

Nobody's pushover —that's Roker

By IVOR BROADIS

Sunderland 2, Luton 0

72/73 (FAC)

I'm glad I learnt to swim—but it's still hard work to avoid being carried along on the current of Sunderland enthusiasm that could well float them to Wembley.

The undeniable fact is that what looked an impossible dream three months ago and no more than a long-odds shot as recently as the pairing with Manchester City is now only a match away.

Right now the thoughts are of what a side with First Division know-how and more ambition than Luton might have done before Dave Watson's cracking 56th minute goal.

Certainly if the helter skelter pace first half screamed out for a player to channel all the energy into creating more than a handful of half chances, their form after the goal ensures they'll be nobody's pushover whatever today's draw.

Frankly Luton's contribution made me wonder why all the cloak and dagger stuff was necessary over the past few weeks.

Without supporting running, the men who left Newcastle wiping egg off their faces — Ryan and Aston — were submerged under the challenge of Malone and Guthrie.

It was an impressive job by the back four which would have been a first-class performance even without their two goals.

"Never have so many made it such hard work to achieve so little," just about sums up the first half with all Sunderland's pace going forward counting for nothing because of unimaginative or inaccurate final passes and crosses which over-reached colleagues.

Off-target

The clear looks at goal were usually from outside the box with Porterfield, Horswill and Halom all miserably off-target.

Inside the box, it was usually a question of waiting for a break with an indication near the interval that the Tueart-Hughes wearing-down process was taking effect.

I couldn't see Luton getting back into it after Sunderland took the lead and a gem of a goal it was.

Kerr's corner-kick was a model of accuracy, and Watson timed his run and header exactly right.

Luton took off Aston to bring on substitute Hales 20 minutes from time and Bob Stokoe commented afterwards, "that was a glorious sight."

I would have thought a forward on for a defender rather than a forward for a forward would have been more useful in Luton's circumstances.

They were left for dead nine minutes from the end when a Hughes corner was headed powerfully forward by Pitt for Guthrie to volley home.

In between the goals, with Sunderland producing a pattern to match their pace, they had chances enough to have made it safe.