

FRANCIS HAT-TRICK LIGHTS BLUES' WAY

74/75

Luton 1, Blues 3

BLUES showed once again that when the chips are down there are few teams who match them for battle pride.

They badly needed a convincing performance against Luton in this vital bottom - of - the - table clash at Kenilworth Road — and their 3-1 success was a welcome pointer to their chart - climbing potential.

If the result was a boost to the team as a whole, it mirrored a magnificent performance by revitalised Trevor Francis.

The Young England player scored his side's three goals and took his tally for the season into double figures.

He now has 10 to his credit and is looking every inch the top-class player he promised to be a couple of years ago as Blues fought their way into the First Division.

Like the side, he has struggled to find his feet in the top flight, but against Luton he confirmed, for all to see, that he is well worth every penny of his multi-thousand pound valuation.

Blues made a spectacular start with two goals in the first five minutes and they were carbon copies of

each other. The first came with a free-kick by Gallagher, a headed pass by Burns, and a volley by Francis. That was in the second minute before Luton had had time to warm up!

Three minutes later Burns again rose to head the ball on for Francis to make it 2-0.

To their credit, Luton succeeded in getting themselves back into the game with a fine goal by Gordon Hindson in the 10th minute. His shot from just outside the penalty area scorched over Latchford's despairing dive and into the roof of the net.

That was about that for Luton. Blues virtually took command against mediocre opposition. In the first half Burns had what seemed a perfectly good goal disallowed for off-side against Hatton.

In the second half, however, Francis's third goal after 70 minutes confirmed Blues' superiority. It was a fine piece of individualism. He took possession on the left, moved forward, beat a defender, and slotted a low drive under diving goalkeeper Keith Barber.

Francis earned the individual plaudits on the strength of his first First Division hat-trick, but it was the highlight of a sound all-round team performance.

Alongside him in the attack Bob Hatton and Burns did everything that could be asked of them and Burns, in particular, gave the reshuffled Luton defence a nightmare afternoon.

Inexperienced centre-half Keith Litt was made to look an also-ran by the Scot.

Luton rarely looked like adding to their early goal and this was largely due to the superiority of Joe Gallagher in the air and the support he received from determined Gary Pendrey, Ray Martin and young Steve Bryant.

Pointer

Bryant is short on experience but long on confidence.

It was good to see the youngster trying to play the ball in difficult situations and, more often than not, succeeding in sparking off an attack for his own side.

If the game proved anything about two teams who shared eight points before the start it was that Blues have far more reason to suppose they will survive in the First Division.

LUTON: Barber; Shanks; Thomson, Chambers, Litt, Ryan (John), Hindson, Ryan (Jim), Husband, West, Alston. **Sub.:** Fuccillo.
BIRMINGHAM CITY: Latchford; Martin, Bryant, Kendall, Gallagher, Pendrey, Campbell, Francis, Burns, Hatton, Calderwood. **Sub.:** Hynd.