

STUNNER AS TOWN PIP THE BLUES

By ROGER DUCKWORTH

70/71

**Roger
Duckworth**



Verdict

LUTON proved they have the guts and ability to fight back when they beat Birmingham in a five-star thriller at Kenilworth Road this afternoon.

Two down after 22 minutes they went in all square at half-time thanks to two goals from Viv Busby.

And three minutes after the interval, Alan Slough won the game for Luton when he bulged the net with a long-range free-kick following a foul on Macdonald.

Some superb football was played by both sides, and Luton played some splendid close-passing stuff which made their long ball tactics in mid-week look like something from another league.

In pain

After only five minutes Latchford put the City ahead following a rare mistake by Nicholl who played the whole match in pain from his injured foot.

Seventeen minutes later it could have been all over for Luton when Summerill headed home with Read stranded from a Latchford cross.

But the Blues underestimated Luton's powers of recovery and two grand goals from Viv Busby put the issue wide open.

The biggest home league crowd of the season were given fine value for their money

Jimmy Ryan had a grand match for Luton

JUST LIKE the Grand National winner Luton stormed through from behind to win this tension-filled action-packed promotion tussle.

Two goals down in 22 minutes Luton looked beaten but a brace of beauties from Viv Busby and a brilliant dead-ball goal from Alan Slough gave the Town an incredible victory.

Long before the kick-off a massive crowd thronged the narrow streets round the ground.

And inside Kenilworth Road, massed choirs were giving vent to their feelings almost an hour before the start of today's vital promotion issue.

Chris Nicholl was this morning announced fit and Slough reverted to left-back after having taken over at centre-half in midweek.

Goodeve was named as sub today at the expense of Roger Hoy. Birmingham were at full strength.

There was terrific tension at the start and Latchford committed the first foul of the afternoon when he brought down Nicholl.

Early shock

It took Birmingham just five minutes to score. A long through ball should have been easily cleared by Nicholl but he fluffed it and the ball ran through invitingly to the left foot of the Birmingham centre-forward LATCHFORD. He did not hit the shot cleanly but it went well wide of Read and rolled into the net.

Luton hit back and a good overhead pass from Macdonald found Anderson on the left. He did the same to lob the ball into the goalmouth and Kelly did well to push the ball over the crossbar for a corner. This was cleared.

Jimmy Ryan put in a gritty run to win a well-deserved corner but this was spoilt when John Ryan ran the ball out of play.

Luton fought determinedly to equalise but a good centre from Slough went across the

goalmouth unheeded.

Then a long free kick from Keen was fought hard for in the air by Macdonald but he could not quite get behind it.

Treatment

In the 16th minute Smith had to leave the field and went to the dressing room for treatment after being kicked in the face unintentionally by Slough who went for a high bouncing ball.

Macdonald charged through but he could not get the ball in his stride and he wasted his shot by hitting it tamely at Kelly.

After a period of Luton pressure, Birmingham went further ahead. Latchford had all the time in the world to cross from the right and SUMMERILL was waiting unmarked in the goalmouth to head an easy goal past Read.

Accident

Referee Nicholson played the advantage rule at its very best after Jimmy Ryan had been fouled on the touchline but had managed to get in his centre. He ignored his linesman's flag but Macdonald could not quite reach the centre.

Chasing through in an offside position, Macdonald did not hear the whistle and it was his turn to get a kick in the face, from Hynd, again accidentally.

Luton still had bags of fight and after some sustained

pressure on the Birmingham goal, Givens flashed the hardest shot of the afternoon a couple of inches over the crossbar from the edge of the box.

Read was penalised for hands after saving in the face of Latchford just outside the box. Birmingham executed a well planned free kick and the ball went out to the unmarked Martin on the right whose low centre should have been banged in for no. 3 by the well placed Summerill.

In the 36th minute, Luton helped their chances no end by pulling a goal back.

A hard through ball was passed on by Macdonald and BUSBY bravely nodded it between two defenders and, with only Kelly to beat, calmly picked his spot in the corner of the net.

After Macdonald had won a corner there was a goalmouth scramble and Anderson might have made better of a brief chance. But again Kelly was given ample chance of saving.

Luton's terrific recovery was complete when two minutes before half-time, John Ryan was awarded a free-kick over by the right-hand corner flag. He lobbed the ball into the middle and it fell to the left foot of Macdonald, who shaped to blast it into the back of the net.

But he mis-kicked the shot and it rolled invitingly to BUSBY who calmly flicked it into the unguarded net.

**HT: Luton Town 2
Birmingham City 2**

The joy of the Luton fans had to be heard to be believed when three minutes after the break, Alan SLOUGH smashed a 30-yard free kick past the helpless Kelly into the net.

It was given for a foul by Hynd on Macdonald and Slough took it with the greatest aplomb shooting straight and hard with the whole Birmingham defence expecting him to lob the free kick into the goalmouth.

Two minutes later the excitement swam to the other end when a mistake by Moore let in Latchford but with only Read to beat he put the ball over the top into the Oak Road end.

There was some tremendous football being played by both sides and as City roared back Nicholl and Moore were forced to concede corners which the Luton defence cleared.

Just over

Some clever man-to-man football by Luton resulted in a crisp centre from Jimmy Ryan being fingertipped over the bar by Kelly.

Luton almost lost their lead in the 68th minute when a good run from Campbell produced a tricky cross from Francis, but it passed just alongside of Latchford after it had beaten Read.

Another fast raid by Birmingham ended with a shot from Campbell. It slithered off the foot of a Luton defender for a corner. From this Read caught a Francis' header which lacked pace.

Keen missed a great opportunity of increasing Luton's lead when he shot over the top from a good position following a classic centre from Macdonald on the left.

MATCH DETAILS

LUTON TOWN: Read, John Ryan, Slough, Givens, Nicholl, Moore, Jimmy Ryan, Busby, Macdonald, Keen, Anderson. Sub: Goodeve.

BIRMINGHAM CITY: Kelly, Martin, Page, Smith, Hynd, Robinson, Campbell, Francis, Latchford, Summerill, Taylor. Sub: Pendrey.

REFEREE: Mr F. M. Nicholson (Manchester).

LATCHFORD (Birmingham) 5 mins

SUMMERILL (Birmingham) 22 mins

BUSBY (Luton Town) 36mins. 43mins.

SLOUGH (Luton Town) 48 mins

Attendance: 25,172