

Date: 22 March 1989  
 Opposition: Coventry City  
 Competition: League

Times		

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# THE TIMES

## Liverpool keep the pressure on

Coventry City 1 Liverpool 3

The seeds of doubt about Arsenal's capacity to reach the championship finishing line ahead of Liverpool must now be growing into full-blown fears. As Highbury lamented the loss of two points to Charlton Athletic 24 hours earlier, the Merseysiders arrogantly maintained their seasonal challenge, at Highfield Road, with a sequence that is now worth 20 points from a possible 24.

With 11 matches ahead of them, only the misguided would regard Liverpool as too far back to have real hopes of retaining the title they earlier seemed to have conceded.

In stunning spasms, this was Liverpool at their best, with the decisive goals coming from Barnes, Aldridge and Whelan after Coventry had given the game a curious introduction. They had bombarded Liverpool's penalty area with dangerous thrusts for 10 minutes only to shoot themselves in the foot when Kilcline passed the ball virtually along Coventry's 18-yard line in front of goal direct to, of all people, the unmarked Barnes. The England winger capitalized on the unforced error to collect an easy ninth goal of the season, and Liverpool were in full flight.

Over the next 18 minutes, until Aldridge made it 2-0, Liverpool dismantled Coventry's defence so comprehensively that little discernible pattern remained. The second goal arrived immediately after a shot by McMahon that went in off the post was ruled out.

He need not have fretted. Within seconds Ogrizovic could not hold Staunton's long-range blast and Barnes pushed the rebound across goal to the predatory Aldridge.

John Sillett, the Coventry manager, has described Liverpool's progress as "steam-rolling", and his players could have been excused for feeling flattened, even though Phillips and Smith had raided threateningly along the wings and Speedie had twice almost chipped the ball over Grobbelaar's head.

To their credit, Coventry refused to allow the disappointment to linger and four minutes before the break Smith's right-wing cross was nodded down by Regis for Bannister to finish it off.

Liverpool quickly resurrected their game with some explosive one-touch football, yet it was a move of individual composure which took them to a 3-1 lead after 51 minutes. Whelan was the scorer just after Ogrizovic's full stretch was required to touch McMahon's cross shot around the post. Coventry's goalkeeper was moving just far forward off his line for the Liverpool player to hold fire before looping a 20-yard lob over his head and under the bar from out on the right.

To keep his side in with a ghost of a chance, Ogrizovic had to dive frantically at Aldridge's feet, while Staunton then rolled a shot right across the face of the goal and wide of the far post. Coventry sent on their substitutes, Houchen and Thompson in place of Smith and Phillips, in the hope soon to prove a vain one that fresh legs might help.

COVENTRY CITY: S Ogrizovic; B Borrow, T Dobson, D Emerson, B Kilcline, T Peake, D Phillips (sub: K Houchen), D Speedie, C Regis, G Bannister, D Smith (sub: K Thompson).

LIVERPOOL: B Grobbelaar; G Ablett, S Staunton, S Nicol, R Whelan, G Gillespie, P Beardsley, J Aldridge, R Houghton, J Barnes, S McMahon.

Referee: D Axcell.