

AGONY AS SORRY BLUES SLIP UP

by RAY MATTS

74/75

Blues 1, Luton 4

BLUES sank to one of their worst performances of the season to lose to First Division strugglers Luton at St. Andrew's.

They were almost totally ineffective and as a result of this defeat they, themselves, are again struggling to protect their First Division status.

Luton piled on the agony with goals by John Ryan, Adrian Alston (2) and Jimmy Husband.

The only bright moment for Blues was Francis's consolation goal in the 60th minute.

It was decision day for Birmingham City. A victory or draw against Luton would assure them of a place in the First Division next season.

There was just one change with Jimmy Calderwood re-

turning in midfield in place of injured Paul Hendrie.

Garry Pendrey, who has been struggling for fitness all week, was finally declared sufficiently recovered to take his place.

Substitute was again Ian Smith.

Luton brought Steve Litt into their defence to replace suspended centre-half Paul Fletcher.

Award

Before the game Blues skipper Howard Kendall was presented with the "Evening Mail" Midland Footballer of the Year award by director Mr. Jack Wiseman.

BIRMINGHAM CITY: Latchford; Page, Bryant, Kendall, Gallagher, Pendrey, Calderwood,



● Jimmy Calderwood . . . unlucky with shot

Francis, Burns, Hatton, Taylor. Sub.: Smith.
LUTON: Barber; Ryan (John), Buckley, Anderson, Faulkner, Litt, Ryan (Jimmy), Husband, Alston, West, Aston. Sub: Spiring.

Referee: D. Richardson (Blackburn).

Blues tried to pressurise Luton's defence in the opening minutes. Although they had more of the ball they seldom looked like creating a positive scoring opportunity.

That was until the sixth minute! Then Kendall



● Garry Pendrey . . . passed fit.

chipped a perfectly flighted through-ball to deceive the square Luton defence and allow Francis to accelerate down the left.

The striker was forced to shoot from an acute angle and put his effort wide of the far post.

There was no chance of Luton playing defensively for a point. They needed victory to survive and whenever the opportunity arose they piled men forward in their search for a goal.

Against the run of play and in unsatisfactory fashion Luton took the lead in the 14th minute.

Calderwood was judged to have fouled Alston outside Blues' penalty area on the left side.

Luton right-back **JOHN RYAN** stepped up to crash a 25-yard right-footer into the top corner of the net to give Latchford no chance of making a save.

From the restart Blues were desperately unlucky not to equalise in sensational fashion.

They raided down the right, the ball came to Calderwood who slammed in a first-time left-foot shot from long range.

The ball thundered against the crossbar and rebounded to safety.

Blues were beginning to look a desperate side, particularly in midfield where the service was so poor it gave the front runners little hope or inspiration.

Blues' most promising move for some time came when Hatton played the ball to Calderwood, Hatton then dashed for a return pass only to be beaten marginally by the goalkeeper who sprinted bravely off his line.

Luton, more confident after their goal, pushed forward again.

Midfield man Anderson tested Latchford with a shot from the edge of the penalty area which the keeper saved diving to his left.

Luton were far sharper on the ball, more decisive in the tackle and showed a greater capacity for work than City.

Right on half-time Luton added the finishing touches to a miserable first-half by Blues when **ADRIAN ALSTON** put them two goals ahead.

He danced his way past Page and Calderwood to plant the ball firmly into the roof of the net.

Half-time	Blues	0
	Luton	2

The agony was a long way from being over for Blues. After their disastrous first-half they began the second in just as much trouble—by going three goals behind.

The Luton troubleshooter was again Australian World Cup star **ALSTON**.

After Jimmy Husband curled in a right-wing corner-kick in the 48th minute the centre-forward rose at the near post to head his second from close range.

Kendall tried a first-time shot which produced a diving save by Barber.

Blues finally pulled a goal back in the 60th minute and it came with a typically individual effort from **TREVOR FRANCIS**.

He sent defenders the wrong way to gain space for a shot.

When the ball came on to his right foot he sent it crashing into the far corner of the net.

In the 65th minute Blues decided to make a substitution and there were cheers when Ian Smith stood on the touch-line waiting to come on.

They changed to howls of derision when it was decided to call off midfield man Jimmy Calderwood when the fans had made it plain that they wanted a change in attack.

Blues had a sensational let-off when Alston missed a sitter from point-blank range following Aston's right-wing cross.

Blue went further behind in the 75th minute when a tragic mistake by Page sent **HUSBAND** racing free down the left. He produced a neat chip over Latchford's head and into the net.

It had an immediate reaction. The goal sent fans streaming from the terraces and set up a chant of "Goodwin out."

GOALS AND THEIR SCORERS

14m. B'ham 0, Luton 1.	Ryan (John)
44m. B'ham 0, Luton 2.	Alston
48m. B'ham 0, Luton 3.	Alston
60m. B'ham 1, Luton 3.	Francis
75m. B'ham 1, Luton 4.	Husband