



● Sunderland 'keeper Sandy McLaughlin leaps from his goal to make a great save from Luton leader Tommy McKechnie in the F.A. Cup tie at Kenilworth Road.

LUTON JUST 12 MINUTES AWAY FROM GLORY

Luton 0 Sunderland 3: by GRAHAM BUXTON

64/65 (FAC)

LUTON so nearly wrote another glorious page in their history. They deserved at least a replay of their tie with Sunderland on the way the game went. For 78 minutes they gave as good as they received, and sometimes a little better, against a team who had more skill but carried little thrust in front of goal.

Manager George Hardwick's instructions were for Sunderland to contain Luton, and then try to break out from defence to snatch the lead. His biggest worry was that rain might stop, leaving the pitch a sticky morass which would have handicapped his light-weight forwards, but the elements were with him.

Immediately after McLaughlin had made a great save at the angle of the woodwork from Riddick Sunderland broke away.

George Herd pushed the ball out to Usher, who had not been having a happy time. Barton, who had a strangely poor second half, was missing from his post, so that Usher had time in which to hammer the ball low across the face of the goal.

Dominic Sharkey, escaping at last from the grip of Graham Caleb, was on hand to sweep the ball in.

That was the vital goal. Although Luton fought back with all the determination at their command, Sunderland at last shaped like First Division exponents of the game.

That first goal gave them strength, caused the Luton defence to wilt, and in the last five minutes Mulhall and Sharkey scored to over-emphasise the only slight superiority of Sunderland.

Had Luton been able to include the former Arsenal "twins," John O'Rourke and Ray Whittaker, in their attack things might have

been different. But Luton had an underlying weakness at inside forward. Riddick seemed out of his element in the mud, and Bloch, who is only 17, found the occasion too much for him.

The crowd was Luton's biggest of the season, and they must have won back some lost support by their fighting spirit, and some football of a quality above their lowly place in the Third Division.

Half-backs Pacey, Caleb, and Reid were a sound foundation, but the trio must have felt frustrated by the failure of the men in front of them. Tommy McKechnie came out about even in a running battle with Dick Rooks, but he never had sufficient support to enable him to achieve ascendancy.

Sunderland's extra class was supplied mainly by the left-wing pair of Herd and Mulhall, and some fine constructive work by Harvey.

Yet all seemed to be going for nothing in the face of Luton determination and team spirit until the fateful goal, 12 minutes from the end.