amid some hearts here, there had to be a trace of sadness at the lingering possibility of Coutinho moving on in January to Barcelona, having helped to guide Liverpool into the round of 16, but there also had to be the hope that such performances and such a clear sign of progress under Klopp could tempt the skilful Brazilian to stay.

Coutinho was nominally on the left in a 4-4-2 but frequently drifting inside, joining forces with other members of the so-called Fab Four, Sadio Mane, Mohamed Salah and Roberto Firmino. Within 15 minutes, they had taken their collective tally for the season to 42 goals. Injury has prevented them from being in tandem that often, notably in Moscow, and the devastating potential was seen in its full potency last night. Chasing qualification for the knockout stages for the first time since 2009, Liverpool were gifted the perfect start after three minutes, a present from Russia with love, insane love actually. Spartak's left back, Georgi Dzhikiya, panicked when Salah lurked closeby, even though Coutinho's delivery from the left looked too high and quick for the Egyptian to control.

Dzhikiya, a full Russia international, reacted like a Sunday league defender thinking the referee wasn't looking, and dragged Salah over. It was almost comical. The Polish official, Szymon Marciniak, had the easiest of decisions to point to the spot. Spartak's goalkeeper, Aleksandar Selikhov, waved his hands wildly, trying to put Coutinho off. The Brazilian stayed calm, ran in, taking one exaggerated step, hesitating without falling foul of the laws, making Selikhov commit himself. As the goalkeeper dived right, Coutinho placed the ball effortlessly the other way: 1-0. Any nerves disappeared. Any nasty shocks were discounted, although there was the bizarre sight in the crowd of a visitor wearing an official Sochi 2014 Russia team tracksuit, surely now a badge of shame, according to the IOC. Russia's footballers certainly failed to rebuild their country's damaged sporting reputation last night. Luiz Adriano did place a shot through Dejan Lovren's legs but Boris Karius held the ball at the second attempt. Emre Can then fouled Ze Luis, and his booking rules him out of the first leg of the next stage. Liverpool were too busy hunting more goals to be distracted.

The second goal arrived after 15 minutes, and it was a gem from Klopp's string quartet. Mane advanced down the right, slipping the ball to Salah, who timed his run with typical cunning, collecting the ball before turning it right to Firmino. Liverpool's No 9 took a touch and then picked out the unmarked Coutinho, who drove the ball left-footed past Selikhov, who was again given no protection by his abject defence: 2-0. Coutinho took the acclaim, but the Kop was also quick to salute the work of Firmino. His movement kept opening space for others, and his touches kept guiding them into promising positions. Firmino got the goal his industry deserved after 18 minutes. Again Spartak made no significant attempt at resistance. Again Mane advanced, playing the ball which hit Serdar Tasci, who seemed unsure which way Spartak were playing. The ball fell to Firmino, who propelled it past Selikhov with the outside of his right foot: 3-0.

Liverpool's 19th goal of the group stage broke their record of 18 in 2007-08. No wonder Klopp was smiling. He still knew that Liverpool had surrendered a 3-0 lead against Seville, but his team were so determined, so dynamic. Klopp had warned of the talent of Quincy Promes, Ze Luis and Denis Glushakov but they were swept aside. When Ze Luis did threaten, Ragnar Klavan blocked athletically.

Liverpool did suffer the frustration of Alberto Moreno limping away injured but his replacement, James Milner, provided the assist for Liverpool's fourth two minutes into the second half. Coutinho passed to Milner down the left and the Englishman wasted no time in swinging in a cross towards the far-post. With Spartak defenders again absent, Mane volleyed the ball spectacularly into the net at the Kop end: 4-0. Milner claimed another assist, setting up Coutinho, whose shot deflected off Salvatore Bocchetti: 5-0.

Anfield rose to salute Lovren as he departed to the bench to be replaced by Trent Alexander-Arnold, with Joe Gomez moving from full back to centre half. Firmino was then given a standing ovation as he made way for Daniel Sturridge. Sturridge was involved in the sixth, taking a pass from Salah, driving down the inside-right channel and crossing for Mane. The ball was slightly behind Mane, but he managed to hook his right foot back and steer it past Selikhov: 6-0. Selikhov really had only the Kop for company by then. He had been abandoned by his defenders.

Selikhov was beaten again with five minutes remaining. Salah deserved his goal, and took it elegantly, controlling the ball, dummieing his marker and then driving the ball in: 7-0. Good luck Everton at Anfield on Sunday. They'll need it.

Liverpool (4-4-2): L Karius 7 -- J Gomez 7, D Lovren 7 (sub: T Alexander-Arnold 60min, 6), R Klavan 7, A Moreno 6 (sub: J Milner 45, 7) -- S Mane 8, G Wijnaldum 7, E Can 7, P Coutinho 9 -- M Salah 8, R Firmino 8 (sub: D Sturridge 71). Substitutes not used S Mignolet, J Henderson, A Oxlade-Chamberlain, D Solanke. Booked Can. Spartak Moscow (4-2-3-1): A Selikhov 5 -- A Eschenko 4, S Tasci 4, S Bocchetti 4, G Dzhikiya 4 (sub: M Pasalic 59, 5) -- D Glushakov 6, Fernando 5 -- R Zobnin 5, Luiz Adriano 5, Q Promes 6 (sub: A Samedov 75) -- Ze Luis 5 (sub: L Melgarejo 51, 5). Substitutes not used A Rebrov, I Kutepov, I Popov, P Rocha. Booked Dzhikiya, Fernando. Referee S Marciniak (Pol)

## the guardian

Philippe Coutinho hat-trick inspires 7-0 Liverpool romp against Spartak Moscow

For Liverpool, this time there was never any danger that a 3-0 half-time lead could be lost. It was more just a surprise that their record win in the Champions League, an 8-0 thrashing of Besiktas in 2007, remained intact on a night when English football was assured of its fifth representative in the last 16 of the [Champions League](#) and Jürgen Klopp's players had a lot of fun sealing their qualification.

By the end, it had started to feel absurd that Liverpool's [second-half meltdown against Seville](#) in their previous Champions League assignment had left their final match in Group E with a precarious feel. It was a deception. Philippe Coutinho had his first hat-trick for the club. The players of Spartak Moscow looked in need of smelling salts and the only slight oddity was that it took until the 86th minute before Mohamed Salah, Liverpool's leading marksman, added his name to an already extensive scoresheet.

By that stage Sadio Mané had scored twice. Roberto Firmino added the other in that early blitz when [Liverpool](#) scored three times inside the opening 19 minutes and there was another statistic that made Klopp beam proudly. No other English team had ever qualified from the Champions League group stages with so many goals – 23 from six games. Not even the great Barcelona and Real Madrid sides had accumulated these numbers. Paris Saint-Germain, who scored 25 times to qualify this season, are the only side ever to do better.

Liverpool will find out their prize, as group winners, in the draw on Monday, though first there is the small matter of a Merseyside derby. Everton might be sturdier opponents now Sam Allardyce has been parachuted in but, on this evidence, Klopp's team will take some stopping.

Coutinho, in particular, looked irresistible. Wearing the captain's armband on a night when Jordan Henderson was relegated to the bench, the Brazilian has been directly involved in 15 goals in his past 11 appearances, scoring nine and setting up another six. The only downside for Liverpool was the first-half injury to Alberto Moreno and the fact Emre Can will be suspended from the opening leg of their last-16 match because of the yellow card he received for an early challenge on Ze Luis. Can went into the match knowing a booking would make him ineligible and it was strange, in such a one-sided contest, he felt it necessary to lunge in that way. That apart, Liverpool can reflect on a hugely satisfying evening and it would have felt slightly impudent to point out that not even the most optimistic Kopite can expect Everton to defend as generously as the team who are fourth in the Russian Premier League. Georgi Dzhikiya's bewildering challenge on Salah, four minutes in, set the tone, presenting Coutinho with the chance to open the scoring from the penalty spot, and the same Spartak defender carelessly lost the ball to Mané in the buildup to Firmino making it 3-0. In between, Liverpool's quick, incisive passing had carved open the visiting defence for Coutinho's second and thereafter it was difficult to keep count of the scoring opportunities.

Liverpool might not have just emulated the Besiktas score – they had enough chances, without exaggeration, to inflict the damage that Stromsgodset endured here in 1974, on the wrong end of an 11-0 whipping in the European Cup Winners' Cup. This was also the night when Coutinho identified himself as the club's new penalty-taker, ending a difficult run during which Firmino, Salah and James Milner, twice, have failed to convert from 12 yards during games at Anfield in 2017. Yet the game will be remembered for the stylish, attacking football from Liverpool once they had realised their passage to the next stage was not in danger. The move for Coutinho's second goal was particularly illuminating, with Salah and Firmino prominently involved, and there was an even more beguiling exchange of passes later in the first half, spoiled only by Mané's wild shot. Firmino's expertly taken finish, after a lucky ricochet off a Russian defender, demonstrated his own high confidence and Liverpool's attacking quartet never eased off once the game had become a rout.

The outstanding goal came two minutes into the second half when Milner, who had replaced Moreno, sent over a cross from the left and Mané smashed in a volley with so much power it might have done serious damage to someone in the Kop had it not rocketed into the roof of the net. Coutinho's hat-trick goal came via a deflection off Salvatore Bocchetti and, with 40 minutes still to play, Liverpool were 5-0 up, closing in on their record win in this competition.

They could not quite get there but it was a close-run thing. The substitute Daniel Sturridge set up Mané to poke in the sixth goal. Salah rammed in the next one for his 18th goal of the season and Liverpool freewheeled into the knockout stages for the first time since 2009.

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## The Mail

SWEET MUSIC FROM THE FAB FOUR

LIVERPOOL Coutinho 4 (pen), 15, 50, Firmino 18, Mane 47, 76, Salah 86 7

SPARTAK 0

WHEN Jurgen Klopp closes his eyes at night, this is the kind of football he surely must see. This is the kind of football the German came to Liverpool to deliver and when it all falls in to place, it seems unfeasible to think anybody would ever doubt him. Klopp is yet to deliver a trophy to Liverpool in his two years and his team sit 14 points behind Premier League leaders Manchester City. So that's the bad news. Here in superb animation was all the good news bundled into one as Klopp's team ripped Spartak Moscow apart with the kind of football that you are only privileged to witness once in a while. Spartak are Russian champions and as such are no mugs. Here at Anfield, though, they were embarrassed by Liverpool, dismantled by the kind of devastating passing football that is only possible to attempt when you are blessed with a certain kind of player.

The four leaders of Liverpool's orchestra were all present at the same time as Philippe Coutinho, Roberto Firmino, Mo Salah and Saido Mane combined to light up a cold European night. The first goal of Coutinho's hat-trick came from the penalty spot early on and the third was a deflected shot. But the one in between was majestic, while Firmino's finish with the outside of his foot on the half-volley was made to look rather ordinary by a second half Mane volley that almost ripped the net from its moorings at the Kop end.

There could have been more, too. Liverpool were forensic in the way they created chances but not always in the way that they attempted to finish them.

Nevertheless, Liverpool have scored 23 goals in six European games this season and it is no surprise to see them top Group E. Liverpool were ahead in only the fourth minute and it was all Spartak's fault.

The ball Coutinho aimed towards the head of Mo Salah was speculative at best. But instead of allowing what was an over-hit pass to pass harmlessly out of play, Georgi Dzhikiya chose to get physical with his opponent. When he needlessly dragged Salah to the ground the referee was alert enough to award the penalty. Coutinho sent goalkeeper Aleksandr Selikhov the wrong way.

Ahead so early, Liverpool were in the position they love so much. Already chasing the game, Spartak tried to respond and in doing so left huge gaps in their own half of the field. As a result, the game was over within 20 minutes.

When Liverpool are in this mood, they are ruthless. Everything they do looks like it will end in a goal.

The second arrived in the 15th minute, moments after Spartak's Quincy Promes had brought a low save from Loris Karius.

This was a beautiful goal, too, a result of passing, movement, vision and understanding. Dejan Lovren started the move in his own half.

And when Mane and Salah funnelled the ball to Roberto Firmino on the right overlap, the Brazilian chose his moment perfectly to pull it back for Coutinho to finish with an equally calm sidefoot. It was a goal that couldn't have looked any prettier had it been painted in watercolour.

This was everything Klopp strives for as a manager and when it was followed by a third goal four minutes later, one wondered just how many Liverpool may score.

Once more there was a Spartak mistake involved -- Denis Glushakov giving the ball away in centre field. Once again Liverpool punished their opponents as Mane's cross rebounded off Serdar Tasci in the penalty area for Firmino to finish beautifully on the half-volley with the outside of his right foot.

With a derby against Everton looming on Sunday, Liverpool already had reason to slacken off but they continued to push. Mane should have scored the fourth in the 36th minute only to blaze over when played through by Salah's lovely backheel.

But two minutes into the second half he did score and what a goal it was.

Substitute James Milner was played down the left by Coutinho and when the cross reached Mane at the far post he crashed it high in to the net with a scissor kick of immaculate timing and power. Three minutes later they had another as Milner allowed Coutinho to dance in to the penalty area. His low shot struck Salvatore Bocchetti and span past goalkeeper Selikhov for the Liverpool No 10's hat-trick. As the night went on, Spartak continued to help out when they could and the Russians were hustled out of possession again with 14 minutes left. Emre Can fed Daniel Sturridge down the right and Mane dragged in his second goal from six yards. Still Liverpool were not finished. They had already scored seven at Maribor and equalled that when Salah left his man on his back with another superb turn in the box. He placed a right-foot shot high in to the goal as though taking part in a passing drill at Melwood.

If new Everton manager Sam Allardyce hasn't got a plan in place already, he had better find one.

LIVERPOOL (4-3-3): Karius 6.5; Gomez 6.5, Lovren 6.5 (Alexander-Arnold 60min, 6), Klavan 6.5, Moreno 6 (Milner 45, 6.5); COUTINHO 8.5, Can 7.5, Wijnaldum 7.5; Salah 8, Firmino 7.5 (Sturridge 72, 6), Mane 7.5. Subs not used: Mignolet, Henderson, Oxlade-Chamberlain, Solanke. Scorers: Coutinho 4 (pen), 15, 50, Firmino 18, Mane 47, 76, Salah 86.

Booked: Can. Manager: Jurgen Klopp 8. SPARTAK MOSCOW (4-2-3-1): Selikhov 5; Eschenko 5, Tasci 5, Bocchetti 5, Dzhikiya 6 (Pasalic 60, 6); Glushakov 6, Fernando 6.5; Zobnin 6, Luiz Adriano 5, Promes 5 (Samedov 75, 6); Ze Luis 5 (Melgarejo 51, 5). Subs not used: Rebrov, Kutepov, Popov, Rocha. Booked: Dzhikiya, Fernando. Manager: Massimo Carrera 5. Referee: Szymon Marciniak (Pol) 7. Attendance: 48,779.

## The Daily Telegraph

Coutinho helps rampant Liverpool create history

Liverpool 7 Coutinho 4 pen, 15, 50, Firmino 18, Mane 47, 76, Salah 86 Spartak Moscow 0 Att: 48,779 Liverpool have their "Fab Four" and the Premier League has its "Fantastic Five" as the quintet of English clubs all qualified for the last 16 of the Champions League - which is the first time any country has achieved that impressive feat.

Liverpool completed it in wonderful style, scoring seven - for the second time in this campaign - and blowing away Spartak Moscow with an exhilarating attacking display orchestrated by their relentless four attackers. Philippe Coutinho struck his first-ever hat-trick while Sadio Mane, twice, Roberto Firmino and Mohamed Salah all scored to top Group E. They were magnificent.

Manager Jurgen Klopp had described this showdown as "all or nothing" and so his team gave their all and left the Russian champions with nothing. The goal rush means Liverpool scored an incredible 23 times in their six group games, only bettered by Paris St-Germain, this season with 25, and more than any English team has ever scored - more than Manchester United in 1998-99, when they won it.

More importantly, for Liverpool, it is the first time they have reached the Champions League knockout stages since 2009 and it felt like a landmark for them, having fallen short in 2010 and 2014, ahead of Sunday's Merseyside derby. It was quickly over. Liverpool claimed three goals in a devastating first-half, 14-minute spell, aided by some horrendous defending from Spartak, partly forced by some awesome attacking from all angles. The lead was gift-wrapped inside four minutes. It came from a penalty, awarded after Georgi Dzhikiya bizarrely pulled back Salah following a cross by Coutinho even though it was sailing over the head of the pair of them.

Coutinho, wearing the captain's armband, stepped up and calmly lifted the ball to the goalkeeper's left as Aleksandr Selikhov dived to his right. The Kop's reaction had probably helped make up the mind of Polish referee Szymon Marciniak but it was some mad defending by Dzhikiya. It was also - at three minutes and 51 seconds - the fastest ever goal in a Champions League game at this stadium. Liverpool were buoyed; Liverpool were rampant. Klopp had reunited that attacking quartet, after several games of rotation, and it was Mane who threatened next as he drove an angled shot into the side-netting. It proved a warning as they broke again and this time all four were all involved as Mane slid the ball through to Salah who switched it out to Firmino. The striker had time and space and rolled it across the area for Coutinho to side-foot into the net.

The defending, the marking was once more terrible and Liverpool took full advantage. They struck again - and again Spartak were culpable as they lost possession on halfway with Mane sprinting into their area and crossing towards Salah. The ball was intercepted by Serdar Tasci - it may well have been another penalty as it struck the defender's arm - but it rebounded to Firmino who curled it first-time inside the far post with the outside of his right boot. So the tie was over. Another three-goal advantage in the Champions League for Liverpool but this time, surely, there would be no slip-up after Sevilla?

Liverpool had drawn 1-1 in Moscow in September, but Spartak were without Quincy Promes, their leading scorer, the captain, Denis Glushakov, and the striker Ze Luis on that occasion and although their record in Europe is modest they had lost just one of their past 19 games in all competitions, 2-1 to Sevilla. But any Klopp concerns had been quickly blown away.

There should have been another goal. Again the attacking quarter was involved with Coutinho playing an 'around-the-corner' pass to Firmino who ferried it on for Salah who flicked it out wide to allow Mane a clear run on goal. It was a glorious set-up - only for Mane to blast over, just as Salah did after wriggling free moments later.

Finally Spartak summoned a response with Ragnar Klavan superbly blocking Ze Luis's goalbound shot after a cross broke to the Cape Verdean but the only worry for Liverpool came on half-time as they lost Alberto Moreno to injury. It did not matter.

Soon after the re-start they struck with Coutinho pushing the ball out wide to Moreno's replacement James Milner who crossed for Mane to scissor a glorious, acrobatic right-footed volley high into the net. It was a stunning finish. Anfield erupted for that one and then, also, for Coutinho as he completed his hat-trick, collecting a short pass from Milner, again providing the assist, and driving his shot goalwards with it ricocheting heavily off Salvatore Bocchetti and past the wrong-footed Selikhov. It was Liverpool's first Champions League hat-trick for 10 years. Mane claimed his second with Firmino's replacement Daniel Sturridge pulling out wide right, from Salah's pass, and unselfishly crossing low for Mane to stretch, as he stumbled, and side-foot home from close-range. Sturridge should have had a penalty, when he was felled by Selikhov, but the referee charitably waved play on and then the striker flicked the ball over from inside the six-yard area after another clever build-up.

Finally it was Salah who did score with Milner alertly heading the ball infield towards Sturridge, who smartly jumped over it. It ran to Salah who checked and fired high into the goal to complete the rout.

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## THE INDEPENDENT

### Coutinho grabs hat-trick as Reds thump Spartak

The final page of the matchday programme at Anfield was a photograph of Steven Gerrard side-on, roaring in the direction of the Kop, celebrating victory over Olympiakos and qualification from the Champions League group stages by the finest of margins. Liverpool could do without one of their 'famous European night' here, though. A more routine victory would suffice.

It was exactly what they got. From Liverpool's opening goal to their seventh, a place in the knockout phase for the first time since the 2008-09 season was never in doubt. Jürgen Klopp's side only need to draw to progress, but nevertheless pummelled Spartak Moscow to finish top of Group E and ensure English football will make up almost a third of the representatives in the competition's last 16.

Few of the others, perhaps not even Manchester City, can claim to have an attack as devastating as the one at Jürgen Klopp's disposal. All seven goals came from members of Liverpool's 'Fab Four', with Philippe Coutinho scoring three, Sadio Mané two, while Roberto Firmino and Mohamed Salah claimed one each.

Klopp started the four together for the first time in the 1-1 draw between these two sides in September, when Spartak provided much stiffer resistance. The fear at the start of the night was that the same well-drilled Russian champions who held Liverpool that night and later thrashed Sevilla 5-1 would come to Anfield and spoil the party.

It took just three minutes for Coutinho, captain in the absence of Jordan Henderson and James Milner, to settle any lingering nerves. The Brazilian's long, lofted ball into the box found Salah, who was being guarded by Georgi Dzhikiya. For some unknown reason, the visiting defender thought it was wise to haul his opponent down. Referee Szymon Marciniak had no choice but to point to the spot. Liverpool's skipper converted.

He, Salah, Firmino and Sadio Mané lined themselves up as straight front four at times, in a formation that would lead to defensive vulnerabilities against stronger opposition. Yet Klopp's decision to field all of them at once was vindicated by a superb second, stroked home by Coutinho after an interchange of passes between the three others that pulled Spartak's defence from pillar to post.

The Russians themselves needed their first European away win in 10 games to qualify and actually saw their fair share of the ball in the opening stages but Liverpool simply had the beating of them on the counter. Mané was a particular thorn in their side down the rig and when the Senegalese sent one cross in search of Salah, it rebounded back off Serdar Tasci's arm. While Anfield asked for a penalty, Firmino jabbed a shot into the far corner. 3-0 up in the first half and on the brink of qualification again. What could possibly go wrong? There would be no repeat of the collapse in Seville a fortnight ago this time though, and Klopp's side ensured of their progression as winners of Group E with a quickfire double at the start of the second half. Mané added the fourth, acrobatically volleying from close range after James Milner, on for the injured Alberto Moreno, found the winger in space at the far post.

Minutes later, Coutinho sealed the first hat-trick of his Liverpool career. It was not the finest of his 51 goals for the club, with the ball taking a pivotal deflection off the hands of Salvatore Bochetti and creeping underneath the goalkeeper Aleksandr Selikhov's reach at the near post. No matter. It would still earn him a standing ovation from an adoring Kop.

Any ounce of fight in Spartak had long disappeared and Liverpool scored their sixth and seventh at their leisure. With a quarter of an hour remaining, Mané produced a finish almost as audacious as first, turning Daniel Sturridge's squared ball around Selikhov with the back of heel from yards out.

Of the 'Fab Four', only Salah was left to score and for a while, it looked as though the Egyptian would be forced to play Ringo. Yet in the closing stages, after Milner's cushioned header from the left, he collected ball, evaded one defender's hopeless challenge and lifted a shot into the roof of the net. Spartak's best moment of the night came at its close. The officials did not bother with any stoppage time.

Liverpool (4-3-3): Karius; Gomez, Klavan, Lovren, Moreno; Can, Wijnaldum, Coutinho; Mane, Salah, Firmino.

Spartak Moscow (4-2-3-1): Selikhov; Eschenko, Tasci, Bochetti, Dzhikiya; Glushakov, Fernando; Zobnin, Luiz Adriano, Promes; Ze Lui

## DAILY MIRROR

### THE BLAST SIXTEEN

FOR all the talk of frailty in both mind and body, there is one quality that makes Liverpool genuine Champions League contenders: goal threat.

In dismissing Spartak Moscow here with an imperious, sublime performance, Jürgen Klopp's side recorded their highest goals total in the group stages of this competition.

They are its second highest scorers this season, ahead of Real Madrid, Barcelona, Bayern Munich and Manchester City, and behind only the rampant Paris Saint-Germain.

That, undoubtedly, will strike fear into the heart of any rival in the next round, their bold four-man attack at Anfield last night confirming what we have known for some time now - there are few forward lines in Europe their equal.

There will be much sterner tests ahead, but let us rejoice in this display, in the sheer menace of the again outstanding front three of Sadio Mané, Roberto Firmino and Mohamed Salah, and the brilliance of Philippe Coutinho, who outshone even those three.

His hat-trick last night was a thing of beauty, the Brazilian showing just why Klopp will fight viciously to keep him out of the clutches of Barca and any other side. Yet it is far from a one-man show, even if he certainly was the man last night. Mané's volley just after the break, which sealed the game, the group and Liverpool's burgeoning reputation, was epic in its execution, and magnificent in its audacity. On this form, with this ruthless mentality, the attack looks virtually unstoppable, and even with a vulnerable defence they have the fire-power, the intimidating threat, to go far this season. Remember, Spartak came here knowing victory would put them through and, potentially, the Reds out.

This was a pressure game make no mistake, but the joy Liverpool brought to their football to go three goals up within 19 minutes suggested this team feels no such thing. It was all started by a woeful mistake from the hapless Spartak left-back Georgi Dzhikiya - who had a horror show - dragging down Salah in the box when there was little danger. Coutinho swept home the penalty with relish. Spartak were simply overwhelmed by the home side. Within minutes, Coutinho had scored a brilliant second, running onto a fine pull back from Firmino. Incredibly, no visiting defender got within five yards of any of Liverpool's front four in that move. Then Firmino finished after Mané ran through totally unchallenged to cross for the Brazilian, with a helping hand - literally - from a Spartak defender.

If there were fears of another Liverpool lapse, another Sevilla-style meltdown, Mané put them to rest with another contender for the goal of the season, which he seems to produce every season. Sub James Milner crossed brilliantly just two minutes into the second half, and the Senegal star launched himself into a horizontal position five feet off the ground to smash a volley into the roof of the net.

From there, the only remaining interest on a night where Liverpool announced themselves to the rest of Europe, was whether Coutinho could complete a hat-trick.

He did not keep the fans waiting for long. Milner was again the provider, Coutinho's shot taking a deflection on its way in.

Daniel Sturridge, on as a sub, escaped down the right and unselfishly crossed to give Mané a tap in.

And Salah crowned an epic victory with the seventh.

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Jurgen Klopp's rampant Reds sent a booming statement of intent across Europe

It was an act of mercy. The clock hadn't even ticked over to 90 minutes when Polish referee Szymon Marciniak blew the final whistle. Spartak Moscow's humiliation was complete. Jurgen Klopp's rampant Liverpool had sent a booming statement of intent which will reverberate across Europe. The Reds didn't just hold the nerve when the stakes were high, they breezed into the last 16 of the Champions League in scintillating style after a ruthless demolition job on the Russian champions. This was the night when Liverpool truly announced their return to Europe's elite. *"Bring on yer Internazionale,"* roared the jubilant Kop. Nine years after they last qualified for the knockout stages, the Reds are back where they belong. The five-times champions of Europe will join the big boys in Monday's draw.

Klopp accepted the acclaim of Anfield and rightly so. Here was the fruits of his labour as Liverpool showcased the breathless brand of attacking football he preaches. The Fab Four purred from start to finish as Philippe Coutinho, Sadio Mane, Mohamed Salah and Roberto Firmino wreaked havoc.

Any backline in Europe would struggle to contain that dazzling quartet when they are in this kind of mood. Their blistering pace, intelligent movement and lethal finishing will have been enough to give Evertonians cold sweats ahead of Sunday's Merseyside derby. Stand-in skipper Coutinho walked off with the matchball stuffed up the back of his shirt after claiming the first hat-trick of his Anfield career.

The outstanding Mane bagged a double with Firmino and Salah also on target on a record-breaking night. Spartak were lucky to get nil.

With 23 goals across the six matches, Liverpool became the highest scoring English club in a Champions League group stage campaign.

The Reds had made hard work of Group E – throwing away leads home and away to Sevilla, and wasting a stack of chances in the draw away to Spartak. But when it really mattered, they delivered and it's another significant milestone in Klopp's reign. Three years ago Liverpool squandered the opportunity when they returned to the Champions League. They looked out of their depth and had a manager who was a rookie in European terms.

Now they have the required class both on the field and in the dugout to shine at this level. Klopp knows what it takes. Those two-legged ties brought the best out of him tactically en route to the Europa League final in 2016 and Liverpool are on the march under him once again.

Klopp had sprung a surprise before kick-off as he left out captain Jordan Henderson and opted for the central midfield axis of Emre Can and Gini Wijnaldum. Mane and Coutinho provided the width in his 4-4-2 with Salah joining Firmino through the middle. The balance was perfect.

Spartak arrived on a high after a recent upturn in form. Klopp had warned they would be a tougher nut to crack with the return of top scorer Quincy Promes, captain Denis Glushakov and striker Ze Luis.

But the Russian outfit were blown away by a devastating opening 20-minute blast from the hosts. Liverpool's frontline operated at a tempo and an intensity Spartak couldn't live with as centre-backs Serdar Tasci and Salvatore Bocchetti endured a torrid night. The Reds were given a helping hand by some shoddy defending but that panic was triggered by the sheer weight of pressure.

The opener was a gift as Coutinho delivered from the left and Georgi Dzhiqiya senselessly barged into Salah and hauled him down.

Coutinho took responsibility and coolly dispatched his first penalty for the Reds into the bottom corner. At 3mins 51secs it was also the fastest goal Liverpool had ever netted in a Champions League home game.

The dream start calmed the nerves and Liverpool tore forward in search of greater reward. Mane lashed into the side netting before the Reds doubled their account. It was the kind of quick, incisive and selfless team move which Klopp relishes. No wonder he reacted with a flurry of fist pumps.

The Fab Four were all involved with Mane and Salah combining to release Firmino. The Brazilian could have gone for glory himself but decided to put it on a plate for the on-rushing Coutinho. Spartak looked shell-shocked and their night soon got even worse. Mane pounced on a loose pass close to halfway and charged goalwards. His cross struck the hapless Tasci on the arm but Firmino made the appeals for a penalty academic as he whipped the ball past Aleksandr Selikhov with the outside of his right boot.

When Ragnar Klavan then pinged a 70-yard pass on to Mane's boot it was a sign of the confidence pumping through the Reds' veins.

Defensively, Liverpool were impressive. Spartak rarely had a sniff with Promes firing straight at Loris Karius before Klavan produced a brave block to thwart Ze Luis. Liverpool should have added to their tally when an audacious back-heel from Salah put Mane clear but he blazed over.

The only downside for Klopp - aside from Can picking up a booking which rules him out of the first leg of the last 16 tie - was the sight of Alberto Moreno hobbling off with an ankle injury just before the break. With Andy Robertson not on the bench, it was left to James Milner to deputise at left-back and he did that with aplomb.

A fortnight earlier Liverpool had carelessly squandered a three-goal lead in a Seville bear pit. Those memories will have focused minds but there was never any chance

of history repeating itself here.

Spartak's resolve was broken and within five minutes of the second half they found themselves 5-0 down. The Reds' fourth nearly raised the roof. Coutinho released Milner down the left and his deep cross picked out the unmarked Mane.

The Senegal international still had plenty to do as the ball dropped waist height eight yards out, but he steadied himself and unleashed a thunderous volley past Selikhov at the Kop End. Anfield erupted.

The fifth wasn't as pleasing on the eye but for Coutinho it was one to cherish.

After latching on to Milner's pass, his effort took a wicked deflection off Bocchetti and flew inside the near post. He became the first Liverpool player to score a hat-trick at Anfield since Luis Suarez against Norwich four years ago.

There was no let-up. The Reds were relentless. With 14 minutes to go it was 6-0.

Mane's persistence won back possession with Can and Salah linking up before substitute Daniel Sturridge crossed. The delivery was behind Mane but he reacted smartly and still managed to hook it home from close range.

Liverpool had scored 11 goals in the space of four days with not one of them from Salah. This is no one-man band but the Egyptian, who oozed class once again, wasn't to be denied and his 18th goal of the season completed the rout.

Milner nodded back across goal and Salah was calm and composed as he worked it on to right foot and finished emphatically.

Liverpool are on the road to Kiev. If standards are maintained this Klopp inspired juggernaut will take some stopping.

#### MATCH FACTS

Liverpool: Karius, Gomez, Lovren (Alexander-Arnold 60), Klavan, Moreno (Milner 45), Can, Wijnaldum, Coutinho, Salah, Firmino (Sturridge 71), Mane.

Not used: Mignolet, Henderson, Oxlade-Chamberlain, Solanke.

Spartak: Selikhov, Eschenko, Tasci, Bocchetti, Dzhiqiya (Pasalic 60), Glushakov, Fernando, Zobnin, Luiz Adriano, Promes (Samedov 75), Ze Luis (Melgarejo 51).

Not used: Rebrov, Kutepov, Popov, Rocha.

Referee: Szymon Marciniak

Goals: Coutinho 4, Coutinho 15, Firmino 19, Mane 47, Coutinho 50, Mane 76, Salah 86.

Bookings: Can, Dzhiqiya, Fernando.

Man of the match: Philippe Coutinho. The little magician goes from strength to strength.

Date: 6 December 2017 Opposition: Spartak Moskva Competition: Champions League	Times	Telegraph	Echo	6 December 2017
	Guardian	Mirror	BBC	
	Independent	Mail		



Philippe Coutinho scored a hat-trick as Liverpool became the fifth English club to qualify for the last 16 of this season's Champions League with a thumping victory over Spartak Moscow at Anfield.

Jurgen Klopp's Group E leaders came into the game knowing they needed to avoid defeat to be sure of reaching the knockout stage for the first time since 2008-09 - and Coutinho gave them the lead with a fourth-minute penalty after Mohamed Salah was fouled by Georgi Dzhikiya. They doubled their advantage after a superb move 11 minutes later, Coutinho tapping home from Roberto Firmino's pass. Firmino netted himself to make it 3-0 at half-time, and Sadio Mane's sublime volley extended the lead. Coutinho completed his first hat-trick for the club with a deflected shot, and Mane added the sixth before Salah completed the rout. Liverpool's victory means this is the first time five English teams have qualified for the Champions League last 16 in the same season.

Chelsea, Manchester City, Manchester United and Tottenham will join the Reds in Monday's draw at Uefa headquarters in Nyon, Switzerland.

Asked if his side would be a threat in the last 16, Klopp said: "If we perform like this, if we are that clinical, then yes.

"If we perform like this then it is obviously a threat, 100%."

**Rampant Reds march on**

This is a huge result for Liverpool, who failed to advance from the group stage on their previous two appearances - in 2009-10 and 2014-15.

Klopp's side were close to qualifying last month, but Guido Pizarro poked home in the third minute of added time as Sevilla came from [3-0 down to snatch a dramatic draw](#). There was no second-half collapse this time as the Reds produced another attacking masterclass to ensure they progress in Europe's most prestigious club competition. Spartak had held the Reds to a draw in Moscow but were blown away on Merseyside as Klopp once again unleashed Coutinho, Salah, Firmino and Mane from the start.

The quartet had scored 12 of their team's 16 goals in five previous group games - and they were once again in ruthless mood.

Spartak were 3-0 down inside 18 minutes.

Dzhikiya clumsily hauled down Salah to allow Coutinho to score before the Brazilian made it 2-0 after finishing a delicious move started by Mane and involving Salah and Firmino.

Firmino made it six goals in as many group games before the goal of the night by Mane - an exquisite volley from James Milner's inch-perfect cross.

Coutinho's hat-trick goal came from a deflected shot off Salvatore Bocchetti before substitute Daniel Sturridge teed up Mane for the sixth and Salah pounced from close range for the seventh.

Having beaten Brighton 5-1 in the Premier League on Saturday, Liverpool have now scored 12 goals in two games.

Who can Liverpool face in the last 16?

Liverpool emerge from the group unbeaten but despite finishing top and being seeded they could still face a European heavyweight in the next round.

Among the unseeded teams the Reds could face are holders Real Madrid, five-time winners Bayern Munich and Italian champions Juventus.

They cannot face a team from the same country so will avoid Chelsea, and also cannot be drawn against Sevilla, who advance from Group E as runners-up following a 1-1 draw with Maribor.

The other teams they could be paired with are Swiss club Basel, Ukraine's Shakhtar Donetsk and Porto.

"I don't mind too much who we get - usually I always get Real Madrid so we will see," added Klopp.

"There are a lot of really strong teams. This year is quite special. Not often you can face Bayern Munich and Real Madrid, but Juventus and all the others.

"We will not be happy when we see who we face in the next round, but we will be ready."

Liverpool can score goals and that's the hardest part of the game - but coming up against opposition in the next round their defence might struggle.

You can still see Liverpool scoring but will they be strong enough at the back to deal with that quality?

Liverpool are great on the eye but it starts to get hard now.

Man of the match - Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool)

Fastest Champions League goal - the stats

Coutinho's penalty was Liverpool's fastest goal in a Champions League game at Anfield (three minutes 51 seconds).

Spartak have lost 23 of their past 29 Champions League away games (W5 D1).

Liverpool became the fourth English side to top their Champions League group this season - it is the first time since 2006-07 that four English teams have finished first in a single group campaign.

Klopp's team are now unbeaten in their past eight Champions League games, winning three and drawing five.

Salah has scored more goals in all competitions this season than any other Premier League player (18).

What's next?

Liverpool will look to cement their place in the Premier League's top four when they host neighbours Everton in the first Merseyside derby of the season at Anfield on Sunday (14:15 GMT).



Date: 6 December 2017  
 Opposition: Spartak Moskva  
 Competition: Champions League

	Times	Telegraph	Echo
	Guardian	Mirror	BBC
	Independent	Mail	

6 December  
2017



Match ends, Liverpool 7, Spartak Moscow 0.  
 90'+1' Second Half ends, Liverpool 7, Spartak Moscow 0.  
 90' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Mario Pasalic.  
 89' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Serdar Tasci.  
 89' Attempt blocked. Mohamed Salah (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Sadio Mané.  
 89' Foul by Emre Can (Liverpool).  
 89' Lorenzo Melgarejo (Spartak Moscow wins a free kick in the attacking half.  
 88' Attempt saved. Fernando (Spartak Moscow right footed shot from a difficult angle and long range on the left is saved in the bottom left corner.  
 87' Foul by Trent Alexander-Arnold (Liverpool).  
 87' Roman Zobnin (Spartak Moscow wins a free kick on the left wing.  
 86' Goal! Liverpool 7, Spartak Moscow 0. Mohamed Salah (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box to the top right corner. Assisted by James Milner with a headed pass.  
 84' Attempt missed. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool left footed shot from very close range is too high. Assisted by Trent Alexander-Arnold.  
 83' James Milner (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 83' Foul by Andrey Eshchenko (Spartak Moscow).  
 82' Emre Can (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 82' Foul by Luiz Adriano (Spartak Moscow).  
 80' Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.  
 80' Foul by Serdar Tasci (Spartak Moscow).  
 80' Attempt missed. Lorenzo Melgarejo (Spartak Moscow left footed shot from outside the box is close, but misses to the left. Assisted by Andrey Eshchenko.  
 78' Offside, Liverpool. Philippe Coutinho tries a through ball, but Mohamed Salah is caught offside.  
 76' Goal! Liverpool 6, Spartak Moscow 0. Sadio Mané (Liverpool right footed shot from very close range to the bottom right corner. Assisted by Daniel Sturridge.  
 75' Substitution, Spartak Moscow. Aleksandr Samedov replaces Quincy Promes.  
 74' Attempt missed. Quincy Promes (Spartak Moscow right footed shot from the centre of the box is close, but misses to the left. Assisted by Denis Glushakov.  
 73' Offside, Liverpool. Philippe Coutinho tries a through ball, but Daniel Sturridge is caught offside.  
 72' Substitution, Liverpool. Daniel Sturridge replaces Roberto Firmino.  
 71' Foul by Trent Alexander-Arnold (Liverpool).  
 71' Lorenzo Melgarejo (Spartak Moscow wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 66' Offside, Spartak Moscow. Denis Glushakov tries a through ball, but Lorenzo Melgarejo is caught offside.  
 66' Attempt missed. Mario Pasalic (Spartak Moscow right footed shot from outside the box is too high.  
 65' Attempt blocked. Denis Glushakov (Spartak Moscow left footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Luiz Adriano.  
 65' Foul by Joseph Gomez (Liverpool).  
 65' Luiz Adriano (Spartak Moscow wins a free kick in the attacking half.  
 64' Foul by Georginio Wijnaldum (Liverpool).  
 64' Mario Pasalic (Spartak Moscow wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 62' Fernando (Spartak Moscow is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.  
 62' James Milner (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 62' Foul by Fernando (Spartak Moscow).  
 62' Georginio Wijnaldum (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.  
 62' Foul by Mario Pasalic (Spartak Moscow).  
 61' Attempt blocked. James Milner (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.  
 61' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Alexander Selikhov.  
 61' Attempt saved. Mohamed Salah (Liverpool left footed shot from the right side of the box is saved in the bottom left corner.  
 60' Substitution, Liverpool. Trent Alexander-Arnold replaces Dejan Lovren.  
 60' Substitution, Spartak Moscow. Mario Pasalic replaces Giorgi Jikia because of an injury.  
 54' Hand ball by Mohamed Salah (Liverpool).  
 51' Offside, Spartak Moscow. Alexander Selikhov tries a through ball, but Luiz Adriano is caught offside.  
 51' Substitution, Spartak Moscow. Lorenzo Melgarejo replaces Zé Luís.  
 50' Goal! Liverpool 5, Spartak Moscow 0. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool left footed shot from the left side of the box to the bottom left corner. Assisted by James Milner.  
 49' Attempt saved. Quincy Promes (Spartak Moscow left footed shot from outside the box is saved in the top centre of the goal.  
 47' Goal! Liverpool 4, Spartak Moscow 0. Sadio Mané (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box to the top right corner. Assisted by James Milner with a cross.  
 Second Half begins Liverpool 3, Spartak Moscow 0.  
 45'+2' First Half ends, Liverpool 3, Spartak Moscow 0.  
 45'+1' Substitution, Liverpool. James Milner replaces Alberto Moreno because of an injury.  
 45' Fernando (Spartak Moscow wins a free kick in the attacking half.  
 45' Foul by Emre Can (Liverpool).  
 43' Delay over. They are ready to continue.  
 42' Delay in match Alberto Moreno (Liverpool because of an injury).  
 41' Attempt missed. Roman Zobnin (Spartak Moscow right footed shot from outside the box misses to the left.  
 41' Attempt blocked. Zé Luís (Spartak Moscow left footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked.  
 39' Foul by Roberto Firmino (Liverpool).  
 39' Fernando (Spartak Moscow wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 39' Foul by Roberto Firmino (Liverpool).

39' Roman Zobnin (Spartak Moscow wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 38' Attempt missed. Mohamed Salah (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box is just a bit too high. Assisted by Dejan Lovren.  
 37' Foul by Mohamed Salah (Liverpool).  
 37' Denis Glushakov (Spartak Moscow wins a free kick on the right wing.  
 36' Hand ball by Giorgi Jikia (Spartak Moscow).  
 36' Attempt missed. Sadio Mané (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is too high. Assisted by Mohamed Salah.  
 35' Attempt saved. Quincy Promes (Spartak Moscow right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the centre of the goal.  
 34' Offside, Spartak Moscow. Fernando tries a through ball, but Zé Luís is caught offside.  
 31' Alberto Moreno (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 31' Foul by Quincy Promes (Spartak Moscow).  
 30' Attempt saved. Denis Glushakov (Spartak Moscow left footed shot from outside the box is saved in the centre of the goal.  
 29' Corner, Spartak Moscow. Conceded by Dejan Lovren.  
 29' Attempt blocked. Quincy Promes (Spartak Moscow right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Salvatore Bocchetti.  
 29' Foul by Emre Can (Liverpool).  
 29' Luiz Adriano (Spartak Moscow wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 28' Attempt saved. Mohamed Salah (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is saved in the bottom right corner. Assisted by Sadio Mané.  
 27' Foul by Sadio Mané (Liverpool).  
 27' Roman Zobnin (Spartak Moscow wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 24' Foul by Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool).  
 24' Denis Glushakov (Spartak Moscow wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 22' Roberto Firmino (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 22' Foul by Andrey Eshchenko (Spartak Moscow).  
 20' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Serdar Tasci.  
 20' Attempt blocked. Sadio Mané (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Mohamed Salah.  
 18' Goal! Liverpool 3, Spartak Moscow 0. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box to the bottom left corner.  
 18' Emre Can (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 18' Foul by Zé Luís (Spartak Moscow).  
 17' Foul by Sadio Mané (Liverpool).  
 17' Giorgi Jikia (Spartak Moscow wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 15' Goal! Liverpool 2, Spartak Moscow 0. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box to the bottom right corner. Assisted by Roberto Firmino.  
 15' Attempt saved. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the top right corner. Assisted by Georginio Wijnaldum.  
 13' Attempt saved. Luiz Adriano (Spartak Moscow right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom left corner. Assisted by Roman Zobnin.  
 12' Salvatore Bocchetti (Spartak Moscow wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 12' Foul by Dejan Lovren (Liverpool).  
 11' Foul by Serdar Tasci (Spartak Moscow).  
 11' Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing.  
 10' Attempt missed. Sadio Mané (Liverpool right footed shot from a difficult angle on the right is close, but misses to the right. Assisted by Philippe Coutinho.  
 7' Corner, Spartak Moscow. Conceded by Ragnar Klavan.  
 7' Attempt blocked. Quincy Promes (Spartak Moscow left footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Luiz Adriano.  
 6' Emre Can (Liverpool is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.  
 6' Foul by Emre Can (Liverpool).  
 6' Zé Luís (Spartak Moscow wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 4' Goal! Liverpool 1, Spartak Moscow 0. Philippe Coutinho (Liverpool converts the penalty with a right footed shot to the bottom right corner.  
 4' Giorgi Jikia (Spartak Moscow is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.  
 3' Penalty conceded by Giorgi Jikia (Spartak Moscow after a foul in the penalty area.  
 3' Penalty Liverpool. Mohamed Salah draws a foul in the penalty area.  
 First Half begins.  
 Lineups are announced and players are warming up.