

HERO SHANKS SAVES THE TOWN'S BACON

A LAST gasp goal from Don Shanks saved Luton's bacon in a real cliff-hanger at Highbury today.

A double from Gunners' ace Brian Kidd had earlier put the Town on a sticky wicket.

Adrian Alston shone again today with a fine goal soon after half time — but Don Shanks is today's hero.

The injury bogey that has bothered Luton all season returned again today when striker Jimmy Husband was forced to drop out of the Luton side for today's all-important match at Highbury against the Gunners.

Husband collected a training injury on Thursday and was so doubtful yesterday that manager Harry Haslam could do no more than pick a squad of 14.

So Jimmy Ryan moved up from the substitute spot which he has held for the last six matches and the track suit was taken over by Brian Chambers who came to Luton from Arsenal during the summer for £40,000.

This further disturbance was bad luck for Luton who came to London still looking for their first league win of the season.

The Gunners were without Pat Rice and Charlie George, both injured, but England defender Peter Simpson passed a fitness test and was able to play.

It was a lousy day for Luton's first Division One match at the impressive Highbury stadium for so many years. The match started in heavy rain and it was obvious the ball was going to be difficult to control off the lush turf.

First corner went to Arsenal after Faulkner had sliced the ball over the line with his head, but Armstrong's flag kick was headed away by Anderson.

A strong run through the middle by young John Matthews, the Arsenal No 6, resulted in another corner after Armstrong had taken a good pass and tried a centre. But Barber caught the flag kick cleanly.

After only four minutes Luton had a let-off. Faulkner went in quickly to challenge the advancing Radford and slipped. Radford went round him easily, but held the ball too long and an alert looking Barber raced out of his goal to save smartly at the feet of the Arsenal centre forward.

Luton's first goal attempt came after ten minutes when Alston collected a ball from the right at the back of the penalty area and swung round to hit a left-footed shot that Rimmer had to dive to turn round for a corner.

Again Barber caught the ball cleanly under pressure when Kelly lobbed a free-kick into the goalmouth, but Luton

were being gradually pushed back in midfield and Arsenal looked the stronger side in the early stages.

Luton were awarded a free-kick in a good position, but when West lobbed the ball into the goalmouth the high-jumping Faulkner fouled goalkeeper Rimmer, who had already caught the ball anyway.

And there was some good ball control from John Ryan who coolly got the ball back to Barber after juggling it, under pressure, on the edge of the box.

In the 18th minute Arsenal won another corner off Shanks who had done well to block Armstrong's cross. Armstrong put the flag kick over from the left, and Barber made a brilliant diving catch to a strong header from centre-half Blockley.

Jimmy Ryan had his first shot in the 21st minute, but it was wasted when he banged the ball high over the Arsenal crossbar as Luton were looking to build a good move.

After John Ryan had headed clear a centre from Simpson, the ball was banged back over

his head into the Luton goalmouth, but Kidd was caught offside — much to Luton's relief.

Then a Luton free kick almost brought an own goal. Anderson leaped for the ball and it skidded off the head of the unsighted Nelson to go past the far post for a corner.

Then Barber was in action again to catch a high, but hopeful effort from Blockley following another dangerous Armstrong corner.

Hindson made a break and took a good return pass from Butlin, and after he had ridden a hard tackle by Matthews, the ball squirted out to Jimmy Ryan whose cross skidded across the face of the Arsenal goal.

A long free-kick by Shanks, for a foul by Kidd, just missed the head of the high-jumping Butlin and Rimmer caught the ball to clear.

From the clearance John Ryan found himself in trouble knocking the ball back, and Radford controlled it nicely to bang in a hard shot which Barber just managed to finger over for a corner.



Luton keeper Barber saves from Arsenal's Radford.

MATCH DETAILS

ARSENAL: Rimmer, Simpson, Nelson, Storey, Blockley, Matthews, Armstrong, Kelly, Radford, Kidd, Brady. Sub: Powling.

LUTON TOWN: Barber, Shanks, Thomson, Anderson, Faulkner, John Ryan, Hindson, Jimmy Ryan, Butlin, West, Alston. Sub: Chambers.

REFEREE: Mr R. Challis (Tonbridge).

KIDD (Arsenal) in 43 minutes

ALSTON (Luton) in 52 minutes

KIDD (Arsenal) in 61 minutes.

SHANKS (Luton) in 80 minutes.

ATTENDANCE: 21,629

At the other end Kidd had another of those free-kicks rolled to him by Kelly. And his low shot, a replica of the one that brought him a first half goal, was deflected off the wall for a corner.

In the 58th minute West nearly put Luton ahead. He hit a free-kick from well outside the penalty box and with Anderson and Alston kidding Rimmer into going for a cross, he slammed the ball just wide of the right hand post.

But Luton were soon on the defensive again and after a free-kick by Armstrong had been half cleared as it flashed across the face of the goal, Simpson banged it back into the goalmouth, and it looked at first as if Barber had made an amazing save.

But the ball squirmed free among the flashing legs and Kidd managed to nudge it over the line to put Arsenal back into the lead.

When the cause was looking lost, Don Shanks belted in a spectacular equaliser with his left foot after Alston and Butlin had fought hard

THE DUCKWORTH MATCH VERDICT

WHAT a fight back Luton put on in the second half at Highbury this afternoon. Twice behind they fought back with guts and character to put themselves back in for a point.

With ten minutes left Luton trailing 2-1, were still pressing and their hard work was rewarded when full back Don Shanks cracked in a spectacular goal that will surely win ATVs Goal of the Month Award.

In the first half Luton didn't have a great deal to offer except for a shot by Alston that hit a post, spun across the goal line and went out of play. By half time the Town were one down, Kidd having shot through a break in the defensive wall from a free kick.

But this lad Alston doesn't like losing and he gave a marvellous display of skill and fight in the second half.

He shot in the first himself from a good pass by Anderson and was instrumental in getting the ball back to Shanks for the late equaliser.

Unfortunately for Luton they had gone behind for a second time in the 61st minute when Kidd had followed up a hard drive by Simpson.

Then, in the 38th minute, Luton had the most incredible bad luck. Alston took control of the ball in the middle of the field, cut out to the left, beat his man by nipping inside and blazed a shot against the inside of the left hand post. The ball shot across the goal line and went out of play on the far side of the goal to give the Gunners an amazing let-off.

By this time the rain had stopped and it was to be hoped that this burst by Luton was to be a signal for more impressive football in the second half.

With two minutes to go to half time John Ryan pulled back Kidd just outside the box and Arsenal were given a great chance with the free-kick. It was taken by Kidd who blasted a low shot through a gap in the defensive wall created by Blockley who had wormed his way in and moved quickly at the last minute.

HT: 1-0

From a short free-kick John Ryan had a hard shot into the goalmouth but Butlin's deflection went straight into the hands of Rimmer.

Luton's first move of the second half was completely ineffective. Jim Ryan took a pass from Shanks and banged the ball across the goalmouth, but Butlin, although he can jump high, had no chance at all and the ball went straight out of play.

But Arsenal soon got a grip again and a long through ball caught Kidd offside. And then from a short free kick John Ryan had a hard shot, into the goalmouth, but Butlin's deflection went straight into Rimmer's hands.

Seven minutes into the second half the sun began to shine again for Luton. A short free-kick by West was helped by Jimmy Ryan and Shanks out to Anderson. He went wide to the right of the goalmouth and pushed the ball back into the centre for Alston to run on to and smash a first-time shot into the net.

The goal gave Luton real heart for the fight, and after some close work between West and Jimmy Ryan the ball was deflected out to Hindson on the right and with a very real chance he shot wide.