Saturday 8 February 2025

## **Tarkowski nightmare brings a sad end to the FA Cup at Goodison Park**

### Everton 0 – 2 Bournemouth

**Goodison Park bid a sad an poignant farewell to 132 years of FA Cup football with a dismal capitulation led by a dreadful performance from their usually robust captain, James Tarkowski. They rallied for parts of the second half, hitting the woodwork three times, but with no luck going their way there was no way back in this disappointing result.**

New signing Charly Alcaraz was named on the bench with Ashley Young getting a start in place of Vitalii Mykolenko who has a tight calf. Nathan Patterson has a hamstring problem and is also missing from today’s squad in addition to the long-term injured: Broja, McNeil, Mangala, Calvert-Lewin, Chermiti.

Bournemouth kicked off and immediately tried to score through Tavernier, his shot blocked away. Everton had a couple more wake-up calls as The Cherries kept the ball in the Everton half for the first 2 minutes.

Ndiaye got forward but his cross was deflected back to Arrizabalaga. Better football from Everton saw Branthwaite (!) then Young crossing from the left. But Everton failed to clear their own lines thanks to a poor forward pass by Young, and Bournemouth won their first corner, easily repelled.

After good work at the back by Branthwaite, Tarkowski played a slide-rule pass to Lindstrøm in plenty of space but his cross was dreadfully overhit. His next cross was lightly better, defended, Beto trying to profit but failing with his pirouette, Bournemouth giving away a soft corner

A great corner form Young but the referee gave a foul on Arrizabalaga. But Ndiaye fought hard to win the ball back and danced in to confront Arrizabalaga whose crouched save stopped the goal.

Kerkez sent Semenyo through with Tarkowski desperately chasing in on him and judged to have fouled him with a pretty good sliding tackle; penalty called after 23 minutes despite what looked like the final touch on the ball by Tarkowski. Semenyo smashed the spot kick into the Gwladys Street net despite Pickford going the right way.

Semenyo got played in again but lashed this one high and wide, emphasizing what a mammoth uphill battle Everton now had in store. As if that was not bad enough, Lindstrom gave away the ball and The Cherries drove forward to win their second corner but they could not fashion a strike from their superior possession.

Everton tried to get forward, working it down the right until the ball was allowed to roll out of play. Then they tried to build from the back but were easily forced back to Pickford. Gana tried to play Beto in but he was outpaced, as Everton in general were being outfought for possession of the ball, Semenyo and Tarkowski having a fair old tussle by the corner flag.

Beto was dropping dep but his interventions were ineffective as the visitors drove forward and drew a free-kick that Tavernier overhit well past the far post. A dreadful interchange saw Ndiaye put Gana in deep trouble and Semenyo almost punished the Blues, forcing their third corner with a defected shot across goal.

And it would get a hell of a lot worse as a ridiculous mix-up followed Tarkowski’s shockingly bad clearance that went straight to Tavernier. Jebbison bundled it home at the second attempt on 43 minutes despite Branthwaite’s weak attempt to clear off the line.

Everton did win a corner before the break but it was very poorly executed. Some better play going forward ended with another very poor cross, this time from O’Brien. So ended an abysmal half from Everton, who had not really competed properly anywhere on the pitch and had the proverbial mountain to climb in the second half.

Everton huffed and puffed in an effort to exert some degree of control on the game after the break but weaknesses were appearing all over the field, Lindstrom so easily disposed and Semenyo falling over again under the slightest touch – but no penalty call this time.

But some better Everton action finally came with Ndiaye set Doucoure down the left channel but did not anticipate the return ball coming back to him and Garner saw his shot deflected behind, Doucoure worked in well ro get another corner that flew across the goal and evaded Tarkowski ducking to try and head it in at the far post.

Ndiaye was fouled but Garner’s poor free kick did not beat the first defender. It came back to O’Brien but again he horribly overhit his deep cross well beyond the far post.

Ndiaye did brilliantly to create an attack but Beto and Doucoure couldn’t carry on the good work into the penalty area. At least the Blues were trying but it was painfully inadequate, with Jebbison allowed to drive through almost in on goal.

Better movement won a corner but Garner’s cross was poor, with both Branthwaite and O’Brien staying up high to no avail. After changes on the hour, Tarkowski’s error led to Kluivert’s first strike, parried well by Pickford. But Kluivert got back and drove in, Pickford saving his next effort but it was headed high back in and Branthwaite headed it back, bouncing on the Everton bar with Pickford making sure it didn’t go in.

Harrison delivered a slightly better cross but no-one was underneath it. Alcaraz drove forward and was fouled by Christie for an Everton free kick about 26 yards out. A superb strike by Alcaraz smacked off the post with Kepa frozen.

A forward move by Tarkowski and Young won a corner, with a great ball sent in from the corner and headed on superbly by Ndiaye but there was Everton’ nemesis Semenyo to head it off the line, cross back in O’Brien heading it onto the far post.

Harrison put in a great cross, but it went all the way through and hit the post before coming back to Kepa. Everton were having no luck, hitting the woodwork three times in short order,

A free kick awarded against Kerkez on Harrison just outside The Cherries area was laid back to Young but his shot was blocked. Then Alcaraz set up Iroegbunam but he powered it over the bar.

The Cherries finally got forward after a period of good Everton pressure, Brooks playing in Semenyo his shot stopped by Pickford, the rebound hammered goalward by Outtara and careening off Iroegbunam behind.

Keane came on for Gueye and played up front as Iroegbunam drove laterally and powered another shot over the bar. Everton kept pushing for a goal that just would not come. Alcaraz came forward but Ndiaye’s cross was cleared.

Ndiaye was booked for dissent as the dirty tricks started from The Cherries, Brooks going down very easily under a non-challenge from Harrison. O’Brien put a better cross in but Keane was leaning back and could not control it.

With time running out, Young put in a free-kick that Harrison crossed high behind the goal. Another late flurry saw a ball fall awkwardly for O’Brien. Kluivert bamboozled Alcaraz and scampered away with the ball but chose to lob it over Pickford and the goal rather than play in one of his teammates, saving Everton the embarrassment of a third goal conceded.

And that’s how the final FA Cup game ever at Goodison Park ended for Everton, there being no way back from a terrible first-half performance.

**Everton:** Pickford, Young, Branthwaite, Tarkowski, O'Brien, Ndiaye [Y:87’], Garner (74’ Iroegbunam), Doucoure (65’ Alcaraz), Gueye (84’ Keane), Lindstrom (65’ Harrison), Beto.

*Subs not Used:*  Virginia, Begovic, Sherif, Dixon, Heath.

**Bournemouth:** Arrizabalaga, Huijsen [Y:90+1’], Kerkez [Y:79’], Cook*,* Christie (90+2’ Silcott-Duberry), Adams [Y:63’], Tavernier (78’ Brooks [Y:90+3’]), Jebbison (78’ Ouattara), Semenyo. Zabarnyi, Winterburn (64’ Kluivert).

*Subs not Used:* Dennis, McKenna, Akinmboni, Kinsey, Rees-Dottin