

Date: 1 September 1992  
 Opposition: Southampton  
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## THE TIMES

Wright comes to the rescue of a hapless Liverpool

Liverpool 1 Southampton 1

AS THE final whistle signalled an extension to Liverpool's indifferent start to the season, it is debatable which of the sides at Anfield was the more relieved.

While it would be foolish to proclaim the end of an era, Liverpool's decline as a major footballing force appears to be accelerating as the loss of key individuals, both those sold and those sidelined because of injury, becomes more keenly felt. Liverpool's total of six points from their six Premier League fixtures constitutes the club's poorest start in more than three decades.

Graeme Souness, their manager, will be concerned by the response to his decision to replace Redknapp with Thomas midway through the second half. As Redknapp, an impressive component in the Liverpool midfield, trudged towards the dressing-room, booing and jeering engulfed the stadium.

In Souness's defence, it must be stressed that in the absence of the injured Stewart and the nearly-departed Saunders, he was once again forced to make changes in personnel. These inevitably disrupted the rhythm of a side which had produced a creditable performance against Leeds United at the weekend.

Rush's partner in attack, his third in as many matches, was Walters, while McManaman was introduced on the right flank to help give width to a midfield which has proved less than productive after Houghton's summer transfer to Aston Villa.

Much as they had in their previous home game, against Arsenal, Liverpool opened in sprightly enough fashion, but Flowers was only rarely threatened by their numerous forward thrusts.

Molby's fiercely driven shot from just outside the penalty area in the fourth minute was well saved by the Southampton goalkeeper, but that was to be Liverpool's best chance in a first half which contained considerable effort but little fluent football.

Although initially content to pursue a policy of resolute defence and swift counter-attack, Southampton grew in confidence as the extent of their opponents' shortcomings became apparent. Speedie should have scored in the seventeenth minute when he met Dixon's marvellous cross at the far post, but he scooped the ball over the crossbar from no more than two yards.

Dixon's sense of direction proved a good deal more reliable in the 52nd minute, when Southampton took a deserved lead. Having spent much of the evening lofting delicate passes into the heart of the Liverpool defence to no great effect, Le Tissier finally found both his range and a colleague. Dixon scored with some ease from close range: his first goal since his move from Chelsea.

So poor had been their lead-up work and so lacklustre their finishing that a Liverpool recovery seemed highly improbable, but they drew level on the hour when Wright rose unchallenged to head in Molby's superb cross from the left. LIVERPOOL: D James; R Jones, D Burrows, S Harkness, R Whelan, M Wright, S McManaman, J Redknapp (sub: M Thomas), I Rush, J Molby, M Walters.

SOUTHAMPTON: T Flowers; J Dodd, M Adams, T Hurlock, K Monkou, J Moore, M Le Tissier, N Maddison, T Dixon, D Speedie, F Benali.

Referee: R Hart.

## the guardian

Anfield's lost generation leaves space all over the place

IT WAS exciting. It had errors, near misses and two good goals: one from Dixon, his first for Southampton, and one from Wright, his first this season for Liverpool. But it was not Anfield.

Was this really the home of the club that in the recent past have captivated opponents and spectators alike with passing so fast and skilful they deceived the eye like a conjuror's hand? Can it all have been lost so quickly?

One thing gone for almost certain last night was Dean Saunders. The pitch seemed less cluttered without him, for indeed he was a player who seemed to get everywhere. But Liverpool had nothing with which to fill the space. Rarely have a Liverpool side looked so ill at ease with themselves, so shapeless and prone to error. Their youngsters try hard, the older players retain vestiges of the legend, but there is a generation gap. In fact there are lots of gaps.

Dixon sped through one left by a horribly mis-kicked short pass by Burrows. Redknapp chased after him but the Southampton striker crossed to the far post where Speedie somehow shot over.

Liverpool, whose only first-half chance had come from Molby's stinging drive which Flowers parried, seemed likely to be punished further. And in a remarkable spell of break and counter-break at the start of the second half Southampton went ahead.

Le Tissier made space on the left and put over the perfect cross for Dixon, whose side-footed volley at the far post gave England's No. 4 goalkeeper James no chance.

It was the start of some end-to-end, shoot-and-scramble football more akin to non-League cup ties.

Flowers, like a short-sighted man who had dropped his bus fare, clawed about on his knees on the goalline to keep out Whelan's effort. Seconds later Speedie, the former Anfield man, headed against the bar.

But eight minutes after the Southampton goal, Liverpool equalised when Wright headed in Molby's free-kick, leading to a hectic final quarter in which either side could have won. It was great fun but Liverpool, whose pounds 8 million Centenary stand was opened by Uefa's president Lennart Johansson before the match, will not want this for the next hundred years.

Liverpool: James; Jones, Burrows, Harkness, Whelan, Wright, McManaman, Redknapp (Thomas, 64min), Rush, Molby, Walters.

Southampton: Flowers; Dodd, Adams, Hurlock, Monkou, Moore, Le Tissier, Maddison, Dixon, Speedie, Benali.

Referee: R Hart (Darlington).

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## BRITISH SOCCER WEEK

### Dixon opener has Reds' on the back foot

Liverpool struggled to escape with a point after going behind thanks to ex-Chelsea striker Kerry Dixon's first goal for new club Southampton.

With Dean Saunders away in the Midlands discussing his proposed transfer to Aston Villa, Liverpool would have been dead and buried but for the generosity of another former Anfield striker, David Speedie, who hit the bar and missed three good chances for Southampton.

Matthew Le Tissier floated the ball over Liverpool's static rearguard for Dixon who ran in unmarked to sidefoot the ball home after 51 minutes.

Liverpool skipper Mark Wright equalised nine minutes later soaring to meet Jan Molby's free kick with a looping header into the top corner.

Molby had seen a shot well saved by keeper Tim Flowers after just four minutes, but from then on the best chances of a scrappy first-half fell to Southampton.

Dixon robbed hesitant David Burrows after 17 minutes and delivered a curling cross to the far post. It looked like a formality for the inrushing Speedie to score but he somehow missed the target.

Then after 34 minutes Micky Adams ended a left wing run with a deep raking cross which Le Tissier met sweetly on the volley with a right-foot shot that narrowly cleared the bar.

Liverpool should have equalised within two minutes of Dixon's strike, Ronnie Whelan failing to connect with Jamie Redknapp's cross on the goal-line. Flowers got across with time to parry Ian Rush's follow-up effort. Then Speedie headed against the crossbar from Adams' cross after 56 minutes.

In the closing stages substitute Michael Thomas hit the post from Steve McManaman's cross, Rush glanced a header wide and Flowers saved well from Steve Harkness as Liverpool pushed for a winner their overall performance did not deserve.