

Savage Wolves demolish Luton

By ROGER DUCKWORTH
Wolves 5 Luton Town 2

LUTON tiptoed into Easter hanging on to the shirt-tail of hope. They staggered out of the holiday strangled by the neck-tie of doom, having conceded an incredible 10 goals and scoring only a paltry two.

Surely Luton's only interest in the rest of the season is in who climbs into the escalator down to Division Two with themselves and Carlisle.

They can resurrect a little of their pride next weekend by beating Spurs and taking them down with them.

Luton are a notoriously bad Easter side. We've seen it happen before. A couple of years ago they also lost Easter 10-2. But that was over three matches.

'I still can't believe it's happened'

— Len Hawkins

Even manager Harry Haslam, the most optimistic of people, admitted after yesterday's match things looked bleak. "People keep asking me to smile," he told me. "It gets more and more difficult to do."

"Things look bad, but I won't stop hoping until it is mathematically impossible to survive."

And Town chairman, Len Hawkins, looking drawn and shocked, said: "It didn't seem possible we could crash like this after beating Leeds and Arsenal the way we did. I still can't believe it's happened."

Many people will be in the same boat. Luton came out of the holiday with the reddest faces in the Football League. It is going

to take some time for the effects of these two good hidings to wear off.

Centre-half John Faulkner came out of it worst. On Saturday the man he was marking, Roger Davies, scored all five goals for Derby.

Yesterday he conceded one goal with a silly mistake, had three stitches embroidered into a gash on his forehead, and ended in the Luton and Dunstable Hospital for X-rays on a suspected fractured left wrist.

The lad will want to forget Easter 1975. So will the rest of Luton.

To be fair to the team, they played much better yesterday than they did on Saturday — if it's any consolation. For quite a long time they looked the better side.

But they had another terrible start when goalkeeper Keith Barber fisted a Willie Carr corner into his own net.

How Luton fought to erase this embarrassment. They were rewarded after quarter of an hour when Jim Ryan curled over a long corner from the left, Faulkner headed it back into the middle, and young John Seaman, playing his first full game for the club, dived forward to head Luton equal.

Luton began to buzz, with Aston and West fighting hard on the left and Anderson and Jim Ryan doing the same in the middle.

And they actually went ahead in the 29th minute when the sheer power of Jim Ryan's 25-yarder beat goalkeeper Pierce.

'It gets more and more difficult to smile'

— Harry Haslam

But four minutes later, it was all square again when Hibbitt scored with a penalty after Barber had misjudged a run out of his box and had been beaten by Hibbitt whose shot was palmed wide by the diving West. It would have gone in.

The frustration crept back into Luton's game and John Ryan was booked for a foul on Daly. Hibbitt took advantage of the lack of cover to a long throw from the left to score Wolves' third, and, before the half time whistle, Ron Futchter and Jefferson were booked for scrapping.

Despite the score, Luton still looked good enough to win, but then the bad mistakes started to creep in; an overhang from Saturday.

Buckley let in Hibbitt who rattled his hat-trick, and a Faulkner mistake allowed Withe possession, and the big centre-forward chipped the ball over Barber's head.

Luton couldn't believe it. Ten goals in three hours football. These two goals sunk them, and Wolves, who looked a different side from that which I saw lose at Spurs on Friday, took command.

Luton knew they'd had it. Long passes began to stray, and even when Buckley hit the bar with a rising free kick from inside the box, the cause was lost.

Late in the game, Spiring went on as substitute for Ron Futchter, who must certainly face a two-match suspension for his indiscretion.

He is on 12 disciplinary points and has twice won appeals for cautions. He won't even appeal against this one.

Luton have five matches left in which to haul their pride back from the seabed of failure. They have played one match less than Leicester who are three points better off in fourth-from-bottom plate.

It is Leicester Luton have to overhaul if they are to escape. It's rather like being in Colditz, it doesn't look possible to get out, but it's been done.

DETAILS

LUTON: Barber, John Ryan, Buckley, Anderson, Faulkner, Paul Futchter, Jimmy Ryan, Seaman, Ron Futchter, West, Aston. Sub: Spiring (for Ron Futchter, 72 mins)

WOLVES: Pierce, Williams, Parkin, Jefferson, Munro, McAlle, Hibbitt, Carr, Withe, Kindon, Daly. Sub: Gardner (for Kindon, 62 mins)

REFEREE: Mr Pat Partridge (Bishop Auckland).

ATTENDANCE: 22,689.

GOALS: Carr (Wolves) 7 mins. Seaman (Luton) 15 mins. Jim Ryan (Luton) 29 mins. Hibbitt (Wolves) pen, 33 mins. Hibbitt (Wolves) 42 mins. Hibbitt (Wolves) 57 mins. Withe (Wolves) 60 mins.

BOOKINGS: John Ryan (Foul on Daly). Ron Futchter (pushing match with Jefferson). Jefferson (same offence with Ron Futchter).

BOTTOM SIX

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pt
Arsenal	36	11	10	15	42	43	32
Chelsea	37	9	13	15	40	46	31
Leicester	36	9	11	16	38	53	29
Spurs	37	10	8	19	42	56	28
LUTON	37	8	10	19	36	60	26
Carlisle	37	10	3	24	38	55	23