

THE Luton fairy tale continues to gather pace and substance. Yesterday at Kenilworth Road, the club that had debts of £750,000 and was in danger of extinction little more than a year ago, won for the eighth time in succession and put themselves firmly in contention among the Second Division promotion candidates.

At the same time, of course, Luton ended Wolves' rewarding unbeaten run of 16 games and prevented the high-scoring Midlands side from exerting further pressure on Chelsea's leadership of the Division.

In fact, Luton's completion of the double over Wolves this season could be said to have thrown the Second Division promotion situation wide open.

No longer certainly, can it be regarded as, at most, a four horse race.

Essentially, their victory yesterday was a triumph of honest toil over sophistication. While most of Luton's attacks were

little more than a series of head-long rushes through the middle, Wolves, building carefully and imaginatively from the back, looked a First Division team in everything but name for long periods of the first half.

Gradually however, Luton's determination and persistence exposed the vulnerability of Wolves's back four, the weakest department of their team, and the match was virtually settled by two goals, from Husband and Fuccillo inside a minute late in the first half.

That crushing double blow weakened Wolves's resolve and disturbed their composure to such an extent that Luton might easily have made the margin of victory much wider in the second half.

Nevertheless, Aleksic was compelled to make two excellent saves and Richards had a "goal" disallowed for an infringement as the force of Wolves's belated attempt to salvage a point suggested the Luton defence could struggle a bit if the club did return to the First Division.

That now realistic prospect looked little more than an elusive

Seeing is believing

By COLIN MALAM
Luton 2, Wolves 0

dream as Wolves nearly scored five times, through Daley, Sunderland, Richards, Hibbitt and Carr, inside the first six minutes.

At that point, Luton simply could not fathom Wolves's unusual 4-4-2 formation in which Richards and Sunderland, quick on the turn and fleet of foot, are supported quickly and intelligently from midfield by Daley and Hibbitt, two dangerous strikers of the ball.

With Aston tightly marked by Palmer, Luton had to look elsewhere this time for match-winning inspiration.

In the event, it came principally

from Buckley, their adventurous left back, and Fuccillo, the Bedford boy with the Italian name, who gives Luton's midfield its power. Twice Fuccillo, thrusting through the middle, forced Pierce to concede corners; and he caused so much general uncertainty in the Wolves defence that Ron Futcher was presented with three chances, all of which he wasted, to score from close range.

Pierce also had to save from Buckley, Paul Futcher, Luton's accomplished central defender, and Chambers in that extremely lively first half. Yet Wolves's subtle creation of two chances, both of which he failed to take, for Hibbitt and an offside "goal" by Munro left us unprepared for Luton's two quick goals.

The first one, after 36 minutes, was started by Buckley's long free kick, Ron Futcher headed it down and Husband, quicker than McAlle to spot the opening, swept the ball past the right hand of the diving Pierce on the half-volley.

Then, a minute later Buckley's long forward pass found Fuccillo running unmarked through the right side of the Wolves defence.

At an acute angle to the goal, he lobbed the ball precisely over the poorly positioned Pierce and into the far corner.

In the second half, Hibbitt, twice, and Carr tried to beat the inspired Aleksic without success, and it was a measure of Wolves's frustration that Patching was replaced with Gould, the substitute, after 67 minutes and that three of their players, Sunderland, McAlle and Carr, were booked for dissent during the 90 minutes.

At the other end Ron Futcher squandered yet another scoring chance and he was also refused an appeal, justified afterwards by Wolves's confession, for a penalty when Palmer deflected the striker's shot for a corner, apparently with his hand. All in all though, a memorable day for Luton's Harry Haslam, deservedly elected the Second Division's manager of the month before the start.

Luton : Aleksic, Price, Buckley, Chambers, Faulkner, P. Futcher, Husband, West, R. Flutcher, Fuccillo, Aston. Sub : Geddes.

Wolves : Pierce, Palmer, Parkin, Daley, Munro, McAlle, Hibbit, Richards, Sunderland, Patching, Carr. Sub : Gould.

Referee : R. S. Lewis (G. Bookham).