

THE HAT-TRICK HERO SMASHES

LUTON

BIRMINGHAM invaded the Town's goal-mouth twice in the first five minutes of this afternoon's match . . . and produced goals both times.

And Luton's defence wobbled like a jelly as City stepped up their aggressive attacks.

Up front, the Hatters played better and Gordon Hindson pulled one back six minutes later. But Birmingham's Trevor Francis scored another to give him a hat-trick and dash Luton's hopes once more.

There was a new First Division face for the Luton crowd to watch this afternoon. Brian Chambers made his league debut for the Hatters

Chambers who came from Arsenal for £40,000 during the summer played in midfield — where Anderson used to play. This meant that Jimmy Ryan moved into the attack with Alston and Husband.

Roger Hynd, Birmingham's old stager, was on the substitute's bench with Calderwood coming into the attack.

The match was only three minutes old when Birmingham, fellow strugglers with Luton, took a shock lead. The Luton defence was caught out badly with a crossfield pass from the left, and Francis was left all alone in the penalty box to the right of the goal. He beat Barber easily with a rising shot.

This was a sad blow for Luton captain Bobby Thomson, who missed his tackle, after returning to the Luton side after missing two weeks with an injury.

And Luton had no chance at all of settling down when Francis scored a second. Again the ball came over from the left, and from an identical position he took control of the

**Luton Town 1
Birmingham City 3
By
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ball and banged it past a bemused Barber.

It looked as if the Luton defence was going to have one of those afternoons. Francis's two goals looked to easy to be true.

With Luton looking all at sea it was left to new boy Chambers to create Luton's first two openings. From the second he won a corner, but Latchford went in strongly to catch Hindson's flag kick.

Luton's fight back was immediate. In the 11th minute Husband sped through with the ball at his feet and was tripped by Campbell just outside the penalty box. West took the free kick and after dummying a shot he slipped the ball to his left for HINDSON, sporting a short hair cut, to smash in his first goal of the season from about 20 yards.

The ball clipped a defender on the way through which helped to deceive Latchford, but it was a tremendous shot from Hindson and gave Luton the boost they needed.

Chambers continued his aggression and from a hard

centre won a corner off Gallagher which City had trouble in clearing.

Further good work by Chambers and Alston provided the glimmer of an opening for Husband, but he could not quite get to the right place at the right time and goalkeeper Latchford pounced greedily on to the ball in the goalmouth.

At the other end Burns shot over the top with Thomson again a bit slow with his tackle.

Luton tried to equalise in the 16th minute, but again Latchford caught the long centre from Shanks under pressure from Alston.

Then Jimmy Ryan tried to sort something out after a run by Husband, but his centre was yards off target and from the clearance it looked as if Birmingham had gone further ahead.

Centre-forward Burns chased a high through ball, beat Thomson on the bounce and headed cleverly into the net past the advancing Barber. Fortunately for Luton, he was off-side. Though it was by the narrowest of margins.

The pattern continued in the same hectic manner with Birmingham exposing Luton's dodgy defence and Luton trying to build some sort of rhythm in midfield. Jimmy

Ryan started a good move in the 23rd minute, but it ended with him and Husband colliding on the edge of the box, both clambering to their feet in a daze, and Birmingham clearing quite easily.

After Burns had shot wide from long range, Shanks went on a good run on the right only to be stopped in full flight with a good tackle from Pendrey.

Some remarkable ball control by Husband won Luton a corner after his shot-on-the-turn had been blocked. From it, Birmingham had a narrow squeak with Alston and Husband trying to hack the ball from under the prostrate Kendall in the goalmouth. Alston got in a shot which looked to have beaten Latchford, but it was cleared off the line and left the Birmingham defence complaining to the referee that Kendall had been fouled. He waved play on.

Chambers and Husband worked hard in midfield to get Luton going forward again and a good move ended with a hard shot from Alston, from well out, going wide.

A rare header from Jimmy Ryan set Luton going forward again and Husband was unlucky not to take the ball through the Birmingham defence before being robbed.

The next goal attempt came from Birmingham when Calderwood shot over the top after a long run. He might have done better to slip the ball to Francis who had made an intelligent run into space.

Burns was hurt in the Luton goalmouth when he fell under a flying challenge from Barber, who was also left rubbing his head. The sad thing is that the defence again opened up and it should not have been left to Barber to break up the move.

John Ryan went on a long run through the middle, but he ran into trouble before he could find a partner, and the City defence got the ball back to Latchford fairly easily.

Chambers and Husband again tried to set up a Luton move through the middle, but it was spoiled when Jimmy Ryan flapped a weak shot high and wide. I couldn't understand why Luton were playing 4-2-2 when they were 2-1 down at home.

Hindson managed to get over a left-wing centre, but it went straight to Latchford with no challenge from the Luton forwards — all two of them.

Chambers got in Luton's next shot and he placed it well, but Latchford made a diving save and clung on to the ball as Husband went in to do a mopping up operation.

It looked as if Calderwood had got away from Thomson, but the Luton skipper chased

hard, got in a tackle from behind, and the Birmingham man went down holding his back. But it was a fair tackle, Mr Gow waved on play and the Birmingham man recovered immediately.

HT: 1-2

A strong run by Don Shanks down Luton's right wing ended with a good cross which was headed away by Bryant. It looked for a moment as if Jimmy Ryan, following up, had won a corner but the flag went the other way.

Then John Ryan went through strongly and really cracked a ball towards the Birmingham goal but, like most of Luton's efforts, it zipped over the top.

Further good control by Husband, this time to a clearance by John Ryan, might have set Jimmy Ryan up with a chance but once again the final pass was just out. Luton continued to push forward and Alston, after some clever footwork on the left, shot over the top from the widest of angles.

Birmingham had the ball in the net for the fourth time in the 52nd minute but again they were ruled offside. Hatton was the "scorer" after skinning the Luton defence as he went through after a Burns header.

And at the other end a good cross from Husband brought a smart diving interception out of Latchford.

Birmingham's Burns had to have treatment after falling under a heavy tackle from Litt. He was soon able to continue.

Birmingham got back on top and a strong run on the right by Calderwood won them a corner which Chambers had to head clear. And Thomson was forced to concede another corner when Francis put in a strong cross, again from the right.

A good run by full-back Martin again had Luton in all sorts of trouble, and they can thank goalkeeper Barber for the speed with which he left his line to dive at the Birmingham man's feet to prevent another goal going in.

Aggression in midfield by Jimmy Ryan saw him put a through ball in for Husband to chase, but the off-side flag beat the Luton centre-forward.

Another good free-kick by Shanks was challenged for by the Luton attack, but again Latchford was one step ahead and he cleared quickly.

The clearance led to Francis rounding off his hat-trick. The Birmingham forward so easily shrugged off a tackle by John Ryan and slipped a clever shot wide of Barber.

VERDICT

LUTON, thin-legged in attack and fallible in the extreme in defence, were well and truly whacked by Birmingham at Kenilworth Road this afternoon.

Outgunned in the air and outrun on the heavy turf, they received their most humiliating defeat of the season.

It was brought about by a hat-trick from Trevor Francis who had a field day. He scored twice in the first five minutes to knock Luton groggy, and though the Town replied with a goal from Hindson, they rarely looked like winning and Francis rounded it off in the 70th minute with another superb solo effort.



Even with skipper Bobby Thomson returning, Luton looked in one helluva mess in defence, and because they couldn't get on top in midfield, they spent most of the afternoon playing with only two forwards up front. They were Alston and Husband.

With two games at home in five days — Middlesbrough come on Wednesday — Luton looked to be in with a chance of heaving themselves out of trouble.

Unless something drastic is done, they are going to spend the season in trouble and one thing is sure, they'll have to play better than this. And soon, if they are going to get out of the mire.



Husband and West go in for the ball — but it squirms away from the Luton pair

MATCH DETAILS

LUTON TOWN: Barber, Shanks, Thomson, Chambers, Litt, John Ryan, Hindson, Jimmy Ryan, Husband, West, Alston. Sub: Fucillo.
BIRMINGHAM CITY: Latchford, Martin, Bryant, Kendall, Gallagher, Pendrey, Campbell, Francis, Burns, Hatton, Calderwood. Sub: Hynd.
Referee: Mr W. Gow (Swansea).

FRANCIS (Birmingham) 3mins
FRANCIS (Birmingham) 5mins
HINDSON (Luton) 11 mins
FRANCIS (Birmingham) in 70 minutes.

ATTENDANCE: 15,097