

RON FUTCHER SINKS UNITED

74/75

LUTON's battle for First Division survival was given a great boost today when Ron Futchler thrilled the home crowd with a goal to give his side a well-earned victory.

Futchler's goal inspired the Hatters into even greater efforts, even though they had shown plenty of guts and provided plenty of pressure on Newcastle up to that stage.

The goal was, in fact, just reward for the pressure they had been piling on. Undaunted by the return of Supremac Malcolm Macdonald to Kenilworth Road ground, Luton put on a fine show of attacking football.

Yesterday defender Pat Howard had to drop out of the squad because his wife was taken ill shortly before producing a baby.

And in the middle of the night Irving Nattrass became ill with worry about his own wife who is due to give birth.

Frank Clark travelled down instead of Howard, and David Craig was rushed down by road this morning to take the place of Nattrass.

Luton had no such problems. Again they were unchanged and after their recent good performances must have fancied their chances before the kick off.

There was the first return to Luton of Malcolm Macdonald since he left Kenilworth Road almost four years ago. Supremac led the Newcastle attack but he was without his great partner John Tudor who is recovering from an injury and playing for the Reserves at St James's Park.

Peter Spiring returned to the Luton squad as substitute — it was his first appearance since he fractured a toe in the game against Derby before Christmas.

There was one of the largest Luton crowds to watch today's match which began in bright sunshine and on a pitch which was tacky on top but fairly firm and well sanded.

Today's game was covered by London Weekend television for transmission tomorrow afternoon.

There was a real hero's welcome for Macdonald from a sporting Luton crowd. Mac, captain for the day, led Newcastle out and he nearly brought the house down when he ran to the centre of the pitch and gave a friendly wave to his old fans.

Luton goalkeeper Horn was brought into action with the game about two seconds old. From the kick-off Burns slipped the ball to Macdonald and he whacked it straight at Horn in the Oak Road goal and the Luton goalkeeper caught it before it bounced.

Centre-half Faulkner won

his first chase with Macdonald and got the ball into touch before the speeding Newcastle centre-forward could get past him.

Anderson caused a few hearts to flutter when he dribbled into the Newcastle penalty box, but he was robbed before he could get in his shot.

After five minutes Macdonald nearly scored. A long ball from the Newcastle defence was chased by Burns and he slipped a neat pass to Macdonald, whose shot at goal was nudged over the crossbar by John Ryan. Ryan had shown tremendous pace in catching the Newcastle striker.

Luton calmed themselves

down and West only just failed to reach a thoughtful through ball from John Ryan.

In the 12th minute David Craig embarked on a tremendous run which he ended by thumping a shot just over the crossbar from the edge of the box.

A good through ball from Anderson came to grief when Ron Futchler and Husband failed to decide who was to take it and in the confusion Newcastle cleared.

And then West was unlucky under pressure not to make something of a good cross from Ron Futchler on the right.

Macdonald slipped by Paul Futchler but his short cross

MATCH DETAILS

LUTON: Horn; John Ryan, Buckley, Anderson, Faulkner, Paul Futchler, Jim Ryan, Husband, Ron Futchler, West, Aston. Sub: Spiring.

NEWCASTLE: McFaul; David Craig, Kennedy, Smith, Keesley, Clark, Barrowclough, Nulty, Macdonald, Burns, Tommy Craig. Sub: Gibb.

Ref: Mr R. Perkin (Stafford).

RON FUTCHER — Luton. 56 mins

Attendance 18,019

was too high for both Burns and Nulty. And at the other end there was no Luton forward on hand to do anything with a good cross from Aston on the left.

Horn was forced to fust away a shot from full-back Kennedy and when the ball came back via Barrowclough he caught it cleanly.

Then McFaul had to tear out of his goal to beat Anderson to a through ball from Ron Futchler and West saw a shot sail over the top from the corner of the box.

Luton's best chance so far came in the 26th minute but Husband failed to connect as the ball flashed across a

bumpy goalmouth from a John Ryan cross. Jimmy Ryan helped with the spade work.

Amid a flurry of Luton corners West was unlucky with a low shot and Luton's pressure was such that it had the home crowd screaming for a goal.

Then McFaul had to go full length to save a low effort from Husband as Luton kept up the pressure.

The Luton efforts continued and Jimmy Ryan was next to scoop a shot over the crossbar after an intensive build up.

The thrills swung to the other end where Horn did well to catch a long free kick from Kennedy under severe pressure from the bustling Macdonald.

Kennedy and Barrowclough played some clever football to provide a good cross for Newcastle but Faulkner jumped high in the goal mouth to concede a corner which was cleared.

Five minutes before half time Luton again almost scored when Husband screamed the best shot of the match inches over the crossbar after some clever football by West had provided the opening.

Luton went close again when Macdonald cleared off the line after McFaul had fumbled a Luton corner and West had darted in quickly.

Before the half time whistle could go McFaul made another diving save to a surprise shot from Husband who looked Luton's most dangerous marksman.

And seconds before the whistle Faulkner managed to block a shot from Macdonald after a cross from Barrowclough had drawn Horn out of position.

HT: 0-0

Luton started the second half strongly, winning two corners, but they got nil reward from either of them. Macdonald seemed to play a much deeper role on occasions and often helped out in defence.

A strong run by Aston down Luton's left wing produced a corner off the chasing David Craig and from it Faulkner was just an inch or so too short in his jump as the ball flashed across the face of the goal.

The Luton defence parted to allow David Craig through but he missed the chance of shooting and fed the ball left. The chance was gone and then Burns was offside when the ball was crossed to him.

Luton's pressure paid off after 56 minutes when Ron Futchler flashed the ball into the Newcastle net from just inside the box with the help of a deflection off a defender.

Then some splendid football from Aston saw the ball through to Anderson in midfield and his clever chip over the defence was only a yard too far for West.

Luton really began to turn it on and some great stuff from Aston and West saw Futchler again go close with a header and then be caught offside to a through ball from West.

Then a fiery run from Buckley ended with him being foiled on the edge of the box as he was about to shoot.

And at the other end Buckley, Horn and Anderson were involved in a collision and had to have treatment as they tried to clear a cross from Barrowclough which was eventually knocked out for a corner.

After some lengthy treatment by both trainers Horn was eventually hauled to his feet but he looked decidedly shaky.

Then McFaul was in the action at the other end making a brave save at the feet of West who hurled himself through the defence following a good pass by Husband.

Then it was Luton's turn again to scramble in defence and Horn foiled Barrowclough with a save on the post.

The
verdict...

SPURRED from midfield by man of the match Alan West, Luton thrilled their Kenilworth Road followers again this afternoon.

The crowd might have been chilled by the weather but they were warmed right through by a marvellous show of attacking football by the Town.

No casual onlooker could ever have imagined that Luton were bottom of the table before today's match.

They attacked from start to finish and if they can continue to play as they are doing at the moment they will haul themselves out of relegation trouble.

In defence Faulkner and Paul Futchler played Macdonald out of the game leaving Barrowclough the most dangerous Newcastle forward.

The goal that mattered came from Ron Futchler in the 56th minute when he beat an otherwise impeccable McFaul with a hard shot that was deflected past the Newcastle keeper.

In the first half Jimmy Husband was unlucky on three occasions and in the second Aston prompted the Luton attack into all sorts of adventurous things.

Luton had a couple of frights as the game went into injury time but they defended coolly and, still attacking at the end, they fully deserved their victory.



Ron Futchler in a duel for the ball with a Newcastle defender