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Luton joy at last as Hatton grabs winner

SUPER GOAL ENDS AWAYDAY MISERY

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IT'S BEEN a long wait. But Luton's victory at Charlton last night was well worth it. It was the first time the Town have won away in the League since December 11 last year and the first time manager David Pleat has seen his team collect two points on an opponents' ground since he took over.

Behind these statistics lies the story of how Luton finally came good in this game, particularly in the second half when everyone was left wondering how Charlton managed to score five goals at Bristol Rovers on Saturday.

The fact that they also conceded five in the same match was not so surprising on the evidence of their performance last night.

Luton's slender winning margin made a mockery of their all-round superiority in a game where Charlton found it extremely difficult to compete against the Town's fighting qualities.

After starting on top, Luton conceded a 33rd minute goal but found the impetus to grind Charlton down with a tenacious wave of non-stop second half attacks.

Despite watching his team win for the first time in 11 months, Pleat refused to be drawn into the post-match euphoria.

"The goal shook us, but I felt that if we kept our foot on the ball — and our composure — we could get a result," he said.

"At half time I told my players to look at the opposition and say to themselves: 'Are you better than them?' They proved in the second half that they were."

Pleat also played a battle of wits with Charlton when he revealed after the match that Bob Hatton, Graham Jones, Paul Price and David Moss had played with a throat infection, which started to run through the club after Saturday's victory over Newcastle.

Mark Aizlewood also played despite hospital treatment on Monday for a chest complaint.

**CHARLTON 1,
LUTON 2**
Report by ERIC HARRIS
Pictures by PETER HOARE



■ On it's way. David Moss beats Peter Shaw (left) and the keeper to equalise for the Hatters

Hatters hit back

But these problems were never evident as Luton calmly proceeded to demolish Charlton's feeble resistance.

Charlton hadn't lost a game since they were beaten 3-0 at Kenilworth Road on September 2. Last night, they were finally brushed aside so easily that their fans responded with the slow handclap.

The London club's manager Andy Nelson had no sympathy for his players. "They are not paid as office workers. They receive more for being professional footballers and if

they fail to produce the goods, they must expect criticism," he said.

But Charlton's failure to please their fans does not detract from the Town's competent display.

Brian Stein could have hit a hat-trick, Hatton screwed the ball just wide in the first half and could have snapped up another two chances.

Charlton strangely played a 4-4-2 formation at the start with only Martin Robinson and Mike Flanagan operating up front. They offered little in

building up their attacks and often relied on the long high through ball which Luton picked off with simplicity.

After Luton's early superiority against Charlton's shaky defence, the Town were stunned to concede a goal when Robinson cleverly nodded the ball past Dave Lawson.

Not surprisingly, the goal encouraged Charlton and Lawson had to dive at Robinson's feet to prevent a second. Earlier, Stein, under

pressure, slid the ball wide and then allowed Jeff Wood to dive on the ball with a low shot.

Eight minutes into the second half David Moss was unlucky with a powerful drive that was only inches over. But two minutes later he deservedly equalised when his low left-footed shot from Stein's cross beat Wood.

It was no more than Luton deserved and Moss again went close before Stein shot over after Hatton found him in space. Young Stein caused problems by creating space and did well to test Wood with a fierce shot which he parried.

But the best goal of the game was reserved for Hatton in the 70th minute. He started a 60 yard run in Luton's half and quickly made ground. Despite the close attention of two Charlton defenders, Hatton emphasised his terrific work rate to motor forward and push the ball under Wood's body into the left hand corner.

The points were Luton's. Charlton had gone and, towards the end, were reduced to back-passed from the halfway line in their frustrated attempts to find their own players.

There wasn't one weak link in this Luton performance. It was a gritty display and won the Town a thoroughly deserved victory.

MATCH DETAILS

CHARLTON: Wood; Campbell, Maddon, Gritt, Shaw, Berry, Powell, Robinson, Flanagan, Brisley, Peacock. Sub: Penfold.

LUTON: Lawson; Price, Aizlewood, Carr, Turner, Donaghy, West, Fuccillo, Stein, Hatton, Moss. Sub: Jones.

REFEREE: W. Bombroff (Avon).

GOALS: Robinson (33), Moss (55), Hatton (70).

BOOKINGS: West (foul on Maddon), Turner (dissent), Carr (foul on Berry).

ATTENDANCE: 10,191