

LUTON LORD IT AFTER BOOSTER FROM KING

Portsmouth 0 Luton 2

By ROGER
DUCKWORTH

SAFETY FIRST displays by Luton and Portsmouth threatened to produce a thrill-less and goal-less draw — until Andy King struck for the Hatters.

His chance came in the 39th minute when the ball came to him in a packed goalmouth. His shot was deflected in off a defender.

This put fire into Luton's game, resulting in splendid attacks and a great second half goal from Adrian Alston.

Alan West, the club captain, failed to get over his shoulder injury in spite of a vigorous fitness test yesterday. He said last night: "There was no chance of me playing. It's still very painful when I move it."

And so Brian Chambers came back into the side in West's place in midfield.

John Aston, who is suspended, was replaced on the left wing by Peter Spiring who has been playing some impressive stuff with the Reserves.

This meant that Jimmy Ryan, who has been suspended for the first three matches of the season, came back into the squad as substitute.

Portsmouth had to make one change. Chris Kamara, a tall coloured lad, came in to make his League debut in place of midfield man Mick Mellows who has a knee injury.

The Luton fans who travelled to the South coast would remember that the last time the Town played here the

MATCH DETAILS		
PORTSMOUTH: Lloyd; Roberts, Piper, Reynolds, Went, Hand, Marinello, Kane, Graham, Foster, Kamara. Sub: McGuinness.		
LUTON TOWN: Barber; John Ryan, Buckley, Anderson, Faulkner, Paul Futcher, King, Alston, Ron Futcher, Chambers, Spiring. Sub: Jimmy Ryan.		
REFEREE: Mr C. White (Harrow).		
GOALS: King (Luton) 39 min	75/76	
ALSTON (Luton) 55 mins	ATT: 9,835	

game ended in chaos with a floodlight failure which ended in the players going to the dressing room for a spell.

In the absence of West, John Faulkner was captain for today's game.

The first shot of the match was a lukewarm affair in the first minute when Alston flapped a right footer well wide from outside the box.

A minute later King went much closer with a shot that rose just over the Portsmouth crossbar after a move across the back of the penalty box involving Alston and Spiring.

And at the other end Paul Futcher did a cool bit of defending to get the ball back to Barber under pressure from Marinello.

In the fourth minute Anderson very nearly put Luton ahead but Lloyd made a diving save to stop his effort after good football between Spiring and King.

In the seventh minute Barber made a flying save to tip a splendid shot from Reynolds over the crossbar

after Buckley had been exposed by a rather weak pass from Paul Futcher.

Paul Futcher received an injury to his left leg after being fouled by Foster, but recovered after a dab with the magic sponge.

With both sides trying hard to settle, the game went through a dull patch but John Ryan almost ignited it again with a first-time shot from outside the penalty area that went over the top.

After a bad free-kick by John Ryan, way back in his own half, had been cut out by Reynolds, young Kamara sped down the left and put over a fine cross that was narrowly missed by the forehead of the diving Foster.

Another sweet move by Portsmouth came to grief under the offside flag. Kamara was again the sculptor and his fine ball out to Graham on the right and the resultant cross could have brought a goal had not Marinello been caught the wrong side of the Luton defence.

Luton were getting some abuse from the crowd for the over-use of the pass-back to the goalkeeper but at the other end they could have gone ahead had not a well-thought out pass by John Ryan been a yard too hard for Ron Futcher.

For a considerable spell Luton were struggling to get back into the game, a game in which they had started so brightly. But there was a lot of bad passing and with new members in the side, it was obviously going to take some time for them to settle.

Then some needle crept in when George Graham decided he didn't like a hard tackle from John Ryan and both players were spoken to.

Luton spent too much time taking the ball the wrong way and when they did get another view of the goal, Chambers lobbed the ball aimlessly wide from well outside the box. And the game went back to sleep.

Portsmouth had another chance to do something in the 29th minute, but after turning cleverly, Foster put in a shot that went nowhere near goal, and was helped back to Barber by Buckley.

What the game badly needed was a goal but after half an hour, it was difficult to see where one would come from. Much of the football was short stuff in midfield from two sides seemingly anxious not to expose themselves in defence.

It looked as if Luton might be starting with a few ideas again, but a long through ball from Chambers caught Spiring offside and the Portsmouth free-kick ended with a shot from Marinello

being blocked and the rebound being thumped wide by Kamara.

And the game was raised after a Portsmouth crossfield move ended with a low shot by Marinello being saved by the diving Barber.

Luton's best move for a long time came in the 38th minute when Faulkner cleared from defence and Spiring sent Ron Futcher through. The Luton centre-forward controlled the ball well, but was tackled as he shot and from the corner, Ryan put in a low shot that was easily saved.

After 39 minutes the goal we had been waiting so avidly for arrived. Spiring sent Anderson away on the right, he beat the advancing goalkeeper and pushed the ball into a crowded goalmouth for KING to shoot a deflected goal off Reynolds.

After a Chambers pass, intended for Alston, had been cut out, John Ryan did well to get an awkward ball back to Barber with Marinello closing in.

Just before half-time a corner from Reynolds was headed into the side netting by Foster, and although a cheer went up from the Portsmouth crowd, it was ill-founded and the half-time whistle went.

HT: 0-1

A long free-kick by Paul Futcher was headed behind for a corner by Went and from Chambers' flag-kick, Faulkner headed over the top.

Again the Portsmouth performance brought groans from the home crowd. Hand laboriously conceded a corner to Luton and when play staggered to the other end, full-back Roberts could only manage the softest of shots at Barber from outside the box.

After a Luton attack had been blunted, Portsmouth hit back and a good pass from Marinello on the left was wasted by Foster.

Luton went further ahead ten minutes into the second half with a splendidly engineered goal that involved some seven clever passes before ALSTON took the ball away from goalkeeper Lloyd, turned twice and then knocked the ball through the defence into the net.

Anderson and Spiring started it all and Ron Futcher, challenging hard on the near post, provided the final pass.

Portsmouth looked a poor old lot and a good overlap by Buckley exposed them again in the back line of defence but a Luton man was caught off-side before Chambers could get in a shot.

A good run by Anderson saw the ball through to Alston on the edge of the box, but his intended unselfish flick to Ron Futcher went astray and the ball bobbled harmlessly to the goalkeeper.

Ten minutes before the end two idiot fans ran down the pitch and after being chased by a policeman the crowd showed their appreciation when a fan collared one of them to lead to his arrest.

THE VERDICT

LUTON were miles better than Portsmouth this afternoon. If the game was drab in the first half, it was because Luton could not believe their task was so easy.

At half-time they led by a goal from their Man of the Match Andy King and in the second half they clinched it with a good goal from Alston.

It was in the second half that Luton really came into their own. They had got the measure of the poor Pompey side and concentrated on playing close man-to-man football. They even won the appreciation of a home crowd disillusioned by their own side's lack of fire.



Even without Aston and West, Luton never looked in danger of losing this match. Their replacement, Spiring and Chambers, did admirable jobs and Luton were complete masters in midfield.

Goalkeeper Barber, whose handling was immaculate, was only bothered twice, and on each occasion he put hard shots from Reynolds over the top.

Faulkner had a fine game at centre-half to celebrate his first outing as Luton's skipper, but he had great support from the other back men John Ryan, Paul Futcher and Buckley.

Luton's victory could have been far more convincing. Anderson, who again played well, put an easy looking header over the crossbar and Spiring hit a post with another header.

In attack Alston played a lot of unselfish football and fully deserved his 55th-minute goal that sewed up Luton's win.