



Roger Duckworth's VERDICT

THE local Press was describing this afternoon's game at Meadow Lane as the best seen there this season.

It certainly was a cracker. It was full of attacking football and Luton can never be accused of sitting back in an effort to glean a point.

They tried to create chances throughout the match and both Ron Futcher and King had efforts blocked in the first half.

After the break Ron Futcher wasted a break-away and Anderson also missed a good chance. But the same can be said for County and it was eventually Ian Scanlon who found the net.

I thought he was off-side and so did Luton skipper Faulkner who was told off for arguing about it with a linesman.

But the goal stood and the biggest home gate of the season was absolutely delighted.

From Luton's point of view, Anderson had a fine game in midfield while Paul Futcher did well in defence.

Unfortunately his twin brother was booked for dissent and there was a nasty moment in the second half when the Futcher twins were reprimanded for having a go at County defender Brian Stubbs.

There was obviously some needle between the two camps which is a pity because both teams were managing to play entertaining football without this sort of thing.

Just before half-time desperation worked its way into the Luton defence and Barber, with his ten team mates lined up under the bar behind him, had to make an amazing save to a free kick from the penalty spot by Bolton.

SUSPECT GOAL GETS NOTTS THE POINTS

Notts County 1 Luton 0
By ROGER DUCKWORTH

TRAIL blazers Notts County threw plenty of attacking power against Luton in a ding-dong match and the Hatters withstood it all until the 66th minute.

It was Scanlon who struck for County, helped by a mistake by Anderson. The controversial goal capped a frenzied burst of activity by the County winger.

The Town were unchanged with Alan West again missing because of a shoulder injury. So, like last week, Jimmy Ryan continued in midfield. The only alteration on the Luton sheet was at substitute where Jimmy Husband came back for his first senior appearance of the season.

County have been able to field the same side for the past six matches and this was made possible today by the fact that long-serving centre half David Needham recovered from a strain during the week before being announced fit.

The match could have begun disastrously for Luton. A long ball from County crossed the corner of the Luton penalty box and with Buckley not bothering to feed it to his goalkeeper, Barber picked the ball up from outside the box to give the Nottingham club a first-minute free-kick.

This was knocked across by Probert and though Paul Futcher managed to head clear, he collected an accidental kick from centre-half Needham and had to have some treatment.

And it was Needham again who did well to take the ball from under the nose of Anderson in the County penalty area after King and Jim Ryan had created the opening.

Luton got another bite of the cherry but Alston's shot was wide.

That man Needham was there again a couple of minutes later when he headed back a huge throw from Barber and the Luton goalkeeper was forced into making a brave save at the feet of Carter.

After Aston had won a corner, which was cleared after Ron Futcher had forced McManus into a fumble, County hit back again but a long centre from full back O'Brien caught Bradd offside.

And the thrills continued

when John Ryan put a long free kick into the County goalmouth and McManus made a good catch under pressure from Ron Futcher and Alston.

Then Anderson was unlucky to be robbed in the penalty box as he tried to cut inside the Nottingham centre half to get in a shot. It was a good effort by the Luton midfielder man and was provided by King.

Paul Futcher was suffering from his earlier knock and after treatment had to limp to the touchline with one boot in his hand.

A good build-up by Anderson, King and Jimmy Ryan was wasted when Aston ran the ball out of play.

Luton kept pushing forward and Anderson again looked dangerous in the 13th minute when he got in a hard shot which McManus saved at full stretch.

Knocked

Paul Futcher returned to the match after an absence of five minutes during which the Luton coaching staff was warned for giving advice from the bench.

After Luton had cleared a corner, King tried to dribble clear but was robbed by McVay who nipped through the Luton defence but for some reason was given offside.

After King had fouled Carter, referee Newsome had a word with Jimmy Ryan. It was an obvious case of mistaken identity. Luckily the Luton player was not booked.

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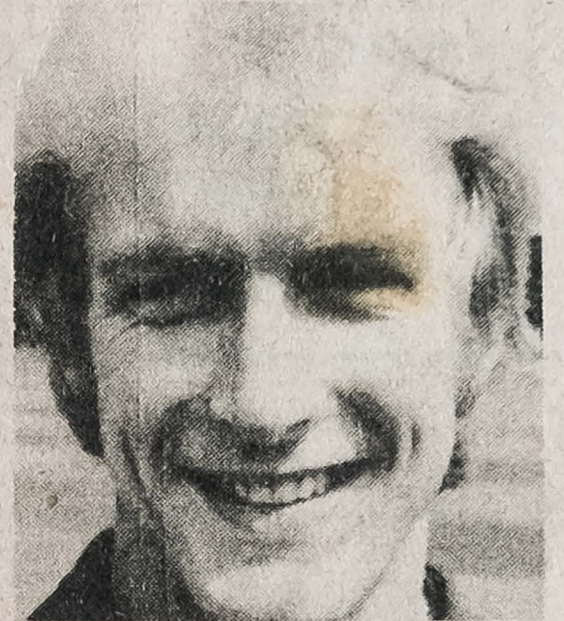
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which McManus saved at full stretch.

In the 21st minute County appealed for a penalty when Faulkner manhandled Bradd off the ball in the box, but the referee waved play on.

In the 24th minute Luton had a let-off when a Carter corner was knocked across the goalmouth and a hard header from Bradd was stopped on the line by Barber with Faulkner charging in to make a last-ditch clearance.

After being fed by a fine pass from Alston, Jimmy Ryan mucked up a good-looking Luton attack by knocking the ball too far forward allowing Needham to clear.



RON FUTCHER

After further flurries of Luton effort, County hit back with a positive shot from Bolton but it lifted over the Luton crossbar.

Aston, who had been injured earlier in the game, had to leave the field after 32 minutes to make way for substitute Jimmy Husband to make his first team appearance of the season.

Ron Futcher tried to turn an accidental trip into a penalty after going over the leg of Richards, but in spite of the Luton man's protests, the referee would have none of it.

In the 36th minute County were again unlucky. A long free kick from the right was knocked into the goalmouth and a first-time effort by

MATCH DETAILS

NOTTS COUNTY: McManus; Richards, O'Brien, Bolton, Needham, Stubbs, Carter, Probert, Bradd, McVay, Scanlon. Sub: Vinter.

LUTON TOWN: Barber; John Ryan, Buckley, Anderson, Faulkner, Paul Futcher, King, Alston, Ron Futcher, Jim Ryan, Aston. Sub: Hu

REFEREE: Mr C. L. Newsome (Shropshire).

ATTENDANCE: 11,173

SCANLON NOTTS COUNTY 66 min

Needham was well caught by the agile Barber.

A minute later a rare defensive mistake by County let in King and Ron Futcher. Futcher took the shot but it was half blocked and bobbled on to the 'keeper.

HT: 0-0

The match soon got back into its pattern. A good dash down the left by Buckley was stopped by the Nottingham defence, and at the other end John Ryan did a good job in preventing Scanlon getting through.

Then a couple of Anderson-prompted moves brought further hope for the Town, but first King and then Alston ran into a wall of trouble.

With some help from Ron Futcher it became Anderson's turn to break through but after a promising run he was stopped by Stubbs.

Some indecision by Buckley let Carter get in a narrow-angled shot which Barber managed to divert for a corner. Fortunately this, and another flag kick which resulted from it, did not cause the Luton defence much problem with Faulkner and Jimmy Ryan sorting it out.

Anderson was playing well in midfield but Luton still found it hard to break through. Faulkner tried a long ball into the goalmouth, but it was much too hard with no Luton player in range.

And seconds later, Faulkner was in action again, this time

helping Barber who had had to run out of his area to stop a left wing raid and then experiencing the ball passing him on its way into an empty goalmouth.

But it was certainly a ding-dong match. Ron Futcher left the County defence standing with a 50-yard dash but his pass across the goalmouth, which beat goalkeeper McManus, was just wide of King.

Another Luton attack started by Jimmy Ryan and furthered by Husband was wasted when King shot wide from too far out.

The all-important goal came after 66 minutes when, after a mistake by Anderson, Bradd slipped a ball through to SCANLON who flicked it past Barber into the Luton net.

The effort looked suspiciously off side but it was allowed and Faulkner received a talking to by the referee for arguing with the linesman who refused to raise his flag.

Following a Jimmy Ryan corner, Anderson wasted a chance. He had started to argue for a penalty when the ball came back to him. By this time he was off balance and also spoiled a chance for Alston.

There was some trouble on the field when the Futcher twins appeared to be having a tussle off the ball with Stubbs. The referee sorted it out without resorting to his pocket book.