

Rowell goal rocks Hatters

LUTON centre-half Chris Turner failed a fitness test on his strained thigh this morning.

Graham Jones, last week's substitute, took his position with Ricky Hill — who has missed the last two games with a groin strain — coming into midfield at the expense of David Carr who was 12th man.

This afternoon's game was sponsored by Barratt Developments who presented a cheque for £1,000 before the game to Luton manager David Pleat.

Anglia Television cameras were installed under the main stand to record highlights from the game for transmission tomorrow afternoon.

There was a slight carnival atmosphere before the kick-off when dozens of balloons were released from the centre circle as part of Barratt's sponsorship.

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

SUNDERLAND: Siddall; Henderson, Bolton, Chisholm, Clarke, Elliott, Buckley, Rostron, Entwistle, Lee, Rowell. Sub: Brown.

Referee: Mr A. Seville (Birmingham).

Although the afternoon was relatively clear, the floodlights — which still had several bulbs missing — were switched on from the start.

The game — after the pre-match ceremonies — finally got under way with Luton attacking the Oak Road end.

And then, despite the pre-match news, it was noticed that Donaghy was wearing the number five shirt with Jones at number six.

There was a nasty scare for the Town after four minutes when Bolton worked his way into a good scoring position and his final shot had Lawson scampering across his line as the ball flashed wide of the post.

ERIC HARRIS reports from Kenilworth Road

Luton had difficulty in the opening minutes in mounting attacks but Fucillo broke quickly although his cross was pulled down under the bar by Siddall.

Then Hatton and Stein combined well to create a chance for Aizlewood whose long-range drive dipped sharply over the bar.

After 15 minutes Sunderland won a controversial corner when Rostron's shot appeared to be diverted by one of his colleagues.

Sunderland players moved out in anticipation of a goal-kick but referee Mr Seville awarded a corner which Luton cleared without too much difficulty.

Sunderland, who had looked slightly on top in the opening stages, went close again when Elliott sliced Bolton's free-kick wide.

Luton immediately broke clear at the other end when Moss and Stein provided a chance for Hatton.

But he was outnumbered by Sunderland defenders and shot wide.



A close thing — but Sunderland scramble the ball away as Luton press for a goal

After 20 minutes Luton found themselves behind. It was a fine goal, headed low into the corner of the net past Lawson by ROWELL who capitalised on Rostron's precision cross.

Luton tried desperately to find the equaliser but their next abortive attack was ruined when Hatton and Moss were penalised for offside.

Then Moss again came into the picture with a fine pass to Hatton which ended with the Luton striker shooting

narrowly wide.

For some reason Siddall was not taking dead ball free-kicks and Henderson placed his defence in danger with a kick which he directed straight into Hatton's path.

Hatton tried an intelligent lob over the top of Sunderland's defence, but it was well read and the visitors cleared the danger.

Luton's next chance came in the 31st minute when, from a free kick, Aizlewood tried to find Jones. Although the kick

found direction, Jones was outjumped by Bolton who cleared the ball.

Luton made another attempt to break down the visitors' defence when Hatton skinned Henderson. But his low cross was well saved by Siddall.

Under pressure, Sunderland occasionally looked suspect at the back and West almost caught them off-guard with a probing through ball.

After 38 minutes, Luton conceded a second goal. It was

almost a replica of their first as ENTWISTLE neatly headed Buckley's cross low into the corner.

Luton now had a major fight on their hands in their attempts to secure at least one point.

There was no doubt that the Luton players could expect some severe words from manager David Pleat during the half-time break.

Luton were looking dodgy at the back as Donaghy showed too much hesitancy in trying to deal with a harmless looking lob, which Lawson eventually fisted out.

Hatton intelligently chipped the ball over the top of Sunderland's defence which allowed Moss to run round the back.

He did the right thing by crossing hard and low but there were none of his colleagues available to take advantage of the situation.

Luton had more chances in the opening minutes of the second-half than they had enjoyed in the entire first period.

West tried to inject some much-needed urgency into the Town's attack but his pass carried too much power for Moss who could not prevent the ball from running over the line for a goal-kick.

Then Stein, who appeared to be nudged off the ball by Clarke, did well to get in a cross. But it carried just too much height for Hatton who was unable to get on top of the ball and his header was eventually cleared.

Luton had opened the second-half at a stinging pace. But, despite their continuous attacks, they had nothing to show for their hard work in the opening ten minute spell.

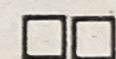
Luton's frustration continued when Donaghy was booked for a foul on Entwistle.

After their initial flurry, Luton again went off the boil and they allowed Sunderland to mount their first serious attack of the second-half when Lawson had to drive to beat out a low cross from Buckley.

Luton's defence was all over the place and they were badly at fault in another Sunderland attack which could have given the visitors a third goal.

In the 66th minute Luton conceded a third goal — and on their overall performance it was no more than the Town deserved.

Again, it came from a header when ROWELL scored his second goal of the game when he successfully converted Rostron's cross.



The Sunderland fans on the Kenilworth Road terraces showed their obvious delight but there was little to enthuse over for Luton's followers.

As far as Luton were concerned the game — as a contest — must have been over. Sunderland were fighting for every ball — and that appeared to be the Town's biggest deficiency.

FINAL SCORE: Luton 0 Sunderland 3 (Rowell, 2, Entwistle). Att: 10,249.