

JOHN KEEPS HIS PROMISE

HATS OFF to big John Faulkner, the Luton centre-half who put his neck on the block on Friday, by telling me that Malcolm Macdonald wouldn't score against him on Saturday.

It was a dangerous thing to say. Dangerous, that is, at any other time than this.

For right now Luton are bubbling with confidence. They are playing their best football for years, and have left the bottom place in the First Division to Leicester, and taken a magnificent 10 points from their last seven matches.

We have got to start believing what manager Harry Haslam has been saying all along that Luton won't go down.

If only they were not frustrated by another blank day next Saturday. They should be playing Everton, but the League leaders are due to meet the winners of tonight's Nottingham Forest-Fulham FA Cup replay marathon.

Still, Luton may be able to fix themselves a friendly against decent opposition. They are still trying. The last time they had to do it — at York a fortnight ago — it didn't put them off their stride. They came back to League duty with a fine draw at Sheffield United.

On Saturday, they put their money where their mouth is, by tonking Newcastle, who admittedly, are not so fashionable as once they were, but nonetheless are still a good side.

Supermac said afterwards: "All credit to Luton for winning, but they caught us on a bad day. We lost Pat Howard yesterday and Irving Natrass today with sickness. We were not a settled side."

Mac returned to Kenilworth Road like a victorious gladiator, some four years after his transfer to fame at Newcastle. He led the side out and won his old fans back with

Luton 1 Newcastle 0 By ROGER DUCKWORTH

a friendly wave from the middle.

They loved him for that. But just to show they had not gone soft, the Luton crowd were howling for his blood five minutes later, when John Ryan chased him through an open penalty area to stop him scoring.

It's still there. The searing pace, the lethal left foot. All that was missing for Mac on Saturday was his mate John Tudor, who is recovering from an injury.

But Luton gradually got on top and the hardworking Jimmy Husband almost scored three times in the first half. He should have netted at least one of his attempts.

Whirled

Once Alan West, Luton's man of the match yet again, got his hands round the throat of the midfield situation, Luton began to buzz. They thrilled us with some marvellous attacking football.

Especially in the second half, Luton whirled from attack to attack, leaving the crowd as breathless as the players. The goal came in the 56th minute when Ronnie Futchter, an impudent, gutsy and skilful striker, thrashed a

shot towards the Newcastle net.

It caught a defender and was deflected past the unlucky Iam McFaul, who had an otherwise impeccable match.

Aston and West provided some more chances for Luton, but they were not accepted. West himself was desperately unlucky not to get to an astute short pass from Husband before McFaul did a Kama-kaze job at his feet to come out with the ball.

Robbed

Paul Futchter did another towering job in the Luton defence and it's easy to see why he's been noticed by England. He must be near the Under-23 side.

John Ryan had another strong match and was again particularly dangerous on the overlap — as was his oppo, Steve Buckley, who twice sheared his way through the Newcastle defence only to be robbed by last ditch tackles.

In goal, Graham Horn played with confidence — if he did punch a couple of times when he might have caught. Towards the end, he received a badly gashed nose in a collision with Buckley, and had to have seven stitches in the dressing room after the match.

For Newcastle, Burns showed a lot of intelligence and Tommy Craig a deal of skill, but I thought their best player was the lippy, cheeky Barrowclough, whose mazy runs had the Luton defence on the hop several times.

But the last word for John Faulkner. He was not afraid to stick his neck out and he backed up his boast by preventing Supermac scoring. It's for reasons like this, that Luton must stay in the First Division. They have the makings of a damn good side.

SPOT ON, Mr HASLAM

IT WAS with amazing foresight that manager Harry Haslam previewed Luton's performance against Newcastle on Saturday in his column in the Town programme.

Talking about Malcolm Macdonald he said— "We'll be doing our damndest to sort him out. John Faulkner will be marking him, and he knows all about Supermac. If we can block out Mac, we can block out Newcastle. They are not having too good a spell at the moment."

And the Luton boss concluded his note: "If we can just beat Newcastle today, we'll be back on the road to survival. It's a stony road, but the gate is still open."