

VERDICT
by
Roger Duckworth

**A thriller
—this
game had
everything**

WHAT a thriller this was at Kenilworth Road this afternoon. We had the lot.

Luton went ahead through Jimmy Husband after four minutes, and for quarter of an hour they looked as if they were going to chalk up a big score.

But for 20 minutes in the first half, they got out of step and lost their rhythm. During this time Oldham scored twice in a minute through Chapman and McVitie and when Luton went in a goal down there were a lot of pulled faces in the tea room.

But Luton had the character to fight back and they provided a thrilling second half.

Two minutes after the break Chambers scored with one of his brilliant lobs and from then on Luton hurled themselves into attack with even centre-half Faulkner joining in much of the fun.

Luton were completely on top — apart from a couple of breakaways when Barber made one brilliant save — and in spite of the miserable day there was plenty to cheer the Luton crowd.

Late in the game Oldham had centre-half Hicks sent off for striking King who was also booked for the original foul in the incident.

Luton lost centre-forward Ron Fitcher with an ankle injury and he was replaced by Jimmy Ryan.

LUTON ROBBED IN LAST MINUTE

STUNNED by a nightmare 60 seconds in the first half when they went from a goal up to a goal down, Luton pulled themselves together in the interval to snatch a superb equaliser straight after the re-start — only to lose the game in the final minute.

They had got off to a dream beginning with Jimmy Husband scoring after just four minutes,

Luton reeled back under the shock and at that stage it seemed likely they would not recover, but after two minutes of the second half Chambers netted brilliantly to put them back on level terms. But as the final whistle approached Shaw made it 2-3.

Ronnie Fitcher returned to lead the Town's attack after Peter Anderson had gone down with a muscle strain during the week. It was the Luton twin's first senior match since he played in the goalless draw at Nottingham Forest on October 21.

Otherwise Luton were unchanged. In the Oldham line-up was striker David Shaw, a player in whom the Town have shown considerable interest over the years.

A bad back-pass by Paul Fitcher put Barber in some trouble and though he raced out to kick the ball of the by-line into the Bobbers stand, a linesman awarded Oldham a corner from which Barber made a good save to a neat little touch from Blair.

After weathering a couple of minutes of Oldham pressure, Luton went ahead with a soft goal from JIMMY HUSBAND.

It was an amazing affair. Aston tricked his way round the back of the defence and after Oldham looked to have cleared the ball, it went to

Luton Town 2 Oldham 3
By ROGER DUCKWORTH

Husband whose shot looked to have provided an easy catch for Platt, but it skidded straight through his hands into the net.

Then an explosive run by John Ryan saw him through the Oldham defence but a last-ditch tackle got the ball back to the 'keeper. Even so, it put the crowd in a happy mood.

Luton continued their ambitions and a short free-kick from Chambers was

SPORTS FLASH

■ John Richards, after 18 seconds, and Steve Daley, 12 minutes, gave Wolves a 2-0 lead at Burnley.

knocked across by Aston, and Husband knocked a possible chance high over the crossbar.

After Oldham left-winger Groves had gone over after a tackle by John Ryan, the referee had a word with both players telling them to cut out the rough stuff.

After a quarter of an hour goalkeeper Platt made up for his earlier mistake when he

brilliantly tipped over a shot from a free-kick by Aston. He must have been unsighted until the very last minute.

The thrills — and the Luton free-kicks — continued, and though Luton could not produce another quick goal, they always looked as if they were about to.

Jimmy Husband had another low shot well saved by Platt who seemed to have recovered his composure.

When Oldham tried to hit back, Barber dealt competently with an awkward cross from Chapman from the left.

Then Mr Turvey had a word with King for bringing down Chapman from behind. There was some hesitancy in the Luton defence following the free-kick and CHAPMAN slammed in a lovely goal from just outside the box.

Barber, going full length, managed to get his hand to the ball, but could not stop it crashing into the net.

A minute later Luton's earlier triumph was turned into despondency when right-winger McVITIE took a nice pass from the left and smacked it first time past the unfortunate Barber from the edge of the box.

Ron Fitcher tried to hit back, taking an awkward ball too strongly, but the Oldham goalkeeper was well placed to take his low right-footer.

Oldham might have had another goal had not Faulkner got a foot to a clever through-pass from Groves that was meant for Chapman.

But the will seemed to drain out of Luton following their reverse and for a spell they did not look as aggressive as their Lancashire opponents.

After half an hour or so, the rain began to stream down making the already slippery

Dream start but shocks in store

conditions even worse for the players.

In the 37th minute after Luton had fought their way back into the game, Paul Fitcher hit the foot of the left-hand post with a fine low shot but there was nobody on hand to deal with the rebound.

A mistake by Paul Fitcher put Faulkner in trouble and he was forced to bring down McVitie. From the free-kick, Whittle was only a foot or so over the crossbar.

Just before half-time Chambers shot wide after a West corner had presented him with a chance.

HT: 1-2

Right from the kick-off Luton surged forward and a long "up and under" from John Ryan was headed out to Ron Fitcher who might have made better of his chance which he put over the top.

Just two minutes of the second half had gone when Luton drew level. A corner from West was headed out and some splendid footwork from King provided Chambers with the ball outside the box. He curled in a brilliant shot over the defence and over the head of goalkeeper Platt into the net.

With the cheers still ringing in their ears, Luton powered forward again and a back-heel by West left King to shoot just over the top from well out.

Everyone wanted to get in on the act and after another powerful run by Faulkner, Husband shot wide.

More good work by Thomson and Chambers gave Luton another chance, but Ron Fitcher did not turn quickly enough and the defence was on him before he could make anything of it.

Aston hit a free-kick straight at Platt and in a more frenzied build up, West had a shot saved. It began to look only a matter of time before Luton would take the lead again.

It might have come on the hour but John Ryan shot wide.

A long centre from Aston produced more goalmouth thrills but the free-kick went against Luton after Ron Fitcher, who was hurt in the incident, tried to fist the ball

save to a terrific shot from Bell.

At the other end, Bell made almost as good a save to Husband, but Luton could do nothing with the corner.

After Chambers had let in Oldham by sending a free-kick the wrong way inside his own half, Luton cleared the danger and roared back. Aston left his full-back for dead in a thrilling dash down the left. Paul

SPORTS FLASH

■ Barry Butlin gave Nottingham Forest a fifth-minute lead against Bristol City.

Fitcher got his head to the cross, and then slammed the rebound inches wide.

A minute later Faulkner put a clever effort on to the roof of the net from a seemingly impossible position.

Then Ron Fitcher had to leave the field again because of his injury and he was replaced by Jimmy Ryan.

In the 77th minute Oldham centre-half Keith Hicks was sent off after hitting King on the back of the head. He had been fouled by the Luton man who was also booked.

With only a minute left SHAW caught the Luton defence out of position with a

SPORTS FLASH

■ Transfer seeking Terry Hibbitt, a £100,000 buy from Newcastle in August, was a last minute omission from Birmingham's team against Arsenal at St Andrews.

well-timed run and with Faulkner steaming back he banged the ball past Barber for a rather lucky winner.

MATCH DETAILS

LUTON: Barber, John Ryan, Thomson, Chambers, Faulkner, Paul Fitcher, Husband, King, Ron Fitcher, West, Aston. Sub: Jim Ryan.

OLDHAM: Platt, Wood, Whittle, Bell, Hicks, Holt, McVitie, Shaw, Blair, Chapman, Groves. Sub: Carroll.

Referee: Mr A. Turvey (Basingstoke)

HUSBAND (LUTON) 4 min

CHAPMAN (Oldham) 26 min

McVITIE (Oldham) 27 min

CHAMBERS (LUTON) 47 min

SHAW (OLDHAM) 89 min

ATTENDANCE 8,237



Comedian Eric Morecambe back in the Luton directors' box today after becoming a vice-president of the club

SPORTS FLASH

■ Manchester City lost Dennis Tueart with a thigh injury after 12 minutes against Everton at Goodison Park. Paul Power came on as substitute.

Tommy Booth scored for Manchester City after 17 minutes.

as he dived in. Fitcher had to have treatment at the side of the Oldham goal.

In spite of being dragged back by Wood, Faulkner got across another good centre and again Oldham were lucky to escape.

A couple of minutes later it was Luton's turn to be let off when Barber made a brilliant