

GO-GO HATTERS HIT BY LATE BURST IN A CRACKER ON ICE

Luton 0 West Brom 2 By ERIC HARRIS

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A BRILLIANT goalkeeping display by Peter Latchford denied Hatters a goal and inspired West Brom on to a shock victory at frozen Kenilworth Road this afternoon.

Luton had certainly had most of the play but Latchford made save after save, notably from Rod Fern and John Ryan, and Town began to lose heart in the second half.

Shaw and Asa Hartford grabbed the winning goals for West Brom in the last quarter of the match.

Luton included Jimmy Husband, their £70,000 signing from Everton, for the first time, and John Sims, on loan from Derby County, was relegated to substitute.

Luton were also forced to make another change when Peter Anderson dropped out. His place was taken by John Ryan, last week's substitute at Preston.

Luton's first serious raid produced a chance for Fern who did well to reach Garner's long throw. But Fern was outnumbered by West Brom defenders and Latchford got up to cleanly take his header.

Then Horn came to Luton's rescue after Thomson had misplaced a pass. With Mayo rushing towards goal, Horn ran out and dived at the striker's feet.

The players were obviously having difficulty in keeping their feet on the rock-hard and slippery turf. But Aston did well to beat off Nisbet before losing the ball for the throw.

From the move West tested Latchford with a hard shot which the goalkeeper did well to hold.

After their quiet start, Luton were really beginning to buzz. And Fern was again in the thick of things when he managed to push over a cross which Aston couldn't quite control.

The slippery surface again gave Luton the advantage when Husband sent in a first-

time shot and, although his effort was just wide, Latchford would have struggled to reach the ball as he almost lost his balance.

Luton, kicking towards the Oak Road end, worked their way down the stand side with a series of throw-ins which was completed when Latchford easily collected Garner's long throw.

Difficult

Fern, John Ryan and Aston then combined well to provide Husband with an opening but again he was unable to control the ball and the chance disappeared.

But Luton should have taken the lead after 16 minutes in a mad scramble in the goalmouth. The move started with Aston floating over a precision centre which ended with John Ryan slamming the ball just wide after Latchford had been fortunate to block the ball with his legs.

Then Shanks wandered up and tried a speculative shot which Wilson managed to

clear before it reached the goalkeeper.

Latchford was certainly seeing plenty of the ball and he had to dive full length to collect John Ryan's fierce shot after West and Husband had created the opening.

The goalkeeper in particular was experiencing great difficulty in keeping his feet and this was emphasised when he slipped over after booting the ball up field following his save.

There was another anxious scare for West Brom when Wile fell over while trying to clear. Aston took advantage of his mistake and ran through before pushing the ball square to Fern.

Latchford ran out to narrow the angle and Fern, in trying to reach the ball, almost finished up over the barrier with the Oak Road crowd.

Husband was proving to be a great favourite with the Luton fans on his debut and his pass, from which Aston sent over another cross, was the chance which gave John Ryan another opportunity to work his way into a scoring position.

Opportunity

But the move finished when Ryan was unable to get enough direction behind his shot and the West Brom defence had no trouble in clearing.

West again split West Brom's defence with a glorious through ball to Aston. But before the winger could get his cross over, Nisbet pushed the ball behind for a corner.

Latchford made a mess of trying to punch the corner clear and the ball ran loose to Jimmy Ryan who almost surprised the goalkeeper with another snap shot.

After 31 minutes, Faulkner was booked for pushing Brown. It was a situation which needn't have arisen because Faulkner had plenty of time to push the ball back to Horn. But he took too long over it and when he sensed the danger from the lurking Brown, he had little option but to shove the No 8 off the ball.

VERDICT

THIS GAME will certainly go down as one of Luton's best performances of the season. But they failed where it mattered most — in front of goal.

They were much the superior side in the first half but their continuous attacks failed to prise open Albion's defence, backed up by a superb goalkeeper in Peter Latchford.

Luton continued their attacking ideas in the second half but it was West Brom who struck

first to sneak the first goal after 65 minutes.

Luton played some attractive football on a treacherous surface which had both teams skating about in an attempt to keep their balance.

Ironically, Albion's goal was scored by Shaw who had gone on in the second half for Mayo.

Shaw was last season the subject of an £80,000 bid by Luton when he was with Oldham. The bid was rejected and Shaw eventually moved

to West Brom for £60,000.

Jimmy Husband made a satisfactory debut for Luton and looks as though he will turn into a tremendous asset to the side.

The second half finally killed Luton's hopes although this was a game they didn't deserve to lose.

But to Luton's credit they kept plugging away to the end.

— ERIC HARRIS

Luton had a confident penalty appeal turned down six minutes before half time when Aston appeared to be nudged off the ball by Wile just inside the penalty area. Aston looked disgusted when Mr Jolly merely shook his head in answer to his appeal.

HT: Luton Town 0
West Brom 0

substitute and Shaw went on for Mayo.

After 54 minutes Fern brought a remarkable save from Latchford, who somehow managed to knock his fierce left-foot shot over the top. It could easily have been a goal because Fern took the opportunity to try yet another snap shot.

The next threat to Town's defence came with a quick shot from Hartford. The effort was a couple of yards over the bar, which was a good thing for Luton because Horn had moved off his line.

Then Latchford denied

Husband a goal when he dived quickly to take the new player's header near the foot of a post.

Luton were really turning it on and their approach work left little to be desired.

Midway through the second half, Luton went off the boil, and West Brom suddenly took the lead.

There was a slight element of luck about it because Horn did well to get down and parry Brown's shot. The ball ran loose to SHAW who ran in and belted the ball into the roof of the net in the 65th minute.

West Brom were certainly looking a much brighter side and Shaw almost knocked in the second when he forced Horn to a neat save.

Any hopes Luton had of salvaging the point almost certainly disappeared six minutes from the end when Albion snatched a second goal.

It came from a snap-shot from HARTFORD which hit the underside of the bar and bounced down before Horn jumped on the ball.

The referee allowed play to go on when the linesman frantically signalled that the ball had crossed the line. The referee consulted the linesman and then allowed the goal.

Horn immediately raced across to the linesman but from my position in the Press Box I don't think there was any doubt that the ball had crossed the line.