

Date: 17 January 1987

Opposition: Manchester City

Competition: League

Times	Sunday Times	

17 January 1987

# THE TIMES

Time might be ripe for Dalglish to swap his suit for a playing strip  
Manchester City ..... 0 Liverpool ..... 1

It would not have taken an injury at Maine Road to promote Ian Snodin from the substitutes' bench if he had chosen to join Liverpool instead of Everton. The cunning of Liverpool's midfield was as notable by its absence as was that of their most crafty individual, Kenny Dalglish, the 'player-manager'.

For the 15th time in the last 17 games Dalglish fulfilled only half the duties expected of him. Again he put down his absence to an ankle injury, and I suppose at nearly 36 years of age he is entitled to be troubled by injuries. Yet there is a lameness about his excuse that reminds you of the schoolboy who seeks to avoid PT.

Not that I am suggesting for a moment that he is feigning injury but the lack of any disappointment at his persistent absence from the team encourages one to think that he is happy enough just trying to steer Liverpool from afar towards a successful defence of their title. Perhaps that is the new target in his career; to be recognised solely for his managerial talent.

The situation is much the same as it was this time last season when Liverpool were also languishing in third place. It was only when Dalglish picked himself with any regularity that Liverpool found that higher gear which drove them relentlessly on to the double. Dalglish did not return then until early March when they were eight points behind. One senses that the Liverpool superman cannot afford to leave it so late this time to change out of his manager's suit and into the stirring all-red strip.

Liverpool were fortunate to keep pace with the leaders on Saturday when their hosts, Manchester City, deserved a little more other than the financial reward from staging half the first division's entertainment. A crowd of 35,336 were still filing into the ground long after kick-off.

They must have left largely unimpressed with the champions. Liverpool's shortage of inspiration in midfield has meant a shortage upfront, just four goals now in seven games. The arrival of Aldridge may not do too much to change that since Rush has gobbled up what few crumbs there have been. Yet I do not believe that Rush would have missed the offering that Walsh did in the last minute from two yards despite Suckling's interference to McMahan's cross. November 1 was the last time and the only time Walsh has scored this season though Dalglish thought that this was one of his best games.

Apart from Wilson, at left back, there was little reason why Liverpool should have been so starved. It meant that their own defence could not afford the merest hiccup and it was just as well that Hansen, Lawrenson and Gillespie were at their most majestic. In fairness to City it was men against boys.

One chance is as much as you are likely to get against the Liverpool defence and Beckford and White, the two teenage strikers, both wasted their quota. Another prodigal son, Barnes, back after eight years, was still flattering to deceive and Varadi, their fourth striker, was perhaps the least effective of all. At least in McNab they had some invention behind them.

Liverpool, in the end, had to dig deeper for theirs. Lawrenson took it upon himself to make some timely incursions into the opposition's penalty area. One of Lawrenson's great strengths, though, is knowing the limitation of those strengths. So when McMahan invited him to lope into the area in the 72nd minute on legs that seemed to go up to his armpits he resisted the temptation to shoot from an angle which would have been wide enough for the more obtuse. Instead he rolled the ball across the face of goal where any number of feet might have made the necessary connection. In the event, inevitably, it was one of Rush's.

MANCHESTER CITY: P Suckling; J Gidman, C Wilson, K Clements, M McCarthy, S Redmond, D White, N McNab, I Varadi, D Beckford, P Barnes.

LIVERPOOL: B Grobbelaar; G Gillespie, J Beglin, M Lawrenson, R Whelan, A Hansen, P Walsh, C Johnston, I Rush, J Molby, S McMahan.

Referee: J Watson

# THE SUNDAY TIMES

City look far too shy  
Manchester City ..... 0 Liverpool ..... 1

RAISING their game somewhat in the second half, Liverpool gained an important, if scarcely comfortable win at Maine Road. For City, the ubiquitous McNab, the insidious Varadi, and the two determined centre-backs never gave up. But City, when they do make chances, are remarkably shy of exploiting them.

Manchester City welcomed back the prodigal son, Peter Barnes, who so promisingly began his career here, and now returns after many adventures and disappointments to try again.

After 10 minutes, we had a moment which perhaps epitomised what is both wrong and right with his game. He glided between two Liverpool defenders on the left as though they were not there, then, with what seemed abundant time, put over a ridiculously long and inaccurate cross.

Directly in opposition to him was the exuberant Craig Johnston, whose pace, energy, incisiveness and readiness to work up and down the right wing has been one of the few positive aspects of Liverpool's play in recent weeks. City decided to live dangerously once again, with only McNab and the solid Redmond in midfield, against Liverpool's battery of midfield men.

Among these Molby inevitably in the circumstances found himself given a great deal of space; always a dangerous indulgence.

But Molby, though there were moments of exquisite class, did not make full use of his relative freedom. For City, meanwhile, you might have said that Varadi was the spice of life.

In the first half, a desperate Lawrenson, tormented by his speed and diabolic turn, brought him down suspiciously near the edge of the box, but only a free-kick resulted.

Early in the second period, Varadi left Gillespie standing, but when he cut in from the left, he surprisingly allowed Hansen to kick clear.

Again he got away electrically on the left, this time for a long, splendid cross which White, roaring in from the right, struck only just wide of the far post. But Liverpool's attacks were looking increasingly promising. Whelan actually beat Suckling with a long, looping shot from the left, which Wilson headed out from under the bar. Then Whelan had another, very concrete opportunity, after a devastating solo by McMahan, but his shot was soft.

Sixteen minutes from time, Liverpool did score, Rush, seldom evident until then, both starting and finishing the move. McMahan carried it on, Lawrenson overlapped devastatingly on the right and Rush had no difficulty, closing in on the far post.

City never surrendered. The always irrepressible McNab had a left-footed curver which Grobbelaar was glad to hold. Then Wilson beat Walsh on the left, delivering a cross which skimmed Varadi's head, to be headed just wide of that same far post by the previously ineffective Beckford.

There was still time for the adventurous Robinson, served by Rush to lob Suckling, only for the ball to bounce wide.

Weather: very cold. Ground: quite soft.

Goals: Rush (74min) 0-1.

Manchester City (4-2-4): Suckling; Gidman, Clements, McCarthy, Wilson; Redmond, McNab; White, Varadi, Beckford, Barnes.

Liverpool (4-4-2): Grobbelaar; Lawrenson, Gillespie, Hansen, Beglin; Johnston, Whelan, Molby, McMahan; Rush, Walsh.

Referee: J L Watson (Whitley Bay).