

DEFEATED UNITED ARE ON THE RACK

OXFORD UNITED 1 LUTON TOWN 3

MIKE CUERDEN reports from The Manor

A FREAK goal 13 minutes from time put Oxford United on the path to a 3—1 defeat in their last home game of the season against Luton Town today.

Boosted by an equalising goal by Derek Clarke a minute before half time, United were sent reeling when Pasquale Fuccillo's hopeful cross bounced into the far corner of United's net. Then in the last minute Jimmy Husband sealed United's fate when he ran in the ball after Ron Futcher's shot had hit a post.

Skipper John Shuker came to United's rescue after only two minutes when a brilliant through ball from West looped over United's defence. Husband was through but delayed his shot, waiting for the ball to bounce just right and allowed Shuker to recover his ground and head back to Burton.

Husband's reactions were quicker a minute later when he turned and shot left footed forcing Burton to a full-length save.

Shuker sent in United's first shot in the fourth minute, a curling effort left footed which Barber plucked from underneath the bar.

Burton was again at full stretch when Ron Futcher turned and shot right footed in the eighth minute.

Punched clear

But Burton reserved his best save for the 16th minute when Aston's right wing corner landed at Fuccillo's feet.

A first-time volley sped through United's defence and Burton took off to his left to punch clear.

A minute later Chambers had

THE TEAMS

OXFORD UNITED:
Burton, Taylor, Shuker, Lowe, C. Clarke, Briggs, Houseman, Foley, D. Clarke, Gibbins, Tait. Sub: Aylott.

LUTON: Barber, Ryan, Buckley, Fuccillo, Price, P. Futcher, Husband, Chambers, R. Futcher, West, Aston. Sub: Pollock.

Referee: Mr B. James (Surrey).

the ball in the back of United's net but was pulled up for handball.

A linesman flagged immediately but Chambers was adamant that the ball had hit his chest before he fired it left footed past Burton.

Gibbins was through on the right but wasted a cross and then came tragedy for United after Colin Clarke had con-



Nick Lowe, Oxford United's goal hero against Charlton yesterday, heads clear against Luton at the Manor today, despite a spirited challenge by Brian Chambers

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ceded possession on the half-way line.

Luton broke away and a brilliant goal by BUCKLEY gave Luton the lead. The full back fired a left footed cross-cum-centre which powered into the top corner of the net in the 22nd minute.

Burton was quickly off his line to deny the Futcher twins when Paul's through ball found his brother goal-side of the defence but Burton was out before Ron could line up his shot.

Luton were exposing United at the back often finding themselves with only one defender to beat. Lowe's fine tackle on Ron Futcher saved United in just such a situation.

Luton almost went further ahead in the 33rd minute when West found Chambers with a neat flick inside. Chambers was unmarked and another flick sent the ball on to Ron Futcher whose back header forced Burton to scramble across his line before punching clear.

On rack

After surviving severe Luton pressure, United hit back when Derek Clarke turned a pass inside to Houseman but Shuker was unable to direct the hard Lowe cross goalwards.

United were on the rack in the 40th minute. Shuker's poor free kick started it all. The ball went straight to Husband and Lowe was forced to concede a corner.

Derek Clarke failed to clear and Colin Clarke gave away another corner which Aston floated over and Husband dipped onto the cross bar.

United were being totally outplayed and then out of nothing came an equaliser.

Briggs floated over a measured cross and DEREK CLARKE rose high with Ryan to head home over the stranded Barber.

So out of the blue, United were back in the game. It was a stroke of luck which they would be hoping that they could cash in on as they left the field to a standing ovation from their fans.

Halftime: Oxford United 1, Luton 1.

As in yesterday's game, when a second half revival beat Charlton, United again started the second period in a more aggressive mood.

Hard ball

They had a good chance four minutes after the restart when a foul on Houseman gave United a free kick just outside kick driving the ball hard and low towards goal but it hit Derek Clarke who was unable to avoid the sheer pace of tait's drive.

Ron Futcher was booked in the 59th minute for kicking the ball away and a minute later, a foul by Shuker on Husband saw Ryan hit the free kick over Burton's bar.

Determined defensive work by Colin Clarke robbed Husband as the former Everton winger turned low and moved in on United's goal.

Taylor was having an outstanding game. Showing experience beyond his eighteen years, he rarely wasted a ball out of defence despite often being under pressure.

With the game threatening to deteriorate into a stalemate Luton brought on Pollock for Aston and, perhaps in an attempt to spur his players, United's manager Mick Brown, sent substitute Aylott to warm up on the sidelines.

Luton were now defending

in numbers and United were finding it more difficult to break them down.

In the 74th minute Mr Brown showed that he was not pulling a psychological trick when he brought on Aylott for Gibbins. Aylott slotted into midfield and Tait took Gibbins place up front.

Aylott was soon in the action robbing Pollock to send a through pass to Derek Clarke but the reliable Paul Futcher was there again.

In the 77th minute, a freak goal sent United on the downward path again. A short throw in on the right saw FUC-CILLO send over a hopeful cross. Three United defenders stood and with Burton on his line the ball bounced once before finding the far corner of the net beyond the keeper's groping fingertips.

As with United's equaliser it was a goal out of nothing, and one which could cost United their second division lives.

HUSBAND added Luton's third goal in the last minute.

RESULT

OXFORD UNITED..... 1
LUTON TOWN..... 3
Attendance 7,633