

LATE EQUALISER SAVES HATTERS

By ROGER DUCKWORTH

A LAST-GASP equaliser from the penalty spot by Malcolm Macdonald gave Luton a fortunate point at St Andrews this afternoon after the Blues had consolidated a first-half goal with some powerful attacking play.

Poor passing in midfield and some inaccurate shooting proved costly for Luton, manager Alec Stock still has a few problems to solve.

Luton put a bit of pep into the opening stages when Hoy found John Ryan, who banged across a probing centre which Macdonald only just failed to reach.

From the resultant goal kick Macdonald interrupted some short passing between Kelly and Hockey, won possession and looked like scoring when he was whistled up by the referee.

It was a lovely afternoon and a big crowd had something to shout about in the fourth minute. Slough conceded a corner to Murray from which Hynd power-drove a header at goal.

Between the sticks Read was all at sixes and sevens and it took a timely clearance from John Ryan right off the line to save the situation for Town.

Splendid

And just to rub in that they really meant it, the Blues bore down on the Luton goal again through Vincent and Robinson, and a lobbed header from Murray landed on top of the net.

When Luton did get a break, after a foul on Tees by Hynd, Court wasted a free kick from eight yards outside the box by putting it out of play.

But on the ten-minute mark it was Luton who opened up the City defence with a splendid move which ended with Tees smashing a low drive against the foot of the post after taking careful aim from about 12 yards.

It came from a splendid move between Hoy, Court and Givens and really, when Macdonald had headed on to send the defence the wrong way, Tees should have made more of his splendid chance and given Luton the lead.

As Luton settled they became more confident in midfield, while up front Macdonald scared the day-lights out of Birmingham with a burst of speed round the

back of the defence that so very nearly caught the City napping.

It became clear that something had to give as both teams continued to provide attractive football. It went Birmingham's way in the 24th minute from an innocuous-looking midfield build-up.

The fair-haired Vincent ambled away on the left and banged an aimless-looking pass to VOWDEN. From a good 25 yards out he smashed a low right-footer past Read who was left high and dry — as were the rest of the Luton defence.

Throughout the first half-hour Nicholl had been doing a good job on the highly rated Latchford and it was just as well for Luton that he was up to scratch in the 26th minute when he halted the City centre-forward in full flight with a beautifully timed tackle.

Pressure

Read again looked uncertain in the 33rd minute when Vincent burst through and tested him with a shot that was not really fierce. Read ran out hurriedly and made a bit of a mess fisting clear.

Luton had more luck in the 36th minute when Latchford sent the Town defence cross-eyed with a beautiful through pass to Hockey who burst away all on his own. As Read raced out the Beatle-haired Birmingham skipper tried to chip the ball over him but Read managed to get his fingers to it and save at the second attempt.

And a minute later Read came right back into his own when he made a flying save to a Hockey header and had to

receive treatment after landing awkwardly.

For ten minutes or so the Luton goal came under real pressure and several flaws were exposed in their ranks.

HT: Birmingham City 1
Luton Town 0

Straight from the start of the second half Luton, realising they had to go out in search of a goal, swept forward.

Macdonald made use of a bit of slack Birmingham play and cut in to find Keen on the left with a good pass. Keen crossed and Tees, fighting hard in the air, won a corner on the right from which Keen blinded the ball over the bar.

City hit back with a move between Summerill and Latchford, but the latter was a bit slow and Slough, dropping back quickly, robbed him by pushing an aggravating foot between his legs and pushing the ball clear to Nicholl.

TEAMS

BIRMINGHAM CITY: Kelly; Thomson, Pendrey; Hockey, Hynd, Robinson; Murray, Vowden, Latchford, Vincent, Summerill. Sub: Martin.

LUTON TOWN: Read; Ryan, Slough; Hoy, Nicholl, Moore; Macdonald, Court, Tees, Keen, Givens. Sub: Bannister.

Referee: Mr R. C. Challis (Tonbridge).

GOALS

VOWDEN (B'ham) 24 mins
MACDONALD (Luton) 83 mins

Attendance: 30,141

Luton were just beginning to settle down a bit when Slough blotted his copy book with a shocking foul on Summerill and the referee pulled him to one side and spoke sternly to him before allowing play to restart with a Vincent free kick which Read caught smartly.

Luton continued to strive in search of an equaliser, but much of their good work fell down because of misdirected passes in midfield. On a couple of occasions Court was to blame and on another Macdonald.

Eight minutes from time Hoy had the ball in the net for Luton but the referee ruled that Luton had to take a penalty after Macdonald had been held on the line with a previous effort.

Macdonald himself took the kick to a barrage of boos from the Birmingham crowd but with goalkeeper Tony Read down in prayer on his own penalty spot MACDONALD calmly slotted the ball into the net from the spot to give Luton an equaliser.

