

ALBION FLOPPED IN THE MUD AT LUTON

57/58

by Dennis Shaw

Luton Town 5, W.B. Albion 1

RAY BARLOW and his men went to Luton with a record of nine away games without defeat and in all 17 unbeaten matches behind them. But how they flopped in the soggy Kenilworth Road mud.

Not once did they look like the side hammering away behind the Wolves at the top of the table.

It took Luton just 26 minutes to discover that Albion had left their craft and power in West Bromwich.

Adam then slammed Luton into the lead, and though Robson pulled one back three minutes later, it was a case of struggle from that moment onwards.

Down 4-1 at half-time! That was a humiliating experience Albion had not suffered for a long, long time, and they never looked likely to get over it.

Albion could never match Luton for skill in either attack or defence.

Goal chart:

LUTON: Adam (26 mins.), Brown (32 mins.), Turner (35 and 64 mins.), Kennedy own goal (44 mins).

ALBION: Robson (29 mins.).

ESTIMATED ATTENDANCE: 15,000

Luton: Bayham; Dunne, Hawkes; Morton, Owen, Pearce; Adam, Turner, Brown, Groves, McLeod.

W.B.A.: Sanders; Howe, Williams; Setters, Kennedy, Barlow; Griffin, Robson, Allen, Kevan, Horobin.

Ref: N. C. Taylor (Westbury, Wilts).

Former Birmingham City player Sid Owen won the toss for Luton.

It was obvious in the first couple of minutes that the pitch would cut up fairly badly. It was soft and soggy on the surface.

Luton attacked first along the right wing, but Adam's flag kick was safely headed away by Kennedy.

Again Luton attacked along the right, but this time Sanders safely held a high centre from Adam.

At last Albion organised an attack with Griffin lobbing the ball over near the by-line. After a mix-up on the six-yard line, Horobin dashed in from the left to boot the ball over the top.

Still it was Luton looking far more sure of themselves on the slimy surface, and Sanders had to run out and snatch another Adam centre out of the air.

Albion forced their way upfield a couple of times, but their passing was badly out of touch and so far they had very little to offer.

Sanders saves

At last a 30-yard precision pass by Allen found Griffin on a green patch near the corner flag, but Hawkes pleased the crowd with a timely tackle.

After a quarter of an hour Baynham dived forward to hold a sharp cross from Robson, while at the other end Sanders had to dive to save close range snap shots from Brown and McLeod in a terrific goalmouth scramble.

Sanders was in action again when Pearce rolled a free kick to Hawkes, and the Albion goalkeeper safely collected the full-back's 25-yarder.

Griffin and Allen tricked Owen out on the right and again Baynham threw himself forward to prevent the centre finding an Albion forward.

Albion were moving a little more smoothly now, but still the bad ground conditions prevented them clicking into top gear.

It was Luton blazing into a 26-minute lead through their most dangerous forward ADAM.

Pearce sent over a swinging centre from the left, and Sanders rushed out to push the ball away from the feet of Brown who was tearing in towards goal.

Before Sanders could recover, however, Adam nipped in smartly to smack an angled drive through a crowd of players.

Kennedy steps in

Adam caused another spot of trouble on Albion's left, but fortunately Kennedy this time stepped in in the nick of time.

Then Robson suddenly sparked

off a breath-taking spell of three goals in six minutes.

Griffin swung the ball over from the right and Allen ducked and allowed the ball to go through to the England inside right.

ROBSON ran through about ten yards before cracking a beautifully placed low drive past Baynham.

But three minutes later a great piece of headwork by BROWN saw Albion a goal down again.

A quick three-man move saw Adam accept a Turner through-ball and swing it towards the near post.

Brown and Sanders went up together, but it was the hefty Scottish centre forward who got there first to nod the ball out of Sanders' grasp.

Sanders hurt

The Albion goalkeeper was hurt in the collision, but carried on after treatment for a knock on his right shoulder.

Three minutes later Albion found themselves struggling 3-1 down.

This time an accurate passing movement scythed through the Albion defence. Groves stabbed the ball across the goalmouth from the edge of the six-yard area on the left, and TURNER ran in to slam the ball home from point-blank range.

Albion swarmed upfield in a brief attempt to pull back the arrears, but their only scoring attempt was a Barlow effort that sailed over the top before catastrophe number four came in the 44th minute.

Brown again dashed through middle on to a through ball from Groves.

As Sanders dashed out to goal KENNEDY pulled off aperate tackle on Brown, an attempting to slide the ball to his goalkeeper pushed it off Sanders and into the net.

Albion's defence had suddenly lost their grip on the Luton at who were far more slick and of themselves on this small muddy ground.

Early in the second half St. Williams tried to force his way through, but his final shot from outside the area swung yards wide.

Albion had a couple of free kicks by Kennedy and Horobin. The second by the left winger from near the touch line resulted in Baynham leaping up smartly to catch the ball.

Then Pearce tackled Horobin heavily at the expense of a corner, but again the Luton defence stood firm as a rock.

When Albion went upfield Griffin neatly delayed his pass and ran through the middle until he was tackled.

A Horobin corner was punched out by Baynham, but though Williams dashed upfield with the chance of a long range effort, he muffed his shot.

Most of the fire disappeared from the game in the second half,

with Luton apparently content with their three-goal lead, and Albion apparently lacking the ability to do anything about it.

Then after a long spell of meaningless play midfield Luton suddenly made it 5-1 in the 64th minute.

Turner cruised through the middle with all the confidence in the world, and slid the ball out of the reach of the diving Sanders.

Albion had another disorganised attack, but Allen ballooned the ball almost over the stand.

Albion struggled on without any marked success.

Williams fell heavily and had to receive attention for a leg injury but fortunately he carried on with a slight limp.

Albion's only effort for some time was an angled Setters' shot which went two or three yards wide.

A few minutes before the end Robson ran through on to a pass by Allen, but Hawkes nipped in and blazed the ball off the inside right's toe.

A minute before the end Kevan got in an angled drive which was held safely by Baynham.