

Emile lifts the fog

Liverpool sub dashes Yeovil dream of glory

YEovil TOWN 0
LIVERPOOL 2

By MATT LAWTON

SENDING on a striker who cost roughly 340 times more than the entire Yeovil team hardly represented a tactical masterstroke at Huish Park, but for the money to buy Emile Heskey a relieved Gerard Houllier must be truly thankful.

Heskey scored the goal that put some daylight between Liverpool and their spirited hosts yesterday, ending a slog in the first with the kind of finish that would have been a replacement for Florent Sinama-Pangolle, had proved beyond his Arsenal colleagues.

Even then manager Houllier was unable to relax. Yeovil were the giant-killers who brought their own giant and so determined they to add their shutout visitors to the 29 scalps they claimed as a non-League side, despite appearing possibly out of their depth.

Fortunately for Liverpool, lowering Hugo Rodrigues ended their anxiety. Always more dangerous than his current area than he ever was in the opposition's, the 6ft 6in defender came out a telescopic leg and brought down Harry Lewis. Danny Murphy stepped up to score the 77th-minute penalty, easing the pressure on a side that battered Yeovil for much of this gritty FA Cup clash.

Not that Yeovil needed Liverpool to perform with such modesty to make them look half-decent. The team Gary Johnson scooped might have been assembled for the £40,000 but they were a team who were bridging the vast financial gap between themselves and the club who spent £1million on Heskey alone. His very good at my players, said Johnson. But he should be.

From the moment the Liverpool side rolled up outside a stadium seating a record 9,840 spectators, there was a sense of something different in green and white that an upset was a distinct possibility. The 18 cameras were in position, and as the exit rolled in across the pitch, cameras of 1400 hooded back. Well, for those old enough to remember.

It was on a snowy grey afternoon that Len Shackleton and his Sunderland team made a slip to a 2-1 defeat on a sloping pitch, one that now sits under a 19th-century roof. The scene was set for another such moment in the longest club's proud history. The Yeovil fans grew eager. Are you watching Weymouth, said they, they cried.

They started well. Terry Silverton, a Chelsea reject

who sold photocopies and even tried acting before being recruited by Johnson, marshalled the defence, while Lee Johnson and Darren Way ran their hearts out in midfield. Paul Terry also did well in front of younger brother John, proving on the right until injury forced him left.

A Nick Crossin cross which brought a desperate save from Jerry Dudek set the tone for the first half, with Johnson then leaving the Liverpool goalkeeper with a free-kick after Iqbal Hussain had brought down the appropriately named Gavin Pook. He also left the field with an injury, prompting one fan to shout: "Pook off!"

For the 1,500 Liverpool spectators it was less amusing. The opportunities they did catch were squandered and when Gavin Williams met a Chelsea loanee, it took a terrific save

from Dudek to deny the 22-year-old his moment of glory. The Yeovil fans were beginning to get excited. "We're going to score in a minute," they sang, before mocking Liverpool with "Champions League — you're having a laugh!"

At this stage they had a point. Never particularly troubled but never able to impose themselves either, the first half was concluded by a treatment that brought change on Liverpool. Eric Hagit Diof was booked for diving. Desperate times.

To his credit, Diof worked a good deal harder than Kewell but it was not until Houllier unleashed Heskey on a tiring Yeovil defence in the 51st minute that Liverpool attacked with purpose.

He made an instant impact, testing Chris White, the Yeovil goalkeeper within seconds of joining the action and then laying off the ball

for Diof to drive a shot against an advertising hoarding. Rarely have Blackacre Farm Eggs enjoyed so much exposure.

As Yeovil began to weaken, Liverpool gathered momentum. Vladimir Smicer directed an effort against a post and when Murphy played a neat pass through the Yeovil defence, Heskey beat White with a superb 10th-minute strike. Murphy's penalty followed, and a Liverpool side who have struggled to perform with any consistency secured their place in today's fourth-round draw.

"Yeovil gave us a hard game," said Houllier, who would have been facing a difficult Anfield atmosphere tonight had Heskey and Murphy failed to score. "I expected that, but I thought we were extremely professional. We showed the right attitude and the right

Huish hushed: Kewell (above) is brought down by Rodrigues for Liverpool's controversial penalty and there were celebrations (left) after a goal from Emile Heskey (second night)

Heskey hopes, much to the dismay of Gavin Williams

Picture: AYC

Richard

Atten



Rodrigues calls Kewell a diver

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draw because they scored one goal then had a penalty that should not have been given. I've seen my challenge on Kewell again on television and it definitely wasn't a foul.

"I spoke with Kewell at the time and told him I never touched him.

"He said: 'Yeah, I know you didn't, but this is football, man. I had to dive'."

"Liverpool tried at least four times to do that in the first half and put pressure on the referee. Eventually he has just said: 'It's give them that one' but it definitely wasn't a penalty."