

NOW LUTON MAY BE ON THE WAY

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Sunderland 2 Luton Town 2

By ROGER DUCKWORTH

ELEVEN warriors from Luton showed on Saturday that they are not going to sit and mope under the cloud of depression that has hung over them recently.

They showed that even the bad times are good when they fought back from the lava slopes of the volcano of disaster to almost match victory at Roker park.

They fought like blazes or the point which could be the turning point of their fortunes. In fact, after being overrun throughout the first half and going in for their tea thankfully only one down, they could have won on the match three times in the final three minutes.

It was Luton's guts that upset Sunderland. The

northerners just couldn't grasp a couple of things. First of all, why they were not at least three goals ahead by half-time.

And how they came to be trailing in the second half after showing off their skills to such fine effect.

Luton's slide into the crater was checked after half an hour when Sunderland's Billy Hughes missed a penalty. They were already one up and had that gone in I think Luton would have found it too big a task to fight their way back over the lip.

Diving save

It came in a most bizarre fashion. It's worth telling again. Read parried a shot from centre-forward Watson, who chased in, got the ball again and took it along the by-line towards touch.

Read gave chase, hoping to dive in and collect. But Watson turned quickly and centred into the empty

MATCH DETAILS

LUTON TOWN: Read; John Ryan, Slough; Shanks, Nicholl, Moore; Anderson, Keen, Halom, Givens, Hindson. Sub: Busby

SUNDERLAND: Montgomery; Malone, Coleman; Harvey, Pitt, Porterfield (Hamilton, 57min); McGiven, Kerr, Watson, Hughes, Tueart.

REFEREE: Mr F. M. Nicholson (Manchester)

ATTENDANCE: 17,979

GOALS: Watson (Sunderland, 18min), Nicholl (Luton, 57), Anderson (Luton, 76), McGiven (Sunderland, 78).

goalmouth. Tueart raced in to head at the keeperless goal, and Chris Nicholl made a fine diving save, a credit to any goalkeeper, and stopped the ball with his hands.

Referee Ricky Nicholson, who had no option but to give a penalty, delayed the agony by taking Nicholl's name. This, I understand, he is required to do under the recent referee's revolution. But why? Any player who had not done what Nicholl had done would have been taken to task by his manager.

When I put that point to Sunderland boss Alan Brown afterwards, the well-known disciplinarian just

smiled and said: "I was dreadfully sorry to see the Luton boy have his name taken for that."

Nicholl is not having the best of luck with referees this season. He was booked at Hull for obstruction.

Mr Nicholson later booked Luton's Vic Halom for a challenge on goalkeeper Montgomery, whose kick at Halom was missed by the referee, and that of Sunderland's Tueart who followed through dangerously and caught Read on the head with a boot after the Luton keeper had gathered the ball.

The bookings were as topsy turvy as the goals. Watson put Sunderland ahead after 18 minutes in the midst of the series of powerful raids, beating Read from well out with a low shot.

And it was incredible that Sunderland could not score again in the first half. It was to Luton's credit that they held on grimly.

In the 56th minute 16-year-old Jimmy Hamilton went on for the injured Porterfield, and a minute later Nicholl silenced the crowing Roker fans when he poked in a neat Hindson corner.

Control

What a tonic this was for the Town.

Anderson had another fine match and when he began to beat the tall Pitt in the air, Luton began to buzz. Halom came more into the game and Givens and Hindson took control of the left to give superb second-half performances.

In the 76th minute Anderson knocked the stuffing out of Sunderland when he banged in a beautiful low cross from Hindson for his fifth league goal of the season.

But two minutes later McGiven scored the best-looking, and perhaps luckiest, goal of the match to put Sunderland back in the game. With Keen and Shanks getting under each other's feet to clear a heavy raid, McGiven leapt two feet into the air to crack a shot home from outside the penalty area.

Good job

It was one of those affairs that could have gone anywhere. And to help it, it struck a Luton shoulder on the way to add to Read's confusion.

Shanks did a good job in midfield, and while he never really contained the wiles of Kerr, he showed that this could be his position in the future. He made way for Slough to return to left-back, where he did really well.

Nicholl and Moore never let anyone down and they again managed to hold the defence together during the lean times, with the help of Ryan.

In goal Read can expect to keep his place. He looked strong and confident despite his earlier setbacks.

In the closing stages Luton went all out for both points, and very nearly got them.

It was so close. But Luton are to be congratulated on this ability to fight back after the roasting they took in the first half and after their recent performances which were enough to san-



Sunderland's Billy Hughes gets the better of this defensive battle with John Moore and Alan Slough



Luton skipper Mike Keen, Chris Nicholl and John Moore get involved in the action at Sunderland on Saturday when they were outjumped by David Watson