

Date: 3 March 2018

Opposition: Newcastle United

Competition: League

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3 March 2018

THE TIMES

Oxlade-Chamberlain silences critics

Liverpool 2 Salah 40, Mané 55 Newcastle United 0 Referee G Scott Attendance 53,287

Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain had kept his counsel for the best part of six months, while all the time the comments that had become seared into his psyche burned away. That the Liverpool midfielder chose Saturday evening to unburden himself and respond to a question relating to the scathing analysis that he was subjected to from Gary Neville and Thierry Henry does not tell the full story.

Neville, in his dissection of Oxlade-Chamberlain after he made his deadline day move to Anfield in August, questioned why "everyone was eulogising over him", suggested Arsenal had the better of a potential £40million deal, highlighted his injury record, lack of goals and assists and said that he strengthened Liverpool's squad, but not the team. It sounded brutal, even if Neville was perceptive enough to add that the move would take the 24-year-old out of his "comfort zone" and force him to be a "man". Yet, the lacerating line would be delivered by Henry a few days later when he stated succinctly: "I still don't know what he's good at."

Oxlade-Chamberlain raised a wry smile when reminded of those acerbic appraisals after a victory over Newcastle United in which he mustered a performance, and an assist for Mohamed Salah's crucial goal, to present the counterargument to those damning critiques. Even here he was honest enough to accept the points relating to end product, but it was clear the public barbs from two men he had worked alongside with England and Arsenal respectively had been hurtful. "I was very aware of those comments, yes," he said. "It is not nice to hear it from your peers or people you have worked with. I have worked with them both in different capacities. "They can have their own opinions.

It cannot shake me. Fair enough, if that is what they think. I am not really too bothered. The important thing is that when I came here I had a manager who had faith in me and he felt something different to that, and I had faith in myself."

When Jack Wilshere was picked apart by Paul Scholes during one piece of punditry, he tracked down and telephoned the former Manchester United and England midfielder in order to seek more constructive criticism.

Oxlade-Chamberlain has not felt the need to reach out to either Neville or Henry, whose withering dismissal, in particular, appears to have irritated. "No. I don't need to. I don't need to," he said. "If people want to say those things, you remember them, you don't forget them, but I am not here to make enemies. Saying you 'don't know what I do' when you have worked with me, I think it is a bit stupid. If they are referencing more end product then that is fair enough.

"I hold my hands up. I will take those comments on the chin. That is something that I have been working on and still need to work on."

Two things struck as Oxlade-Chamberlain was talking. On the one hand, he was showing character and personality in standing up for himself when the easy option would have been to duck the matter altogether as many players do. More importantly, he had volunteered, prior to the criticism being raised, just how much he still needs to improve. This was plainly not someone who believes an assist against Newcastle to follow one against West Ham United the previous week meant the hard work has been achieved and it was time to settle some scores. "I don't know if you could say it's dawned on me, because you always know it, but the key thing is [to do it] game after game," said Oxlade-Chamberlain. "You look at the best midfielders in the world and the best strikers — Mo [Salah] this season has kept his form going, Bobby [Firmino] and Sadio [Mané] they have kept their goals coming. "I can take so much from someone like Mo Salah. Just look at him this season. It has been never-ending and relentless. Obviously he is a quality player, a great player — but to be competing with Harry Kane and Sergio Agüero for top goalscorer those are the things you have to learn from. "People probably wouldn't have expected that from him at the start of the season. To put himself in that position is down to the mentality to work hard and get the best out of himself. "Every season there is always an example of people like that. I look at that and take inspiration from it. "I have got to keep pushing myself."

Jürgen Klopp, the Liverpool manager, felt that Oxlade-Chamberlain should have played more as a No 10 in the first half in order to better penetrate Newcastle's defensive shell, but the breakthrough came from the player picking up a loose ball and driving from deep, breaking the midfield lines to unhinge Rafa Benítez's team before supplying a measured pass. A goal from Mané following Firmino's clever ball confirmed another victory and would have left Benítez envious on two counts on his return to Anfield. In many ways, Klopp has everything the Spaniard ever wanted: a balanced team and a squad with strength in depth, complete control due to the unflinching backing of his owners and an ability to sign players from the top end of market. And, at the same time, Klopp is eyeing what Benítez had. Porto in the Champions League looms tomorrow and then Manchester United await at the weekend. As Oxlade-Chamberlain said, it is no time to be slacking off.

RATINGS

Liverpool (4-3-3): L Karius 7 — T Alexander-Arnold 7, D Lovren 7, V van Dijk 7, A Robertson 7 — A Oxlade-Chamberlain 8 (sub: J Milner 79min), J Henderson 7, E Can 7 — M Salah 7, R Firmino 7 (sub: J Matip 88), S Mané 7 (sub: A Lallana 74). Substitutes not used S Mignolet, J Gomez, A Moreno, D Solanke.

Newcastle United (5-4-1): M Dubravka 6 — D Yedlin 6, F Lejeune 6, J Lascelles 6, P Dummett 6, Kenedy 5 — C Atsu 5, M Diamé 5, M Merino 5 (sub: I Hayden 73), J Murphy 5 (sub: A Pérez 84) — D Gayle 5 (sub: Joselu 65, 5). Substitutes not used K Darlow, C Clark, M Ritchie, J Manquillo.

the guardian

Sadio Mané and Mohamed Salah on target as Liverpool see off Newcastle

Liverpool were not at their sparking best on a bitterly cold and slightly foggy evening on Merseyside, though partly thanks to Mohamed Salah keeping up his scoring run they were too lively for Newcastle and are now up to second in the table. Their supporters probably do not expect them to stay there for very long but the significance of this result, apart from bringing up 200 [Premier League](#) goals under Jürgen Klopp, is that should Chelsea lose to Manchester City on Sunday there will be a seven-point cushion between Liverpool and the dreaded fifth place. Unless Chelsea win, in fact, the fight for top-four places could be as good as over. Early interest was provided by the question of how quickly Salah could get onto the scoresheet. The Egypt international had scored in each of his last six [Liverpool](#) games before Saturday, and one more here took him to 32 in all competitions this season, exactly the same as the entire Newcastle team have managed thus far. Chances were unlikely to be abundant with Newcastle falling back into a flat back five when they were without the ball, which was most of the time, but Salah got his first sight of goal after 11 minutes and managed to catch Paul Dummett in the face with his shot. A couple of minutes later Emre Can hoisted a ball forward from halfway that allowed Salah to easily run through Newcastle's square defence, only to put his first-time half-volley into the side-netting. Newcastle were content to do more defending than attacking, though there was one moment midway through the first half when DeAndre Yedlin was able to show off his startling pace, kicking the ball past Andrew Robertson and beating the Liverpool left-back to it even after taking the long way round.

After Dejan Lovren brought a save from Martin Dubravka with a header from a corner there was another chance for Salah when Can dispossessed Yedlin. Roberto Firmino found Salah in the area, but in attempting to guide the ball around Kenedy he gave Florian Lejeune the opportunity to intercept. The visitors had a lucky escape when Dubravka came for a Salah corner and missed, the ball travelling harmlessly across goal and out of play for a goal-kick, before a measured pass from Virgil van Dijk almost played Robertson into the area from half way, the full-back just failing to control the ball with a headed touch. It was clear that Liverpool would not be kept at bay for long, and the breakthrough finally arrived five minutes from the interval. Naturally it was Salah who applied the finishing touch, though Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain deserves credit for seizing on a loose ball following a Newcastle mistake in the centre-circle and powering instinctively towards goal. At first he looked to be shaping for a shot, but as Mo Diamé closed in the Liverpool midfielder released the ball to the fractionally better placed Salah, whose low left-foot shot went through the goalkeeper's legs. Going behind ought to have forced Newcastle to play with a little more adventure, though at times this season Rafa Benítez's priority has been to keep the margin of defeat to a minimum with an eye on the eventual goal difference. Things could be that tight at the end of the season, though in fairness Newcastle almost managed an instant reply on the stroke of the interval. Diamé was on target with a shot from the edge of the area after beating Can to the ball, and Newcastle would have been level but for Loris Karius leaping to his right to make a last-gasp one handed save. The second half began in the same way as the first, with Newcastle keeping everyone except Dwight Gayle behind the ball and denying Liverpool space to run into. Allowing them to dominate possession when they boast forwards as tricky as Salah, Firmino and Sadio Mané is a risky strategy, however, and the home side had already been denied a fair claim for a penalty when Mané extended their lead in the 55th minute. Salah's shot clearly hit Jamaal Lascelles on the arm as the centre-half tried to fling himself in the way, though as he was in the process of turning his back and not looking at the ball it was probably reasonable of Graham Scott to allow him the benefit of the doubt.

Newcastle respite was brief. Mané started the move which led to the second goal, then moved into the area to finish it following a neat final ball from Firmino. Newcastle were expecting the ball to be moved out wide, though in typically Brazilian fashion Firmino went for the more difficult option, the pass to feet through the middle, and Benítez's defenders had no answer to such eye-of-the-needle precision. Neither was there any attempt to throw caution to the wind and fight back. One misplaced Isaac Hayden header was the sum of Newcastle's attacking efforts in the second half. Salah might have won a penalty right at the end, though Lascelles' foul was actually outside the box and the referee appeared to be unsighted. In three returns to Anfield Benítez has never before finished on the losing side; this time he surrendered quietly. Jürgen Klopp described Jamaal Lascelles as "a lucky man" after his stoppage-time foul on Mohamed Salah went unpunished. The Liverpool manager initially thought his player deserved a penalty and was fuming on the touchline, though replays suggested the challenge had occurred outside the area. Yet Lascelles was clearly the last defender and Salah in a position to score so Klopp was confused as to why Graham Scott failed to take any action. "I can see now it wasn't a penalty but it was 100% a red card," Klopp said. "The Newcastle defender is a lucky man to be able to play the next game."

Rafa Benítez rather diplomatically suggested the referee might not have had a clear view, though privately he must have taken a dim view of Lascelles' action when the game was all but over and Newcastle cannot afford to have their captain and best defender suspended.

"I didn't get a good view of the incident and maybe the referee was the same,"

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the Newcastle manager said. “Overall I was happy with the team’s workrate but I can’t be happy with the result. A gameplan has to be good for 90 minutes, not just 40. You can never guarantee you will not make mistakes, and against top sides you will pay for that.”

The managers agreed a save by Loris Karius from Mo Diamé at the end of the first half was a key point in the game. “That would have been a perfect moment for Newcastle to score and a bad time for us to concede,” Klopp said. “Loris is an outstanding goalkeeper who happened not to make a good start to his Liverpool career. I believe in him, though, the save was almost as good as scoring a goal. I would be the biggest idiot in the world to keep lining him up if he wasn’t good enough.”

The Mail

Mohamed Salah and Sadio Mane strike to send Jurgen Klopp's side to second in the Premier League after routine win at Anfield

Mohamed Salah is now level with Harry Kane in the race for the Premier League's prestigious Golden Boot. On this form he must also be neck-and-neck with Kevin De Bruyne to be Footballer of the Year. Even Jurgen Klopp, not a huge fan of individual awards, says so. Much was predictable on a bitterly cold Anfield evening. Newcastle played for damage limitation but were nowhere near good enough to stop Liverpool gaining the win that saw them leapfrog Manchester United into second place. But when Salah is star billing, there is always reason to buy a ticket. He scored for the seventh game in a row to break the deadlock after 40 minutes, taking a clever pass from Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain with his right foot, before shifting it to his left before finishing between the legs of goalkeeper Martin Dubravka. It was the Egyptian's 32nd goal of an extraordinary debut season on Merseyside, 24 of them in the league.

He is the main reason Liverpool have won 10 of their last 13 matches and though Jurgen Klopp doesn't like talking about one or two players rather than the team, he can't ignore Salah. 'I love his desire to score goals. I love how he is doing so well, the assists and the attitude' said the German manager.

'Of course Mo Salah can be mentioned (as a player of the year contender). There is no doubt Kevin is playing a nice season but there is no doubt Mo Salah is playing a really good one as well. That's how it is. Mane runs to the corner in front of the adoring Anfield faithful before being mobbed by his team-mates in the corner 'They are playing different positions so it depends what you want. I don't make the decision and in the end there will be one winner and a few more good players around them. 'I don't think about individual awards myself but I know players like to win. We have to keep Mo in good shape and doing what he's doing.' To Liverpool fans, Salah is a hero whose name is chanted as loudly as the likes of Kenny Dalglish and Luis Suarez in the past. Even when the game was won, Salah was desperate to score more goals and was raging when he outpaced the Newcastle defence yet again but didn't get a penalty when he was shoved in the back by Jamaal Lascelles.

'The Newcastle player is a lucky man. It should have been a red card,' said Klopp, who made his post-match audience laugh when he explained why Salah had stayed on the pitch for 90 minutes while Roberto Firmino and Sadio Mane, scorer of Liverpool's second goal, were withdrawn early.

'Mo makes his own breaks on the pitch,' smiled Klopp. 'We have to save Roberto,' he added about the workaholic Brazilian. Mohamed Diame thought he had leveled things up just before half-time but a stunning save from Karius denied him

Klopp has every right to be in a good mood. Liverpool have lost only once in 20 Premier League games. Goalkeeper Loris Karius made a world-class save from Mo Diame at 1-0 to ensure Newcastle couldn't sniff a comeback, Virgil van Dijk looked a £75million monster at the back while Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain has overcome his early teething problems and brilliantly set up the opening goal after 40 minutes. Three of Newcastle's seven defenders surrounded the former Arsenal player on the edge of the penalty area but he motored on before releasing a pass to Salah with the outside of his left foot.

The outcome wasn't in doubt from then on and Liverpool were able to reach the interval in front when Karius made an acrobatic dive to his right to claw away Diame's well-struck effort. Newcastle haven't won at Anfield since 1995 and their race was run after 55 minutes when Firmino threaded a pass to Mane who opened his body before rifling home a finish from 12 yards.

Their manager Rafa Benitez, the architect of Liverpool's Champions League win in 2005, had the personal pleasure of hearing his name sung by both sets of fans at the end, but it was scant consolation with his current side in big trouble just two places and two points above the relegation zone. Salah felt he should have been awarded a penalty in the dying stages after being tripped by Jamaal Lascelles in a foot race 'I'm not happy because I don't like to lose,' he said. 'Our gameplan was good for 40 minutes but it has to work for 90. At this level if you make mistakes, you will pay.' 'We were in control defensively for a lot of the first half but you have to be careful against one of the best teams in England.'

At the end, Newcastle seemed relieved their goal difference hadn't taken more of a dent. Next Saturday's home game against Southampton looks critical and Lascelles can count himself fortunate he'll be on the pitch even if his late shove on Salah looked just outside the box. The Newcastle skipper could also have been penalised when a Salah shot struck him on the arm in the second half.

Poor Benitez temporarily stopped scribbling notes near the end to look around Anfield, perhaps remembering a time when he was king and had players like Steven Gerrard and Xabi Alonso at his disposal rather than Dwight Gavle and

Christian Atsu. It seems very Newcastle that their main January loan signing, Islam Slimani, hasn't been fit enough to play for them yet. In the TV studio, the aforementioned Gerrard waxed lyrical about Salah. 'His finishing quality is there for everyone to see. And he's going to get better,' said Liverpool's current under-18s manager. A late plus for Klopp was an energetic late substitute's appearance from Adam Lallana who needs gametime to force his way back into Gareth Southgate's England squad.

Liverpool (4-3-3): Karius 7; Alexander-Arnold 7, Lovren 6.5, van Dijk 7, Robertson 7.5; Oxlade-Chamberlain 7 (Milner 79 6), Henderson 6.5, Can 6.5; Salah 8, Firmino 6.5 (Matip 88), Mane 6.5 (Lallana 73 6) Subs not used: Gomez, Moreno, Mignolet, Solanke.

Goals: Salah 40, Mane 54 Bookings: None

Newcastle (5-4-1): Dubravka 6; Yedlin 6, Lejeune 6.5, Lascelles 6, Dummett 6.5, Kenedy 5.5; Murphy 5.5 (Perez 84), Diame 6.5, Merino 5.5 (Hayden 73 6), Atsu 5.5; Gayle 6 (Joselu 66 6) Subs not used: Clark, Ritchie, Manquillo, Darlow.

Goals: None Bookings: None Referee: Graham Scott 6.5 Attendance: 53,287

The Daily Telegraph

Oxlade-Chamberlain hits back at Henry's criticism

Liverpool 2 Salah 40, Mane 55 Newcastle United 0 Att: 53,287 After Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain's full debut for Liverpool a video appeared on the internet mocking his first 90 minutes for his new club. It attracted 2.59million views and derided the midfielder's failure to beat the first man with a corner, bungled tricks, misplaced passes and overhit crosses.

The Carabao Cup defeat to Leicester City was not his or Liverpool's finest hour, but the video combined with criticism from Sky Sports pundits Thierry Henry and Gary Neville had turned the £35million signing into a laughing stock. The former Arsenal striker said he had been "watching him for a long time" and still did not know "what he's good at", while Neville said it was a "brilliant deal" for Arsenal, who would have "snapped your hand off " to sell Oxlade-Chamberlain for that amount.

Against Newcastle United on Saturday, the 24-year-old was a player transformed; jet-heeled forward runs from mid-field, intelligent passes and the chutzpah to beat an opponent with a piece of skill.

Reinvigorated by Jurgen Klopp, the Liverpool manager, Oxlade-Chamberlain, who has four goals and five assists, decided to hit back at all of the criticism. "Those comments are probably a bit stupid," he said, in reference to Henry's analysis. "When you have watched someone long enough you know what they can do. "I think it was more aimed at my end product and doing those things that lead to scoring a goal or setting up a goal. I will take those comments on the chin. It cannot shake me. Saying you don't know 'what I do' when you have worked with me, it is a bit stupid."

Oxlade-Chamberlain had gone stale at Arsenal, and there is a sense he had been neglected by Arsene Wenger towards the end of his time with the club. The chance to work with Klopp determined he left the comfort zone of London in the hope of finding a new environment in which fresh direction could help him to realise his potential.

"The important thing is that when I came here I had a manager who had faith in me," Oxlade-Chamberlain added. "That is why I made the step. Everyone says you have to be your own biggest fan and believe in yourself. I have been around it long enough to know things will be said. There is more in me, I have to keep pushing on."

Oxlade-Chamberlain made the key run and pass against Newcastle that allowed Mohamed Salah to open the scoring with his 32nd goal of the season, slipped through the legs of goalkeeper Martin Dubravka from the corner of the six-yard box.

He was also involved early on in the move for Liverpool's second goal, which saw Roberto Firmino slide Sadio Mane in before the Senegalese striker fired past Dubravka. Rafael Benitez, the Newcastle manager, took a defensive approach against his former club, but acknowledged the need for ambition against fellow strugglers Southampton and Huddersfield in their next two matches. "These teams are close to us and we have to do well," Benitez said. "We have to attack and create chances."

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Mohamed Salah and Sadio Mane both on target as Liverpool grind down Newcastle in composed victory

Rafael Benítez’s corduroy collared mac was long but it was also thin, inadequate in this weather; a garment the Spaniard had introduced to the story in the 20th minute. He needed it because he was in his technical area so much, exposed to the elements, relentlessly hollering positional instructions at his players, particularly DeAndre Yedlin, the wing-back who was closest to him. Newcastle had got just about everything right. Liverpool were not really threatening. Only five minutes of the first half remained. But any manager, no how much he plots and schemes – and no matter to what level he tries to influence – can legislate for an unfortunate break. It was when Mikel Merino entered a midfield challenge only to see possession spill to Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain that the mood of the evening changed. From there, Liverpool were on the attack. From there, Mohamed Salah was released. From there, Salah scored for the seventh game in succession. It was his 32nd of a wonderful season. Benítez reacted by turning to his bench, cursing in in his native tongue. In the second half he would be further away from his defence and even though he tried, his voice would not carry that far. From this position, Newcastle were weaker. They had no chance.

This was an important victory for Liverpool because it means they are ahead of Chelsea by seven points and Chelsea go to Manchester City tomorrow, a ground no visiting team has won at in the league since December 2016, though that visiting team was, indeed, Chelsea.

It also ended up being the sort of win that will surely delight Liverpool’s manager Jürgen Klopp because it proved to be convincing in spite of Benítez textbook defensive strategy and his team’s organisation and commitment.

The relegation candidates around Newcastle had gained points earlier in the day. Just above them Bournemouth moved a little further away while Swansea, previously below, overtook Newcastle with a resounding victory over West Ham. Elsewhere, Southampton and Stoke’s draw, though not ideal for the teams concerned, drew them closer to the safety line, a line which at kick off here, Newcastle lay just two points above. Their fate will not be determined at grounds like Anfield but Newcastle were under more pressure at 5.30pm than they were at 3pm.

Benítez’s tactical plan had worked in October in the north-east. He was always going to try and find a way to close the half-spaces Klopp targets so much between the midfield and defence of whichever opponent he happens to be facing. Newcastle played with five defenders and two deep-lying midfielders. It resulted in Liverpool playing more fast and longer passes than they were a couple of months ago in an attempt to get Newcastle’s players facing their own goal. Klopp had clarified in his programme column a comment made last weekend after victory over West Ham in relation to his desire for aggression. He was concerned that the message had been lost somewhere, that it had been received as a request to tackle harder when “the only person you should ever be willing to hurt on a football pitch is yourself”. He wanted his players instead to remain focused, to never be satisfied – to be frustrated that although progress has been made, it is not enough.

Newcastle operating this way was linked because Liverpool would need to be patient but equally not believe that just because their domination of possession was almost total, an inevitable lead would be established. Their task was illustrated when Emre Can displayed the type of aggression Klopp wants by dispossessing Yedlin. The ball eventually arrived at Salah’s feet and from there a goal felt inevitable. Salah wanted too much time however and in a flash, the sentries deployed by Benítez’s defence had surrounded him.

Salah would have to be sharper. He would eventually get a second opportunity as half-time approached and on this occasion, he did not fail; reacting to Oxlade-Chamberlain’s surge from midfield by releasing a quick shot. Goalkeeper Martin Dúbravka did not have time to adjust his legs and with that, Liverpool were ahead.

Arguably the first half’s most crucial moment would follow – and it was a huge moment, perhaps, in Loris Karius’s Liverpool career. For much of his first eighteen months at the club, the German has been as convincing as a sandcastle at high-tide. Since Christmas – knowing he is now Klopp’s No 1 until the end of the season at least, his performances have improved. Mohamed Diamé shot had taken a ricochet and so, it was more difficult to judge. But judge it Karius did, using the finger tips on his right hand to maintain Liverpool’s advantage.

That advantage would extend early in the second half when Sadio Mané was freed by Roberto Firmino and it became 2-0. There would have been an opportunity to make it three had Graham Scott awarded a penalty in injury time when Jamaal Lascelles, as last man, brought down Salah. The Newcastle captain – such an influential figure in Benítez’s team – would also have been sent off had Scott judged differently and thus missed home crucial fixtures to come. Benítez reacted to that by turning to his bench again, blowing out his cheeks in relief. At least he had left Merseyside with something to cling on to.



REDS KEEP UP MOMENTUM

IF Rafa Benitez can keep Newcastle in the Premier League, it might just match his greatest managerial achievement.

It must have been souldestroying for a manager who masterminded the Miracle of Istanbul, 13 years ago, to return to his spiritual Anfield home with a plan that was no more ambitious than spoiling a game he knew he couldn't win. Goals by Mo Salah and Sadio Mane ensured the Toon Army duly marched out of Liverpool empty-handed.

But, in many respects, it was job done for the Geordies.

Benitez will take some comfort from the fact that his team avoided the kind of hammering that would drain them of the fighting spirit they are going to need to stay in the top flight.

Not that a serial winner like the Spaniard would admit it.

Kop boss Jurgen Klopp knew that what Newcastle lacked in quality, their manager would strive to make up for in organisation.

"Rafa wants to take the points we crave, the points we need for our aims and our dreams," Klopp had written in his programme notes.

You can be sure that his players were given the same message before they were sent out to chase a victory that would lift them above Manchester United and Tottenham into second place in the table.

Liverpool were rarely at their free-flowing best. But they still had too much for the Toon.

Benitez employed a flat back five in a bid to stem the rampant Reds.

His plans would have been in tatters inside four minutes had Mane controlled Trent Alexander-Arnold's cross as it dropped over Jamal Lascelles' head. He didn't and the chance went begging.

Then Paul Dummett managed to block Salah's half-volley with the side of his head.

Salah tried his luck again when he raced on to Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain's ball over the top to lash a flashing volley into the side-netting.

Dejan Lovren saw his header from Salah's corner saved by Toon keeper Martin Dúbravka and his follow-up was blocked by Mikel Merino.

Then a mistake by Deandre Yedelin enabled Emre Can and Roberto Firmino to free Salah only for Florian Lejune to nick the ball away from the Egyptian as he shaped to shoot.

It was turning into a frustrating night for the home side when they got a break, five es before half-time.

Jordan Henderson went centre-circle duel with Murphy.

ball took a ricochet off y's thigh and suddenly e-Chamberlain was ng towards Newcastle's ng rearguard at full pace. e midfielder's pass to ah to his right was rflection and he had time work the ball back on to s favourite left foot efore whipping his 32nd oal of the season past ubravka.

Loris Karius into a flying save. But any hope that Newcastle could claw their way back into the contest were ended 10 minutes into the second half when Mane scored his 14th goal of the season.

The Senegal striker started the move with a smart pass to Can and, when the ball was worked to Firmino, the Brazilian spotted Mane had continued his run.

When Firmino picked Mane out with a pass, he didn't miss.

Newcastle felt James Milner had handled when he blocked sub Joselu's shot - but referee Graham Scott had spotted the ball had struck the midfielder on the leg. Scott did blunder in the last minute, however, when Salah was clearly impeded by Lascelles as he broke through on goal.

There was some dispute whether contact had taken place inside the box, but it was a clear foul.

Yet, with Klopp raging on the touchline, nothing was given.

Afterwards, the Reds boss said: "The boys were brilliant and they did what they needed to do. There were two wonderful goals. Mo Salah is a very offensive midfielder, more of a striker than a holding player. He has this desire for scoring."

Benitez (left) said: "They are strong, quick and have the possession. We tried to create on the counter-attack, but still they were reacting to stop us."

They are strong, quick and have the possession... and they were reacting to stop us

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LIVERPOOL

ECHO

Past meets present as Jurgen Klopp gets a glimpse of iconic status that could await

There was a nod to the glory of the past before the Kop paid homage to the thrill of the present. With the points secure and Liverpool cruising to an ultimately routine 2-0 victory over Newcastle United, Rafa Benitez's name echoed around Anfield. The Spaniard is always welcomed back with open arms. He gave a generation of supporters the greatest night of their lives in Istanbul and served the Reds with distinction. There was no happy return for Benitez this time – a first defeat in six managerial meetings with the Reds.

But the outpouring of emotion showed Jurgen Klopp the kind of iconic status that awaits him if he can follow in his footsteps and deliver the biggest of prizes. The signs are promising. Two-and-a-half years of hard graft and shrewd transfer business has enabled Klopp to establish the perfect platform.

Liverpool sit second in the Premier League and on the brink of qualifying for the quarter-finals of the Champions League for the first time since Benitez's reign.

Belief is growing - this is a team which has evolved and improved in all departments. Increasingly, they can be trusted to deliver.

The Reds were far from their fluent best on a bitterly cold night against Newcastle, but there was something satisfying about the sight of them winning without getting out of second gear. There was no hint of panic as they battled for 40 minutes to find a way through the black and white wall in front of them.

They stuck to the task and got their reward when Mohamed Salah tucked away Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain's pass. His 32nd goal of a remarkable season puts him level with Harry Kane in the race for the Golden Boot.

Salah is now just one behind Fernando Torres' best ever haul for Liverpool and four adrift of Robbie Fowler. The record books are being re-written on a weekly basis as Kopites are treated to the sight of a genius operating at the peak of his powers.

Barring injury, Salah looks destined to become the first Reds player since Ian Rush in 1986/87 to reach the 40-goal mark. Defenders are on the receiving end of so much punishment from him that referees have now started giving them the sympathy vote.

Graham Scott produced a strong contender for worst decision of the season when he turned a blind eye to Newcastle skipper Jamaal Lascelles blatantly shoving Salah over after he had raced clear late on.

It mattered little to the outcome. Sadio Mane had already killed off the Magpies early in the second half with the 200th league goal of Klopp's tenure.

The re-energised Senegal international's 14th of the campaign means he has already surpassed his tally for last term.

Defensively, the Reds were rock solid as Virgil van Dijk and Dejan Lovren helped deliver a fourth clean sheet in the last six matches.

Loris Karius' promising revival continues unabated.

The tone was set from the opening exchanges as Newcastle defended in numbers and Liverpool took up residency in their half.

Klopp's men enjoyed 75% possession in the opening 45 minutes but prior to Salah's opener they did precious little with it.

Few managers in world football can organised a backline as well as Benitez.

Newcastle's discipline ensured there was precious little space for the Reds to operate in.

Patience was required both in the stands and on the field as Liverpool huffed and puffed in search of a breakthrough.

They didn't play poorly and there was no shortage of desire but too often moments of promise came to nothing as their final ball let them down.

Roberto Firmino scuffed wide before Salah hammered Andy Robertson's cross straight at Paul Dummett.

Jordan Henderson looked fit and fresh on his return to the midfield in place of James Milner as he snapped into tackles and kept the Reds driving forward.

In front of him the impressive Oxlade-Chamberlain built on his fine display against West Ham.

Salah went for the spectacular with a dipping volley when he latched on to Emre Can's lofted pass and nearly caught Martin Dubravka out at his near post.

Henderson and Oxlade-Chamberlain repeatedly switched play in a bid to stretch Newcastle and Firmino dropped off into midfield to make a nuisance of himself.

Lovren, who was recalled in place of Joel Matip, looked composed and confident alongside Van Dijk, whose pin-point distribution once again caught the eye.

Lovren saw his header from Salah's corner pushed away by Dubravka and Mikel Merino blocked his attempts to put away the rebound.

Liverpool were at their most dangerous when their pressing rattled Benitez's side.

Can picked Deandre Yedlin's pocket and Firmino played in Salah, but he delayed the finish and Newcastle survived.

Liverpool were in need of some inspiration and it arrived five minutes before the break.

Oxlade-Camberlain was the creator as he latched on to a loose ball and drove forward with real power and purpose.

Salah darted into space and the England international found him.

The Egyptian controlled with his right and slotted it between the keeper's legs with his lethal left foot.

In doing so Salah equalled a club record by netting in a 19th Premier League game of the season to equal a landmark set by Robbie Fowler (1994/95) and Daniel Sturridge (2013-14).

He's also the first Liverpool player to score in seven successive matches since Sturridge in February 2014.

The biggest threat to Loris Karius for most of the night was frostbite as he stood watching the action unfold.

However, on the cusp of half-time the German keeper was called into action as he expertly tipped behind Mohamed Diamo's strike at full stretch.

It was testament to Karius' concentration levels as well as his agility.

Ten minutes into the second half Liverpool had breathing space. It was a slick team move which Mane started and finished. Can and Firmino were also involved as the Brazilian flicked the ball through to Mane, who darted between Dummett and Florian Lejeune and hammered into the bottom corner.

Newcastle's game plan to contain and frustrate Liverpool lay in tatters.

Klopp fumed on the touchline when the Reds got too casual and briefly allowed the visitors to gain a foothold, but the introduction of Adam Lallana and Milner saw them quickly regain control.

Klopp couldn't hide his disgust at the sight of Lascelles getting away with cynically bringing down Salah before he could pull the trigger in stoppage time.

But the job had already been done.

If Manchester City beat Chelsea on Sunday, Klopp's side will be seven points clear of the fifth placed Londoners.

Momentum continues to grow.

MATCH FACTS

Liverpool: Liverpool: Karius, Alexander-Arnold, Lovren, Van Dijk, Robertson, Can, Henderson, Oxlade-Chamberlain (Milner 79), Salah, Firmino (Matip 88), Mane (Lallana 73). Not used: Mignolet, Gomez, Moreno, Solanke.

Newcastle: Dubravka, Dummett, Lascelles, Lejeune, Yedlin, Merino (Hayden 73), Atsu, Diame, Kenedy, Murphy (Perez 84), Gayle (Joselu 65).

Not used: Darlow, Clark, Ritchie, Manquillo.

Referee: Graham Scott Attendance: 53,287 Goals: Salah 40, Mane 55

Bookings: none

Man of the match: Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain. Made the difference by creating the crucial opener.

CHRONICLE

Frustration starts to show as Magpies remain in trouble

Newcastle United's relegation fears remain firmly intact after they emerged from Anfield with nothing to show for their efforts.

After [defeat on a freezing Merseyside night](#) next weekend's home game with Southampton now has added importance at St James' Park after the Saints nudged a little closer to United on a nervous day in the relegation battle.

Here, Newcastle's limitations were laid bare once again and it's obvious that the Toon Army aren't the only ones to notice it.

Seven of Rafa Benitez's starting XI were playing Championship football last season and while United battled for long periods, they were up against a Liverpool side that never really got out of first gear.

Newcastle needed to make some quality additions to their squad in January but managed only to bring in borrowed bodies and with only Kenedy and Martin Dubravka involved at Anfield, simply staying up will be an achievement for penny pinching United.

As anti-Mike Ashley chants emerged from the away end it even drew applause from Liverpool fans who can clearly appreciate the issues at St James' Park.

Newcastle had started the game with a five-man defence to try to cope with Jurgen Klopp's attack-minded side.

The Magpies began the game in sturdy fashion too as Jamaal Lascelles got in a fine block to deny Sadio Mane before Christian Atsu also weighed in with an important clearance.

With 14 minutes played DeAndre Yedlin ventured forward down the right but his cross was gathered by Loris Karius in front of the Kop.

Liverpool responded with a snapshot from Mo Salah but Martin Dubravka pushed the ball to safety.

An Emre Can header then sailed over the Slovakian goalkeeper's bar as Newcastle kept the home side at bay.

As the game passed the halfway point of the first phase Mikel Merino won a free-kick with Florian Lejeune taking an audacious punt from 35-yards but Karius was equal to it.

Dwight Gayle then struck an effort at goal but it ballooned harmlessly over the bar and into the Kop.

Newcastle made it beyond the half-hour mark with the scores level but switched off momentarily before the break.

On 40 minutes Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain curved a ball into the path of Salah who got ahead of Kenedy before guiding it between Dubravka's legs to open the scores.

Newcastle managed a response before the half-time whistle with Merino picking out Mo Diame.

The former Senegal international's shot was tipped away by Karius to deny United an equaliser on the stroke of half-time.

Newcastle started the second half in a shaky manner and fell behind further after a Liverpool sliced open the black and white defensive rearguard.

Roberto Firmino zipped a ball into the path of Mane who then guided it past Durbavka to put Liverpool in full control.

Benitez made his first change of the evening when Dwight Gayle was replaced by Joselu with 24 minutes to go.

As the game started to peter out, that frustration from the away end began to show and some anti-Ashley chants were heard loud and clear around Anfield.

So much so they were actually applauded by some fans on the Kop who seemed to appreciate the plight of the United faithful with Benitez's struggles in the transfer window well known on Merseyside due to their affection for the former Anfield boss.

Newcastle then seemed to opt for damage limitation tactics as Merino - who didn't take his opportunity to shine on the big stage - was replaced by Isaac Hayden.

Hayden sent a header wide on 77 minutes but Liverpool continued to look dangerous on the break.

With eight minutes left Joselu saw a shot blocked with some half-hearted appeals for a penalty coming soon after.

Just before the game ended Benitez's name was chanted by both sets of fans but the relegation anxiety on Tyneside goes on.

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| | | Times | Independent | Chronicle | | |




The Sunday Telegraph

Salah and Mane ruin Benitez's Anfield return
Liverpool 2 Salah 40, Mane 55 Newcastle United 0 Att: 53,287
Rafa Benitez's Anfield reunion ended with a comfortable defeat as Liverpool re-established their Champions League credentials.
It was a routine win for Jurgen Klopp's, Liverpool ending a winless streak against the former coach.
Benitez had led a side against Liverpool five times during his career at Valencia, Chelsea and Newcastle United going into this game.
From the moment Mohamed Salah struck his 32nd goal of the season just before half-time, Benitez was destined to suffer.
Salah's mission to break every club goalscoring record in his first season continues - and he was denied, what looked a clear penalty, in added time - but it did not matter as Sadio Mane struck to double the lead early in the second half.
There is a growing tendency with Klopp's Liverpool to assess what, on the surface, seems thoroughly impressive and exceedingly enjoyable, only to work towards the conclusion it is not so remarkable until they win a trophy.
This was further evidence of the most entertaining Anfield team since the club's last league title in 1990.
Players like Salah, who arrived brimming with potential rather than the finished article, are edging closer to world-class status by the week; they have not just beaten sides this year, they have dismantled them.
Going to Anfield has been an enriching experience for as long a period a generation of match-goers can remember. It is still not enough, of course.
"Yes, they play well, but until they win something they have achieved nothing," will remain the caveat, these weekly fun festivals contaminated until such time everyone goes home with a shiny prize. Despite that, there is also a dollop of churlishness behind the idea strict conditions must be applied, before we offer adulation to what Klopp has done in the early years of his reign.
Second place would be progress, and the concern here was they were fourth behind Tottenham Hotspur and Manchester United at the start of play.
There was also the fact Benitez's returns to Merseyside always provoke a curious atmosphere, respect for the former manager in danger of impacting on the current generation.
Perhaps recalling Newcastle's 2-2 draw on their past visit two seasons ago, Klopp seemed to fear as much. "For the duration of the game, the goodwill is packed away. Rafa wants the points we crave," he wrote in his match notes.
The Kop's early echoing of the away end's chanting of Benitez's name suggests fewer buy a match programme these days. The goodwill was then parked, however, especially as the home side recognised a pragmatic strategy from a former era needed the highest tempo.
Newcastle stretched five defenders across Anfield, covered by four midfield anchormen, and dared Liverpool to find a way through, while Dwight Gayle gave his hamstrings a workout chasing every clearance as a lone forward.
For 40 minutes, Liverpool were frustrated, although there were enough individual errors in the away side to offer encouragement.
The first from captain Jamaal Lascelles should have led to the opening goal after five minutes, Mane was unable to control when a clear shooting chance beckoned.
Liverpool pushed on, Newcastle's organisation not matched by individual poise. Salah volleyed into the sidenetting, and a series of corners by the Egyptian had Newcastle keeper Martin Dubravka flapping.
Inevitably, Salah would eventually score himself. Of course he did. He always does. By scoring his 32nd goal of the season he was matching Newcastle's total going into this fixture.
Jacob Murphy was careless, losing in the one area Benitez would have compelled his midfielders to be most diligent, and Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain rushed through the gears before picking out Salah. He had time to work the ball onto his left foot and beat Dubravka.
A few weeks ago the idea of Salah reaching the 40-goal mark seemed a fantasy. No longer.
Benitez's game plan needed instant refining, but there was almost an immediate response when Mohamed Diame's curling shot was pushed away from the top corner by Loris Karius.
Karius made a similar intervention against West Ham United. As his confidence improves, quality is showing. Liverpool upped the pace again at the start of the second half, Salah beseeching the referee to penalise Lascelles or handball after another attempt from the edge of the penalty area.
But Mane slotted in the second on 55 minutes and Benitez's notes - which he continued to scribble furiously - would have made fascinating reading.
Klopp now moves on trying to replicate Benitez's European feats, while Benitez must strive to keep Newcastle in the Premier League.
Liverpool (4-3-3) Karius 7; Robertson 7, Van Dijk 7, Lovren 7, Alexander-Arnold 7; Can 6, Henderson 7, Oxlade-Chamberlain 8 (Milner 79); Mane 7 (Lallana 73), Firmino 8 (Matip 88), Salah 8. Subs Mignolet (g), Gomez, Moreno, Solanke.
Newcastle United (5-4-1) Dubravka 5; Dummett 5, Lascelles 4, Lejeune 5, Yedlin 5, Kenedy 5; Diame 5, Merino 5 (Hayden 73), Atsu 5, Murphy 4 (Perez 84); Gayle 5 (Joselu 65).
Subs Darlow (g), Clark, Ritchie, Manquillo. Referee Graham Scott (Oxfordshire).

Date: 3 March 2018
Opposition: Newcastle United
Competition: League

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THE SUNDAY TIMES

Liverpool stride into second

LIVERPOOL 2 Salah 40, Mane 55 NEWCASTLE UNITED 0 Jonathan Northcroft

Football correspondent The return of Rafa Benitez might have once provoked nostalgia at Anfield but the here and now is too sweet for that, for Liverpool fans presently. Yet another goal for Mohamed Salah and yet another self-assured win brought their side back to second in the Premier League. A team that were flaky in autumn now look a machine coming into spring.

Fixing their back four has helped effect the change. This was another match through which Virgil van Dijk strolled, and Andy Robertson ran and ran, and behind them Loris Karius was as convincing as he — or indeed Simon Mignolet — has ever seemed. But the power of Jurgen Klopp's side remains in its forward line. Salah's deadly first touch and deadlier finishing swung a tight first half their way in the 40th minute, and a sublime team attack, finished by Sadio Mane, sealed the victory in the 54th.

Around those points, Newcastle made the assignment awkward thanks to Benitez's tactical wiles — but thanks to the energy, and passing, and pressing of Klopp's players there were still enough chances for them to have scored more. In stoppage time, Salah twice felt he should have had penalties — and the first instance seemed a convincing claim.

Two-nil was enough, though, to raise Liverpool back above Manchester United and into vague sight of Manchester City. Though their team tried well enough the defeat was also sufficient for travelling Geordies, who were magnificently noisy, to sing again for owner Mike Ashley to please get out of their club.

One of Benitez's mantras is that football comes down to "details" and Liverpool underlined that to Newcastle brutally. Few set sides up so well to contain as their manager and for 40 minutes Newcastle's were exactly as Benitez wanted them to be: tight lines, a bank of four and a bank of five, small spaces between their players and diligent at funnelling across to close opponents in the wide areas.

They were conservative with the ball, hitting it long to avoid pressing. It was 0-0 and Anfield was quiet. You knew that the best thing they could do was keep focused on their spoiling, and almost the worst would be to pursue any of their own attacking ideas.

But then young Jacob Murphy intercepted in the centre circle. He did not have the ball under control, yet colleagues began moving — just slightly — into positive positions. Then Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain won the loose ball back, and suddenly there were gaps. Escaping Mo Diame, Oxlade-Chamberlain drove towards the area and passed to Salah who — as he does — immediately found space. With his right foot Salah killed the ball and with his left he swiftly struck a shot that cannoned off Martin Dubravka's thigh and went in through his legs. In the main stand, fans waved an Egyptian flag and in the Kop they began their long "Mo Salah" song.

Diame very nearly equalised just before the interval but Loris Karius got up and across and kept his hand big to shovel the ball to safety. A terrific save: Diame's lifted, curling, effort appeared bound for the top corner. 1-0 at half-time, then, despite all Newcastle's work. You cannot give Salah an inch though — before his goal, even when there were no gaps, he managed to scamper onto balls in the box, smashing one brilliant shot from a difficult angle just into the side netting and in the 11th minute striking a volley against Paul Dummett's arms — no penalty, for contact was accidental.

Jamaal Lascelles, a little more dubiously, was given similar benefit of the doubt when Salah's drive hit his arms in the 51st minute but Newcastle were beginning to feel the weight of Liverpool's pressure. Klopp's is a side who when they score do not sit back but go even harder. They scored again by pass-ing their way right through Newcastle's middle - something you almost never see happen to Benitez teams.

It began in Liverpool's own half, with a move that swept cross-field to Sadio Mane, who touched to Emre Can, who found Oxlade-Chamberlain, who drove down the centre of the pitch. Mane had continued his run and now bent it to arrive in a centre-forward's position. Oxlade-Chamberlain slipped the ball through and Mane beat Dubravka.

Benitez scribbled in his notebook.

Klopp reached for his substitutes' board and sent on Adam Lallana for Mane and James Milner for Oxlade-Chamberlain.

He could give those stars a little rest, and there will be rotation against Porto on Tuesday with Liverpool already 5-0 up in their Champions League game. Since losing to West Brom in the FA Cup, all has gone rather serenely for Liverpool. They could be in worse shape, building up to face Manchester United on Saturday.

Star man: Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain (Liverpool) Referee: G Scott Attendance: 53,287 Liverpool: Karius, Alexander-Arnold, Lovren, Van Dijk, Robertson, Oxlade-Chamberlain (Milner 79min), Henderson, Can, Salah, Firmino (Matip 88min), Mane (Lallana 74min) Substitutes: Mignolet, Gomez, Moreno, Solanke Newcastle United: Dubravka, Lascelles, Lejeune, Dummett, Yedlin, Merino (Hayden 73min), Diame, Kenedy, Murphy (Perez 84min), Atsu, Gayle (Joselu 66min) Substitutes: Darlow, Clark, Manquillo, Ritchie

TheObserver

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BBC

Jurgen Klopp said he "loves the goals" Mohamed Salah is scoring after his Liverpool side consolidated their place in the Premier League top four with a comfortable victory over Newcastle.

With five minutes left of a wasteful first half for the Reds, Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain drove through the away side's lines and played in Salah for his 24th goal of the league season.

With no real outlet in attack, the Magpies were under constant pressure at Anfield and they buckled again when Sadio Mane swept the home side further ahead from Roberto Firmino's pass - the 200th top-flight goal under their German manager.

Salah might have added a late third, too. As he broke clear in injury time, it looked like he was shoved in the back by Jamaal Lascelles. Klopp said it was a "special view" not to give a foul and "definitely a red card" as the forward went down with just the keeper to beat.

"I love the goals he's scored, I love his assists. I love this player," he added of Salah.

"He's doing so well, but all the others have exactly the same importance and he knows that."

Saturday's win moves Liverpool above Manchester United into second place - at least until their rivals play at Crystal Palace on Monday.

The gap to leaders Manchester City is 15 points, with Pep Guardiola's side in action at home to Chelsea on Sunday.

Newcastle, whose best chance saw Mohamed Diame denied by Loris Karius' fine save just before half-time, drop to 16th after Swansea's 4-1 home win over West Ham.

Rafael Benitez's side are two points above the relegation zone with nine matches to play.

Salah just keeps scoring

This was Egypt forward Salah's 32nd goal in 38 games in all competitions for Liverpool this season, and the 26th competitive match in which he's scored.

By comparison, the entire Newcastle squad has managed 31 goals in total this term.

His finish - left-footed, of course, and through the legs of on-loan keeper Martin Dubravka - had a slight element of fortune in that it ricocheted in off Dubravka's calf, but there was no doubt it came with the run of play.

Newcastle had been camped in banks of five but after Oxlade-Chamberlain, again impressive, pounced on a turnover in possession and opened up space with a determined run and Salah drifted into the perfect spot to put his side ahead. From there they never looked back.

In the context of Champions League qualification, Liverpool are now seven points clear of fifth-placed Chelsea, who have a game in hand, but first comes Tuesday's last-16 second-leg with FC Porto in this year's competition. They lead 5-0 lead from the first leg.

Bigger days to come for Newcastle

In recent matches at Manchester City and Bournemouth, Newcastle started games as they did here - stubborn and hard to break down.

But just as in their 3-1 defeat at City, and their 2-2 draw at the Cherries (after leading 2-0), resilience washed away.

The strategy appeared to be to keep Liverpool at bay for as long as possible and take any chances when they came.

Maybe if Diame's curling shot - destined for the top corner - had not been brilliantly matched by Karius' glove, the second half would have told a different story.

Regardless, this defeat at Anfield will not define how Newcastle's season ends. There are more important games to come.

Three of their nine remaining league matches are against other teams threatened by relegation - and games at home to Southampton and Huddersfield are two of their next three.

Analysis: Eye-catching Henderson

Jordan Henderson caught my eye because he showed off his passing range. Sometimes he has been criticised for not being positive with his passing but we saw the full range of his passing against Newcastle.

When it comes to England, you think Eric Dier an Jack Wilshere but in terms of defensive capabilities, Henderson is the best.

Man of the match - Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain (Liverpool)

Unbeaten in 22 - the stats

Liverpool are unbeaten in 22 successive home league games against Newcastle United. They last lost to them at Anfield in April 1994.

The Reds have scored in 22 consecutive home matches against Newcastle - a Premier League record run.

Salah has scored in each of his past seven games for Liverpool in all competitions - the last player to do so in more was Daniel Sturridge in February 2014, with eight. It took 97 games for Liverpool to reach 200 Premier League goals under Klopp - the only managers to have reached 200 goals quicker with their clubs were Manuel Pellegrini at Manchester City (84 games) and Brendan Rodgers at Liverpool (96 games).

What the managers said

Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp, speaking to BBC Sport: "I very often forget the result during the game so even though we were 2-0 up I did feel we had to control the

game better.

"But then when you step out on the pitch, you realise the wind, so it was difficult to do the right thing in the right moment. We scored two wonderful goals and for sure should have had a penalty but didn't.

"They defended really well and are a good team with quality. We lost a few balls we don't usually lose and Roberto Firmino didn't have much support. It caused a few problems but not too many."

Newcastle manager Rafa Benitez, also speaking to BBC Sport: "We were playing against a dangerous team. We know they have the pace up front. We managed to 40 minutes then it was a mistake.

"We had to go for it in the second half and were then more open. You have to keep the balance to be stronger in the defence and create chances in attack.

"We are learning but we are still making mistakes against teams. We are improving but this team has to get points.

"I am pleased with the fans. The Liverpool fans were really good for me."

What's next?

Liverpool play FC Porto at home in the Champions League last-16 second leg on Tuesday. They next play in the league at Manchester United on Saturday (12:30 GMT kick-off).

Newcastle's next match is at home to Southampton in the league on Saturday (15:00).

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BBC

Match ends, Liverpool 2, Newcastle United 0.
90'+4' Second Half ends, Liverpool 2, Newcastle United 0.
90'+1' Foul by Virgil van Dijk (Liverpool).
90'+1' Ayoze Pérez (Newcastle United wins a free kick in the defensive half.
89' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Mohamed Diamé.
88' Substitution, Liverpool. Joel Matip replaces Roberto Firmino.
87' Adam Lallana (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing.
87' Foul by DeAndre Yedlin (Newcastle United).
84' Substitution, Newcastle United. Ayoze Pérez replaces Jacob Murphy.
83' Attempt blocked. Joselu (Newcastle United left footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Jamaal Lascelles with a headed pass.
82' Foul by Jordan Henderson (Liverpool).
82' Isaac Hayden (Newcastle United wins a free kick on the right wing.
81' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Isaac Hayden.
81' Attempt blocked. Jordan Henderson (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked.
81' Attempt blocked. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked.
80' Emre Can (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
80' Foul by Kenedy (Newcastle United).
79' Substitution, Liverpool. James Milner replaces Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain.
77' Attempt missed. Isaac Hayden (Newcastle United header from the centre of the box is close, but misses to the right. Assisted by Christian Atsu with a cross following a corner.
77' Corner, Newcastle United. Conceded by Dejan Lovren.
77' Attempt blocked. Kenedy (Newcastle United right footed shot from outside the box is blocked.
76' Offside, Liverpool. Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain tries a through ball, but Adam Lallana is caught offside.
74' Substitution, Liverpool. Adam Lallana replaces Sadio Mané.
73' Substitution, Newcastle United. Isaac Hayden replaces Mikel Merino.
73' Attempt blocked. Jacob Murphy (Newcastle United right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Christian Atsu.
69' Offside, Liverpool. Emre Can tries a through ball, but Andrew Robertson is caught offside.
69' Emre Can (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
69' Foul by Mohamed Diamé (Newcastle United).
68' Andrew Robertson (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing.
68' Foul by DeAndre Yedlin (Newcastle United).
68' Attempt blocked. Virgil van Dijk (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Dejan Lovren with a headed pass.
67' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Kenedy.
66' Substitution, Newcastle United. Joselu replaces Dwight Gayle.
61' Foul by Andrew Robertson (Liverpool).
61' Mikel Merino (Newcastle United wins a free kick on the right wing.
55' Goal! Liverpool 2, Newcastle United 0. Sadio Mané (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box to the bottom right corner. Assisted by Roberto Firmino.
52' Foul by Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain (Liverpool).
52' Kenedy (Newcastle United wins a free kick on the left wing.
52' Attempt blocked. Mohamed Salah (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Andrew Robertson.
48' Hand ball by Jacob Murphy (Newcastle United).
48' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Paul Dummett.
Second Half begins Liverpool 1, Newcastle United 0.
45'+2' First Half ends, Liverpool 1, Newcastle United 0.
45'+1' Corner, Newcastle United. Conceded by Virgil van Dijk.
45'+1' Corner, Newcastle United. Conceded by Loris Karius.
45'+1' Attempt saved. Mohamed Diamé (Newcastle United left footed shot from outside the box is saved in the top left corner. Assisted by Mikel Merino.
42' Attempt missed. Sadio Mané (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box is high and wide to the left. Assisted by Roberto Firmino.
40' Goal! Liverpool 1, Newcastle United 0. Mohamed Salah (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box to the high centre of the goal. Assisted by Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain.
38' Mohamed Salah (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
38' Foul by Florian Lejeune (Newcastle United).
34' Offside, Newcastle United. Mikel Merino tries a through ball, but Dwight Gayle is caught offside.
33' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Mohamed Diamé.
33' Attempt blocked. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool header from the right side of the six yard box is blocked. Assisted by Mohamed Salah with a cross.
33' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Paul Dummett.
31' Offside, Liverpool. Virgil van Dijk tries a through ball, but Andrew Robertson is caught offside.
29' Attempt missed. Dwight Gayle (Newcastle United right footed shot from outside the box is too high. Assisted by Christian Atsu.
29' Foul by Sadio Mané (Liverpool).
29' Christian Atsu (Newcastle United wins a free kick on the right wing.
28' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Florian Lejeune.
28' Attempt blocked. Mohamed Salah (Liverpool right footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Roberto Firmino.
27' Attempt blocked. Dejan Lovren (Liverpool header from the left side of the six yard box is blocked.
27' Attempt saved. Dejan Lovren (Liverpool header from the centre of the box is saved in the top left corner. Assisted by Mohamed Salah with a cross.

26' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Florian Lejeune.
24' Virgil van Dijk (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.
24' Foul by Dwight Gayle (Newcastle United).
23' Attempt saved. Florian Lejeune (Newcastle United right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom left corner.
23' Foul by Roberto Firmino (Liverpool).
23' Mikel Merino (Newcastle United wins a free kick in the attacking half.
22' Foul by Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain (Liverpool).
22' Kenedy (Newcastle United wins a free kick in the defensive half.
18' Attempt missed. Emre Can (Liverpool header from the centre of the box is close, but misses to the left. Assisted by Trent Alexander-Arnold with a cross following a set piece situation.
18' Mohamed Salah (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.
18' Foul by Mikel Merino (Newcastle United).
16' Attempt missed. Mohamed Salah (Liverpool left footed shot from the left side of the box is close, but misses to the left. Assisted by Emre Can with a through ball.
12' Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing.
12' Foul by Mikel Merino (Newcastle United).
12' Attempt blocked. Mohamed Salah (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Roberto Firmino with a headed pass.
6' Offside, Liverpool. Sadio Mané tries a through ball, but Andrew Robertson is caught offside.
First Half begins.
Lineups are announced and players are warming up.