

MATCH DETAILS

BIRMINGHAM: Latchford; Page, Bryant, Kendall, Gallagher, Pendrey, Calderwood, Francis, Burns, Hatton, Taylor. Sub: Smith.

LUTON TOWN: Barber, John Ryan, Buckley, Anderson, Faulkner, Litt, Jimmy Ryan, Husband, Alston, West, Aston. Sub: Spiring.

JOHN RYAN (Luton) in 13 minutes.

ALSTON (Luton) in 44 minutes.

ALSTON (Luton) in 48 minutes.

FRANCIS (Birmingham) in 61 minutes.

HUSBAND (Luton) in 75 minutes.

LUTON BATTLE TO THE FINISH

Fern walks out on Luton



Luton Town striker Rod Fern walked out on the Town's reserve team today.

Fern was named as substitute for the Football Combination match against Spurs at Kenilworth Road.

But after hearing that he wasn't included in the line-up he refused to play and apparently left the ground before the match.

"Rod was unhappy at being named as substitute," said reserve team coach David Pleat. "It's unlikely he will play for Luton again."

RIP-ROARING Luton continued to shock the pundits this afternoon when they battled on bravely in their bid to stay in the First Division.

With a marvellous 4-1 win over Birmingham —and the news that Spurs had beaten Chelsea— the Town are still in with a slight chance of escaping relegation.

And a cracking double from Aussie Adrian Alston made team boss Harry Haslam happy again. John Ryan and Jimmy Husband scored Luton's other two goals.

Once again it was Luton's "most important" match of the season. The tension was mounting as they continued to fight an almost impossible relegation battle.

But before today's game confidence was high in the Luton camp and the team spent a relaxing night in a plush hotel in the Midlands.

After a slow start in which Trevor Francis lost a boot and Kendall played some clever stuff in midfield, Aston and Anderson combined to stop Kenny Burns attacking from the right.

Aston was quick to help out the defence when this early danger loomed and as the game got into its stride, he linked up with West for some neat play from the touchline.

After some good work by Alston in midfield, Jimmy Ryan sent Aston away on the left. The winger played a shot ball to the near post from Anderson, but he was bundled off the ball by Gallagher and the ball went out of play without Luton even getting the benefit of a free-kick.

Aston was again prominent, this time in defence, when he raced back to win possession off Burns and find Barber with a good back pass.

But then Kendall got to work again and sent Francis chasing through. Under pressure from Faulkner, he shot across the goalmouth, but the ball went out of play a long way to the right of the goal.

A mistake by Faulkner allowed Hatton to run in possession to the edge of the box, but his pass was bad and John Ryan cut it out and cleared.

Birmingham 1 Luton 4 By ROGER DUCKWORTH

After Jimmy Ryan had been upended by Pendrey just outside the box, Buckley wandered over to take the free-kick, but he thumped it at the defensive wall and Luton were no better off.

Birmingham swept back into the attack and tricky left winger Taylor banged over a high cross that Barber was under pressure to fist clear. He managed admirably.

A carbon copy a minute later put Barber in more trouble. Again he got to the cross from Taylor, but could only take it at the second attempt, diving forward through a bunch of players to land on the ball.

But in the lucky 13th minute John Ryan produced perhaps his best shot of the season to give Luton an invaluable lead. Alston had been fouled by Calderwood just outside the box and Ryan ran up to take the free kick and smashed it past Latchford from 20 yards without anybody moving.

A minute later Calderwood almost got his own back. He cashed in on some hesitation in the Luton defence and thumped a shot against the Luton crossbar with Barber stranded and unable to do nothing but watch the ball fly over his head and rebound in to play.

Luton's fight continued when Aston played some clever football on the left and

slipped the ball to Alston who ran in and shot just wide.

And seconds later Aston made a monkey out of Page, shot past him but then put his effort over the Birmingham crossbar from what could have been a dangerous situation.

Barber was forced to leave his goal again to run out and hack the ball into touch from under the nose of the encroaching Hatton.

A good through ball from Calderwood, who looked Birmingham's most dangerous player, brought a diving save from Barber at the feet of Burns, and a few seconds later the Luton keeper again had to run out of his box to thump a through ball clear. Although Luton were a goal up, their position looked in no way safe.

Anderson and Burns were spoken to by the referee for a bad tempered incident in the middle of the field, but both escaped a booking.

After Alston had had a shot saved, Birmingham went back into attack and Jim Ryan was a bit lucky to be awarded a free-kick way back in his own half after a tackle by Taylor.

Tremendous play by John Ryan stopped one Birmingham attack, but back they came and it took a well-timed tackle by Buckley on Burns to keep them out.

After Barber had run out to fist clear a high centre from

THE VERDICT

IT'S still wide open this relegation issue. But this fine win by Luton keeps hope in their hearts. Apart from a spell of some 15 minutes in the second half, they outplayed a Birmingham side who are now joining them in the mud at the bottom of Division One.

Once again Luton played with great enthusiasm and two brilliant goals from Adrian Alston helped them to a victory they will remember for years. It has to be hats off to this side who have been in trouble all season, but always had the character to keep fighting.

Since he returned to the team Alston has been a revelation.

Full-back John Ryan scored Luton's first goal in the 13th minute with a brilliant shot from a direct free-kick. And from then on there was no holding Luton, who could see their escape route widening with every kick.

Alston turned on the magic for a superb second goal just before half time, and when he'd had his cup of tea he headed in an Aston corner to give Luton a 3-0 lead.

This was when they started to flag and Francis pulled one back for the Blues. But Jimmy Husband wrapped it up a quarter of an hour from the end and Luton's amazing fight goes into the last week of the season.

Aston put on another tremendous performance for Luton with Jimmy Ryan doing well in midfield.

Everton v Sheff Utd

Everton took the lead after 25 minutes, with a notable goal. Dobson pushed the ball to new signing Smallman, who pivoted and shot into the far

corner. It was his first goal for Everton in his first home game.

After 30 minutes, Badger pulled down Pearson in the penalty area, and Jones converted the kick.

HT 2-0

Page, he was left stranded for the rebound, but Litt showed supreme cool in trapping the ball in the goalmouth and pushing it clear for a colleague to bang it out of trouble.

After Aston had not managed to flick a shot over the head of the advancing Latchford, the Blues went back on the rampage and a fine header from Francis went just over the Luton bar.

And at the other end Husband missed a good chance after Alston had pushed the ball to him on the

18 yard line and he had a free shot at goal which went wide.

With a few minutes to go to half time Luton pushed to increased their lead, but Aston was caught offside as he took a good through ball from West.

Just before the interval, Alston was unlucky not to get a foot to a back pass to the Birmingham keeper Latchford after having read the situation well. Latchford dived on the ball.

But a minute later Alston scored a brilliant goal ghosting past three players with tremendous skill before smashing the ball into the top of the net.

HT: 0-2

Luton were soon off again. Aston raced past Page and crossed with his left foot. Jimmy Ryan headed back into the goalmouth, but there was nobody on hand to knock the ball in.

And from another attack Luton won a corner. Aston sent over an inswinger from the right and Alston rose majestically to head Luton into a three-goal lead.

But there was still some fire in Birmingham and good work by Hatton and Burns produced a header from Kendall which Midlands League side Luton and he asked the South couple of points at the club. He was not happy with carry on next season.

decide whether he will. Legate is taking a week to LANGFORD boss Roland

Carry on, Roland

myself out." "Ideally he should be phased in gradually as I phase