

Birmingham slump again as . . .

Fans turn on Goodwin

74/75

Birmingham's dejected fans erupted with a massive vote of no confidence in manager Freddie Goodwin as his side slumped disastrously on Saturday.

They chanted "Goodwin out" at St. Andrew's and it was easy to understand their feeling of utter frustration at a performance which sadly had relegation stamped all over it.

By IAN WILLARS

Birmingham 1, Luton 4

Blues had better believe it, too. For if they lose their last two games at Newcastle on Saturday and at home to Sheffield United next Tuesday week they could be back in the Second Division next season.

It was ironic that on this day Goodwin should choose to congratulate Blues' fans by writing in the programme "What a magnificent set of supporters you are."

After Jimmy Husband had cheekily slotted home Luton's fourth goal in the 76th minute those same fans vented all their pent-up emotions by telling Goodwin exactly where he should go.

RELEGATION AND PROMOTION BATTLE

FOOT OF FIRST DIVISION

	P	W	D	Home	A	W	D	Away	F	A	Pts
	L	F	A	L	F	A	L	F	A		
Birmingham	40	10	3	7	34	28	3	5	12	17	32
Tottenham	40	7	4	9	25	25	5	4	11	23	35
Luton	41	8	5	7	26	25	5	5	13	20	39
Chelsea	40	4	7	8	20	29	5	6	10	20	41
Carlisle	41	8	2	11	22	21	4	2	14	21	38

TOP OF SECOND DIVISION

	P	W	D	Home	A	W	D	Away	F	A	Pts
	L	F	A	L	F	A	L	F	A		
Man. Utd.	41	16	3	1	41	12	9	6	8	21	18
Aston Villa	39	15	4	1	45	6	7	4	8	24	25
Sunderland	41	14	6	1	41	8	5	7	8	24	25
Norwich	40	14	3	3	33	13	5	10	5	21	20
Bristol C.	41	13	5	2	28	9	7	3	11	16	23

I have sympathy for both sides. Blues' fans are among the loyalist and best behaved in the country, but the past fortnight has been just too much for them to bear.

Defeat in the FA Cup semi-final replay against Second Division Fulham . . . defeat at Coventry last week in the League . . . and now a defeat by struggling Luton which makes Blues First Division position perilous as well.

It must indeed be a bitter pill for Goodwin. Sixteen days ago he was standing on the threshold of taking Blues through to Wembley for his greatest managerial triumph.

But all that has disappeared now, after five seasons of trying to make Blues the No. 1 club in Birmingham his reign at St. Andrews' could be in jeopardy.

Understanding

Goodwin hid his disappointment well afterwards when he spoke about the fans' protest. "I can understand their attitude. They wanted to show their disappointment and they made their feeling known towards me.

I fear the demonstration against Goodwin would have been far worse but for an ugly 89th-minute incident out on the field when Kenny Burns and Luton's Jim Ryan clashed.

It led to Ryan being sent off for allegedly striking Burns and when the final whistle went there were angry scenes between Burns and Luton's coach Roy McGrohan rather than a renewed outburst against the Blues' manager.

Harry Haslam, Luton's manager, said later: "The referee made a mistake. Burns struck Ryan and Jimmy's got the mark above his ear to prove it.

Disgraceful

"I think it is disgraceful when a player gets a fellow professional sent off and then watches with a smile on his face. We shall appeal."

As far as the match was concerned Luton were always the better and more determined side and the issue was never in doubt after John Ryan had put them ahead with a 25-yard free kick in the 14th minute.

Incredibly, Blues failed to line up a proper wall and their defence wobbled fatally three more times for Adrian Alston to score in the 44th and 48th minutes with Husband adding the fourth humiliating goal.

No Blues player did justice to himself. Trevor Francis did score a consolation goal after 60 minutes to mark his 21st birthday — but the memory of this defeat will long be with him and the rest of his teammates.

Birmingham: Latchford; Page, Bryant, Kendall, Gallagher, Pendrey, Calderwood, Francis, Budns, Hatton, Taylor, Smith (for Calderwood 66 minutes).

Luton: Barber; John Ryan, Buckley, Anderson, Falkner, Litt, Jimmy Ryan, Husband, Alston, West, Aston, Sub.; Spiring.

Attendance: 28,755.



HANDS OFF . . . Luton goalkeeper Keith Barber decides Blues' Bob Hatton poses more of a threat than the ball and takes appropriate action.