

LONDON MEN SINK HATTERS

Chelsea 2 Luton 0

74/75

The verdict...

TWO daft misses in the space of three minutes in the first half cost Luton dear at Stamford Bridge this afternoon.

The first was by Spiring who was too slow in shooting after being put clear by Alston. The second was by Alston himself who missed the chance of a lifetime to score from under the crossbar to an Anderson pass.

It was still 0-0 at half-time, but Luton's chances had gone and Chelsea began to take over.

Four minutes into the second half Hutchinson headed in from a Garland cross and quarter of an hour from the end Hutchinson took a quick throw for Kember to score.



One or two good things to come out of this game from Luton's point of view were the performances by new boys Paul Fletcher and Steve Buckley, who has had only fractionally more experience.

Fletcher was making his First Division debut and if his promise is anything to go by, manager Harry Haslam will prove to be fully justified in paying £100,000 for a raw kid.

Both he and Buckley gave confident, hard and skilful performances as Luton tried to hang on, not only to their pride, but to their quickly diminishing First Division status.

CHELSEA may have their share of problems, but they're not nearly so bad as those at Kenilworth Road.

But after a strong start, the Town fell away in the second half when Hutchinson headed in a fine goal after keeper Horn messed up a clearance. Kember followed up 26 minutes later and the Hatters were sunk.

As expected there were wholesale changes in the Luton side. Skipper Bobby Thomson was dropped along with sweeper Alan Garner and goalkeeper Keith Barber.

Making his First Division debut for the Town was Paul Fletcher the expensive half of the £120,000 deal that brought Paul and his twin brother, Ronnie to Luton from Chester during the summer.

Graham Horn, who started the season as the first team favourite, was back in goal in place of Keith Barber. And young Steve Buckley came in at left-back for Thomson.

Today's fixture at the superbly modernised Stamford Bridge was a bitter struggle between two relegation-fighting sides.

Chelsea were also forced to make changes, and they also dropped their goalkeeper Peter Bonetti along with striker Bill Garner. Marvin Hinton was also absent from the defence with Ian Brittan again missing because of injury.

Both teams took a few minutes to settle down. There was some early fire from Luton centre-forward Spiring, but he just failed to get the lucky break as he darted through, and at the other end Faulkner did well in the air against Garland when he dealt with a high cross from the left.

Chelsea struck again when Garland rounded off a good crossfield move with a hard low drive from long distance on the left. Horn fell to his left to get comfortably behind the ball and a minute later Sissons banged one high over the crossbar with the Luton goalkeeper well positioned anyway.

Chelsea very nearly scored in the seventh minute when Hutchinson put a header on to the top of the Luton crossbar

By **ROGER DUCKWORTH**

following a long, well-flighted centre from Sissons.

After Aston had been sold short by a pass from Spiring, Chelsea full-back Locke went on a fast break on the right and was well stopped by a well-timed tackle from Buckley.

Then Luton put on the pressure and Aston sent Alston chasing into the box, but he was robbed as he tried to engineer a shooting position. On the break from this Garland was caught offside for Chelsea.

Luton were awarded a free-kick just outside the penalty box. Jimmy Ryan shaped to take it, but Buckley finally shot. He mishit the ball that went sadly wide.

A good break by Spiring on the right enabled him to get in a cross that was headed clear. Jim Ryan fell upon ball greedily and lobbed it high into the penalty box where goalkeeper Phillips gave away a corner that Anderson headed wide.



In the first ten minutes or so Luton showed they were more than capable of taking charge of the game given half a chance.

Faulkner looked to be doing a solid job at the back for Luton and after heading clear a difficult cross that seemed to lift itself on the wind, he darted in to rob Garland on the ground and clear safely.

An amazingly long throw from Hutchinson had to be fisted out into touch by Horn. Hutchinson's second throw was cleverly cleared by Jimmy Ryan.

MATCH DETAILS

CHELSEA: Phillips, Locke, Graham Wilkins, Hay, Harris, Ray Wilkins, Cooke, Kember, Garland, Hutchinson, Sissons. Sub: Houseman.

LUTON TOWN: Horn, John Ryan, Buckley, Anderson, Faulkner, Fletcher, Jim Ryan, Alston, Spiring, West, Aston. Sub: Husband.

REFEREE: Mr P. Walters (Bridgwater).

HUTCHINSON (Chelsea) in 49 minutes

KEMBER (Chelsea) in 75 minutes

ATTENDANCE: 19,009

After their aggression had won them a series of four throw-ins near the left-hand corner flag, Luton must have been regretting not having the long throw of Garner to call upon. As it was they had to rely on the more accurate short throws from West.

In spite of this they were unlucky not to do better in a crowded penalty box, the ball finally being lost by Faulkner who had joined the attack.

A well-placed free kick by Aston fooled the Chelsea defence and just when it looked that Anderson might score, Hutchinson hurriedly conceded a corner.

Chelsea goalkeeper Phillips looked most uneasy in the air and I don't think he caught a high ball cleanly in the first 20 minutes. At one point, when the play was at the other end of the field, he walked up and down his penalty area masaging an injured neck.

In the 22nd minute Luton should, without any doubt, have taken the lead.

Alston collected the ball some ten yards outside the box, sold Hay a brilliant dummy and slipped the ball through for the unmarked Spiring to his left. Phillips ran out, Spiring picked his spot and shot coolly — about six inches wide of the right-hand post.

Three minutes later Luton made an even more incredible miss. Anderson made a superb run through the Chelsea defence to the right of the goal. He even pulled goalkeeper Phillips out, but thinking the angle too narrow from the by-line, he shoved the ball into the centre of the goalmouth for Alston.

Alston missed it — with nothing to do, but tap it over the line.

On the half hour John Ryan was booked for pulling back Hutchinson who had escaped after a misunderstanding between Ryan and Fletcher.

From the free kick it was Chelsea's turn to have some bad luck. Cooke did one of his famous flicks over the defence and Hay headed over the advancing Horn on to the crossbar.

West tried to clear the ball, gave it straight back to Cooke who promptly thumped it about 30 yards wide.

Horn made a couple of acrobatic saves in the space of five seconds or so, one of them to a clever overhead shot from Sissons.

The long throw of Hutchinson continued to bother the Luton defence and twice Horn looked surprised at the strength of it.

Horn did well to win a long race that took him well out of his area, with Garland who chased a long through pass. Horn hacked the ball clear with inches to spare.

Luton again looked to have something nice building from the left, but Alston tried a dummy by lifting his foot over Aston's low cross and Spiring was too far away to do anything about it.

John Ryan did a good

mopping up job at the back after Cooke had opened the Luton defence with a long and accurate pass for Garland to chase.

Chelsea appealed for a penalty a couple of minutes before half time when Hutchinson went flying after a heading duel with Faulkner. Mr Walters gave the free-kick to Luton.

And a minute later Locke shot narrowly wide after taking a good pass from Kember. In spite of this Luton were well worth their half-time "draw".

HT: 0-0

Chelsea's first raid of the second half was coolly broken up by Fletcher who went in fast to take the ball off Hutchinson on the edge of the box. This lad looks a fine prospect.

Luton won the first corner of the second half. It was taken by Aston, but easily caught by Phillips who was not challenged.

Then at the other end John Ryan had to head over his own crossbar after Horn had gone up for a high free-kick and been shouldered out of the way. No foul was given and Horn had to dive forward to punch the corner clear with Cooke again shooting wide from the rebound.



But four minutes into the second half Chelsea went ahead. A bad clearance by Horn was knocked out to Garland on the right who beat Buckley before centering for the well-placed HUTCHINSON to score with a header.

At the other end Jimmy Ryan could not attain the height to reach a hard cross from West after Aston had won a throw.

Following a free kick Luton found themselves in more trouble and Faulkner had to head behind for a corner. It was well caught by Horn under the crossbar.

In the 62nd minute West should have scored, but he allowed goalkeeper Phillips to beat him to a clever through ball from Anderson. To say "allowed" is a bit unfair, but perhaps he might have had more luck if he had been quicker off the mark.

A Luton move started by Spiring saw John Ryan cross and Jimmy Ryan have a header saved by Phillips who had to jump to catch the ball high.

Luton's attacks became fewer and fewer, but West did manage to get in a shot that was blocked by Harris with Phillips dashing out of his goal to the left to prevent a corner.

Luton found themselves two down 15 minutes from the end. A through pass caught Buckley on the wrong foot and Fletcher ran across to foil Hutchinson by finding touch.

But the clever Hutchinson used a quick and powerful throw into the penalty area and with the Luton defence back pedalling, Kember drove the ball over the line.



Heads... a Chelsea and a Luton striker hit the heights at Stamford Bridge