

Heskey revels in his mist chance



END OF THE DREAM: Yeovil defenders can only look on helplessly as substitute Emile Heskey fires Liverpool's opening goal at Hush Park

JOHN DILLON
at Hush Park

YEOVIL 0
LIVERPOOL 2

WHEN the mist finally parted, there was the looming figure of Emile Heskey ready to guide Liverpool to respectability.

If he had been around from the start of Gerard Houllier's cliff-walk around Hush Park's glossy and treacherous edge of calamity, it might have been safely completed a lot earlier.

After all the dreamy hopes of a giant-killing and after a lunchtime in which a wisp fog rolled in and out of Yeovil's ground, doing its best to set a suitable scene, there was eventually a business-like advance for Liverpool.

Heskey thumped in the first goal in the 76th minute. 15 minutes after his arrival as a substitute had essentially altered the pattern.

Danny Murphy then tied up the win by scoring with a penalty in the 77th minute after the elongated legs of 22-ten defender Hugo Rodriguez sideways infixed Harry Kewell.

It was an ending that made no concessions to the

insidious traditions of the competition, nor to the part Yeovil have played in creating it by their past exploits.

It was also one which forced an abatement of the criticism raging around Houllier, which prompted speculation that defeat here would signal the approaching end of his reign at Anfield - or at the very least a tervid time at this evening's shareholders AGM.

With a different ending, Houllier would have faced difficult questions about why Heskey was kept on the bench behind Florent Sinama-Pangolle and El-Hadji Diouf.

But explanations, prompted by the continued absence of Michael Owen, were fair enough. Houllier said: "We have three games in seven days

and I have two strikers still sidelined by injury, so we had to be careful."

Liverpool were nervous and confused in the first half. The territory was unfamiliar enough without the mist. At first they failed to engage with their look, while Yeovil surged with ambitious energy.

Head Jerry Dudek been keen simple in flogging himself to push away a searing, dipping volley from Gavin Williams, the Third Division side's neat domination of the early part of the game could have been turned into an historic ranspage in the record books.

In such raw circumstances, however, there awaited a scenario pitched perfectly for the powerful talents of Heskey. Yeovil's initial passion spent

and their five-man midfield less of a barrier than it had been at first to Houllier's edgy team, there had been a swing in Liverpool's favour as half-time approached.

The introduction of Heskey added it down and Liverpool's confidence and control improved immediately.

Within two minutes of his conscious sprint from the dug-out, Sami Hyypia scurried into the box and forced a fine, close-range block from keeper Chris Wain.

Then, Vladimir Smicer screwed a long-range drive through a crowd of defenders and hit Wain's left-hand post.

The clear opportunity for which Heskey had been foraging was presented to him by Murphy's tidy pass into the

right-hand section of Yeovil's penalty area. He did not hesitate and ran on to score with a firm, low drive.

Rodriguez was a gangling and highly noticeable nuisance to Liverpool's forwards all afternoon. But his outburst cost Yeovil in the 77th minute and after Kewell hit the ground, Murphy converted the penalty.

This signalled an end to the fantasy 'bovi' had harboured in the first half, when the excellent Nick Craxton had several times troubled Dudek with long, swirling shots.

The Polish keeper had also been forced to push away a powerful, dipping free-kick from Lee Johnson.

These moments of promise were no less than Yeovil deserved for the way, creative energy displayed in midfield by Darren Way and Critchenden.

Manager Gary Johnson said: "I wouldn't be unprofessional enough to say that a shock was on the cards, but we created chances. I am very proud of the boys. We made Liverpool earn their win."

Houllier added: "They gave us a very hard game. They had a lot of energy and we had a bit of luck at times. But we had the right attitude."

YEOVIL (14-4-02) Squad: Lockwood, Stovaris, Rodriguez, Platt (captain) 74; Ben Greenwell 26; Haining 77; Johnson, Way, Galt, Critchenden, Williams.

LIVERPOOL (14-4-02) Goals: Henschel, Hyypia, Smicer, Wain, Smicer (Own Goal), Rodriguez, Hernandez, Sinama-Pangolle (Own Goal), Diouf (2), Wain (2). **Booked:** Smicer, Diouf, La Sota. **Goals:** Penalty 75, Murphy 77 pen.

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