

ABLETT AGONY

Former Kop star forgets his pain to help out Sanchez's team

FOOTBALL
By Dave Peters

FORMER Liverpool defender Gary Ablett swallowed 11 years of hurt to help Blues boss Lawrie Sanchez on Saturday – but he could not stop Wanderers losing 1-0 at Burnley, despite coming agonisingly close with this header which left him spread-eagled on the turf.

Ablett arrived on a one-month loan to bolster a defence which was missing the suspended Jamie Bates and the crooked Mark Rogers and Paul McCarthy.

He answered Sanchez's SOS call even though the gaffer provided him with his worst moment in football, more than a decade ago.

Then, as a Liverpool player, Ablett was supposed to be marking Wimbledon's Sanchez in the 1988 FA Cup final when Sanchez lost him to head one of Wembley's most famous winners.

Ablett said: "I was supposed to be marking him. Lawrie Sanchez didn't do me a favour that day. But that's a long time in the past now. We go back a long way and I don't mind helping him out now and it's helping me get fit as well."

Ablett has been sidelined with a cruciate injury and Sanchez plucked the former Liverpool and Everton defender from Birmingham City reserves to strengthen a team which is walking through a suspension minefield.

Bates was banned on Saturday, Jermaine McSparran starts a three-match ban this weekend, while Michael Simpson's booking at Burnley means he is also due a suspension.

Ablett made his Wanderers debut at Turf Moor having only met the players at their hotel on the eve of the game.

It was such a rush job that Blues had to get to the ground early to visit the Burnley shop so they could get his name and number printed on his shirt to comply with Football League regulations.

The new boy fitted in well in a defence which held firm against Burnley except for one crucial lapse when Andy Payton was left alone to score the only goal.

Sanchez said: "Ablett did well and showed he's got that little bit of class. You'd never have known he only met the lads on Friday."

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