

Date: 9 March 1991  
 Opposition: Manchester City  
 Competition: League

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## THE SUNDAY TIMES

Man in black puts Liverpool in the pink

Manchester City 0 Liverpool 3

MANCHESTER CITY 0

(4-4-2): Coton; Brightwell, Hendry, Redmond, Pointon; White, Reid, Megson (sub: Heath 81min), Ward; Quinn, Allen.

LIVERPOOL 3

(4-4-2): Grobbelaar; Nicol, Ablett, Hysen, Burrows; Barnes, Houghton, Molby, Speedie; Rush (sub: Rosenthal 82min), Beardsley.

Goals: Molby (pen 39min) 0-1; Molby (pen 45min) 0-2; Barnes (85min) 0-3.

Weather: overcast. Ground: damp.

Referee: G Courtney (Spennymoor).

GEORGE COURTNEY, a man of unimpeachable credentials and a whistle, won this match for Liverpool. Without him and his gallant generosity in awarding the Merseyside club two penalties one of them dubious to the point of non-existence their slide into sustained mediocrity would still be on.

Sympathy has to lie with Manchester City. They were vying to become the fourth link of the chain of losses that Liverpool dragged into the match and for the first half hour this honour looked distinctly possible.

Liverpool players looked tight of nerve but not defence and the thought of a shot on goal seemed not to enter their heads. Spurned by more managers than Andrew Lloyd Webber has had wives, it is hardly surprising that the jitters linger on.

Whether Hysen wears a black armband because he is captain or because he is mourning his mistakes in advance is a mystery. But the latter was favourite following two suspect clearances in a matter of moments, one from a White cross and the other from a Megson shot.

Even Barnes was drafted in to plug gaps at the back, his attacking enterprise reduced to a lob over Coton who had temporarily mislaid his penalty area. The effort, though picturesque, sailed high.

Ill-temper broke out in pockets and offside traps laid by City were regularly sprung. Courtney's whistle provided regular, almost rhythmic, percussion.

One genuine chance threatened to happen when Ablett tripped Allen on the very edge of the penalty area, but Redmond's free kick progressed only as far as the Liverpool wall.

When it came, the first goal of the game was a fitting combination of foul and whistle. Coton, horribly exposed by his defence, brought down Beardsley and Molby insinuated the penalty low into the right corner. There should have been no argument about this one as Coton discovered when he was booked for dissent. But there was a right royal row about Liverpool's second penalty five minutes later. The facts of the case are simple. A Houghton through-ball, Rush on the break and a clean lunge to clear the ball by the goal-keeper. City fans could scarcely believe it when Courtney signalled penalty number two. Molby struck again.

You might say the referee was fearless. You might also say he was wrong. Peter Reid, the City player-manager, who watched these events unfold from midfield, was careful not to say the referee was wrong. He did, however, make a brief visit to the referee's room after the match. "I just said: 'Good game,'" he said ingenuously.

The penalties effectively killed the contest. Liverpool were loosening up under the influence of new-found confidence and City were seizing up with over-anxiousness.

Even so, City fought like terriers to worry their way back into contention. A substantial number of close-range half chances continued to ruffle the visitors' defence and Grobbelaar was forced to make several pertinent saves, particularly one in the first half from Hendry following a smart header forward by Quinn.

At first it appeared Liverpool had decided not to bother with shots on goal. They reclined on their luxurious two-penalty cushion, content to exploit the odd break, while City puffed and panted vainly. But eventually they bestirred themselves to strike.

Barnes held the distinction of being the first Liverpool player to hit a shot almost on target which did not emanate from the penalty spot. This was midway through the second half.

Teammates began following suit. Molby provided a supreme service from midfield and Speedie made his usual contribution to the game. He was booked. It was hard to know who finished the match on a greater note of audacity: Barnes for scoring a typically angled goal in the last five minutes or the Liverpool fans for singing: "We're gonna win the League..."

And talking of shameless, what a pity the new columnist of the Sunday Scot, a tabloid launched in Scotland this weekend, could not be with us. This columnist, a man of many silences is none other than Kenny Dalglish. He has, of course, one terrific advantage as a prose stylist. He will never have to interview that monosyllabic and antagonistic bane of a journalist's life, Kenny Dalglish.

If there were any justice in this world, he would be immediately elevated to chat show host with Lester Piggott as his first guest.

## the guardian

Courtney's pens put City to the sword

MANCHESTER CITY rattled their sabres in the face of Liverpool for almost the whole of the first half on Saturday only to have it confirmed by George Courtney that the pen is mightier than the sword. Two pens, to be exact.

Cometh Courtney, cometh controversy. Another visit to Lancaster Gate to 'clarify matters' as the lawyers like to say looks in order for the Spennymoor referee.

In the 35th minute Allen, on a clear run at goal, was fouled by Ablett, perhaps more a clumsy, off-balance tackle than a calculated foul. City were awarded a free-kick, and Courtney kept his cards to his chest. 'I asked him about this incident afterwards, but he did not see it the way I did,' said City's manager, Peter Reid. Courtney has, in fact, used his discretion consistently, save for the occasion at Old Trafford when he sent off Case for tripping Robson some 40 yards from goal. In that same FA Cup tie, he awarded Southampton a penalty when Sealey took the legs away from Rod Wallace, but the Manchester United goalkeeper escaped punishment. On Saturday Coton, the last line of defence, felled first Beardsley, then Rush.

'I don't argue with referees over penalties,' added Reid. The FA, on the other hand, might wonder why, under the Fifa guidelines, Courtney did not dismiss the City goalkeeper. Coton was booked on the first occasion, but for dissent rather than the foul.

The City fans, naturally enough, were more concerned that Coton had fouled neither Beardsley nor Rush and afforded the referee a verbally torrid exit at both half- and full-time. As the roistering mob gave vent, Liverpool slipped quietly stage left, a long fortnight having ended with a sharp, if initially fortuitous, upturn in fortune.

The English have a tendency to admire superiority but also to loathe it. There has been no hiding the collective glee at Liverpool's recent demise and there were times in the first half when the champions displayed such an edgy fragmentation that it seemed City might sweep up the bits. On one occasion Grobbelaar, trying to locate Barnes, threw the ball directly into touch, and the two players exchanged baleful looks. Very un-Liverpool.

Barnes, indeed, apart from a goal which he took sweetly enough, clung to his touchline with the demeanour of a man who had had it up to the epiglottis and could not wait for his contract to run out.

Quinn, who took a knock on the knee, was never the expected threat to Liverpool's creaking defence, and although Kendall and Reid have, in turn, worked hard on the advantages accrued by not wantonly losing possession, it still comes hard to many City players.

Liverpool, their confidence much bolstered by Molby's double penalty strike, looked much more like their old selves by the end. Certainly, there was no doubting Ronnie Moran's pleasure. He could barely stop talking. Unlike that other chap.

SCORERS: Liverpool: Molby (pens, 39 and 44min), Barnes (86).

Manchester City: Coton; Brightwell, Pointon, Reid, Hendry, Redmond, White, Allen, Quinn, Megson (Heath, 81), Ward.

Liverpool: Grobbelaar; Hysen, Burrows, Nicol, Molby, Ablett, Beardsley, Houghton, Rush (Rosenthal, 82), Barnes, Speedie.

Referee: G Courtney (Spennymoor).

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# PRESS ASSOCIATION

Back with a bang

Two penalties from Danish midfielder Jan Molby gave Liverpool their first win in four games under new manager Ronnie Moran and hauled them level on points with Division One leaders Arsenal.

Having lost to Luton Town and Arsenal in the League plus Everton in the FA Cup since Kenny Dalglish's dramatic resignation as manager last month, the pressure was on Liverpool to return to winning form and keep the Championship race alive.

With Arsenal involved in an FA Cup quarter-final, Liverpool were presented with the chance to wipe out the three point gap. Maine Road though, is no easy ground to visit. Luton discovered this when they lost 3-0 here on Tuesday, Manchester City going fifth as a result.

But, against Liverpool, Manchester City supporters in the 35,000 crowd were mystified by a series of questionable decisions and lack of consistency from a man thought to be one of the world's premier referees, George Courtney.

Raced

Courtney awarded a free-kick only when Liverpool defender Gary Ablett impeded City's Clive Allen on the edge of the area during City's bright start.

But when City's 1 million pound goalkeeper Tony Coton brought down Peter Beardsley as he raced towards goal, Courtney gave a penalty and a yellow card to Coton.

Molby put the penalty past the furious Coton and there was even more controversy before half-time. Again Coton was involved, bringing down Liverpool's leading goalscorer Ian Rush. Courtney pointed to the spot but no red card was shown despite the new ruling from FIFA which states that fouling a pleyer when he is in a scoring position is an automatic dismissal. Molby, unaffected by the controversy, coolly made it 2-0.

City's rhythm looked to be disturbed by the two penalties and Liverpool cantered through the second half looking likely to cap one of their counter-attacks with a third goal.

It came in the 86th minute when John Barnes clinically finished from Ray Houghton's pass, the England forward's 12th goal of the season.

Earlier this week former Liverpool striker John Toshack, now manager of Spanish team Real Sociedad, flew to England to discuss the manager's job at Anfield. Under contract at Sociedad, Toshack informed Liverpool he was unable to take the job, leaving Liverpool to confirm Moran will be in charge at least until the end of the season.