

SUN SHINES ON UNITED WITH A WIN

NEWCASTLE

St. James's Park erupts as new face Jim Pearson salutes the crowd after scoring his first goal — which was also the opening goal of the season for Newcastle — today.

By DICK KIRKUP

78/79

NEWCASTLE United paraded the most expensive signing in their history when £200,000 Peter Withe led their attack against Luton Town in this afternoon's game at sun-drenched St. James's Park.

He became the fifth of manager Bill McGarry's newcomers to play today — Terry Hibbitt, Jim Pearson, John Connolly and Colin Suggett having already made their debuts in a dismal start to the season.

McGarry has asked the fans to resist drawing comparisons between Withe and former Tyneside idol Malcolm Macdonald, but nevertheless those same fans were looking for Withe to give their attack some teeth.

The only change from the side beaten 3-0 at home on Wednesday by West Ham was the omission of young Nigel Walker, who became substitute. Suggett took over the No. 7 shirt to accommodate Withe in the front line.

Newcastle were also hoping to end a run of 23 League and Cup matches — 19 of them in the League — without a victory, the longest such run in Britain.

Indeed, Newcastle's last home win in the League was on December 17 last year when they defeated Wolves 4-0.

Luton were without Lil Fuccillo, who failed a fitness test on a leg injury, but back in action for the first time this season were Alan West and Paul Price.

Newcastle, backed by another big crowd, pushed back Luton's early raids and in the second minute they won a free kick out on the right when Suggett was obstructed. Cassidy's free kick, intended for Withe, was headed away for a corner by Turner and when the centre came over Pearson was pulled up for a foul on Aleksic.

Turner, in particular, and Price were covering Withe tightly. But when Stein tried to get on to the end of a long clearance out of the Luton defence, he was chucked by Barker.

Mahoney rose well to hold a Hatton header following a left-wing centre by Moss high above his head in the sixth minute — and at this stage both sides were playing bright, open football and the crowd was thoroughly enjoying it.

Suggett burst through in mid-field in the eighth minute and ended with a lovely through ball for Connolly, but Stephens just got there first to touch the ball back to his goalkeeper.

Seconds later Withe gave chase in the inside left position but the alert Aleksic was quickly off his line to dive at the striker's feet to take the ball cleanly.

Newcastle easily cleared a Luton free kick and Connolly had the crowd cheering as he brought the ball out of defence with a fine run on the right.

He hit a long ball forward for Suggett to chase, but again Aleksic read the move perfectly and raced out to snatch the ball away from the Newcastle man.

In the 15th minute Connolly, despite being under heavy pressure near Luton's right corner flag, still got in a superb cross. But Suggett was slightly off balance and his header went wide.

Within a minute Connolly again sent over a glorious low cross, but it had too much pace. In the 21st minute Newcastle took the lead — which they thoroughly deserved. Connolly sent in a right-wing corner

NEWCASTLE	LUTON
1 Mahoney	1 Aleksic
2 Kelly	2 Stephens
3 Barker	3 Aizlewood
4 Cassidy	4 Donaghy
5 Bird	5 Turner
6 Blackley	6 Price
7 Suggett	7 Hill
8 Pearson	8 West
9 Withe	9 Stein
10 Hibbitt	10 Hatton
11 Connolly	11 Moss
12 Walker	12 McNichol

Ref: Mr Michael Lowe (Sheffield)

that Turner headed out, but from the rebound Cassidy got in a close-range shot.

The shot was blocked, Suggett touched the ball forward and JIM PEARSON flung himself forward to head the ball into the net from a couple of yards.

The Newcastle goal was met with a mighty roar — it also had a feeling of relief about it — and the fans' singing rang around the ground. Newcastle responded in girth with clever football and the promise of better times ahead.

In the 25th minute Kelly and Cassidy linked up brilliantly in defence to find Connolly in the centre circle and he added his own brilliant touch with a gem of a through ball for Hibbitt to chase.

The little midfield man was after it like a hare, but Aleksic galloped well out of his penalty area to halt Hibbitt, who was injured in the collision. After treatment he resumed.

Then Kelly again won applause for a superb clearance to get the ball upfield and it led to a dazzling move involving Connolly, Pearson and Withe, ending with Hibbitt flashing a 25-yard drive a yard wide.

Withe was certainly making all the difference, not only to Newcastle's play but also their confidence, and he was always involved with either strong running or neat flicks, trying to find space for his colleagues.

Newcastle were full of deft touches but in the 35th minute Turner stole forward to head just wide of the Newcastle goal — and three minutes later Hatton's header was also just off target to remind Newcastle that they still had a match on their hands.

Half-time:

Newcastle Un 1
Luton Tn 0

Luton surged forward in the opening seconds of the second half, stringing together a fine move between Aizlewood, Donaghy and Stein, who pushed a pass out to the overlapping West on the left.

But Cassidy read it perfectly and beat the No. 8 with a superb sliding tackle.

Withe won a free kick midway in the Luton half on the left, but Hibbitt's kick was brilliantly cleared by Price. The ball ran only as far as Cassidy, who again tried a long-range drive, and this time it was deflected for a corner.

Hibbitt's near-post cross was fisted away for another corner by Aleksic as Withe



lunged forward trying to get in a header, but when the corner came over the dominating Turner headed clear.

However, once again the clearance carried to a Newcastle man, this time Suggett, who tried to find Withe inside the box on the right.

But the ever-alert Aleksic was off his line in a flash to smother the ball at the striker's feet.

There was no disputing the fact that Newcastle's form was nothing short of a revelation after two successive defeats. In the 52nd minute a left-wing cross from Barker was only just touched away for a corner by Aleksic as he bravely dived at the feet of Connolly.

Hibbitt sent over a clever far post corner, but there was no one there to meet it.

Cassidy was again wide with long range, Hibbitt almost found Suggett in the box and then Connolly almost broke through as Newcastle really did produce some tremendous football.

In the 55th minute Stephens went down injured in his own box and he needed lengthy treatment before continuing. However, three minutes later, Stephens was clearly in trouble with his injury and was substituted by McNichol.

A minute later Newcastle went so close to producing a second goal—Pearson cleverly going past three defenders before seeing his 15-yard drive saved at the second attempt by Aleksic, diving full-length to his right.

With three minutes left, Withe was given the chance he had been waiting for but he sliced wide.

In the closing seconds Withe found Pearson a yard off the Luton goal line but the ball flashed inches wide.

FINAL:

NEWCASTLE UTD 1
LUTON TOWN 0

Kiwis pound Aussies

NEW ZEALAND beat Australia 22-6 in the second Rugby Union Test in Christchurch today to take a winning 2-0 lead in the three-Test series.

For the All Blacks, who had led 9-6 at half-time, Mark Taylor, Gary Sear and Stuart Wilson scored tries, with Doug Bruce kicking a dropped goal and Bevan Wilson two conversions and a penalty. Ken Wright kicked a dropped goal and penalty for Australia.