

UNITED DEADLOCK

Dour derby in the mud as defences shine

Cambridge United had a late scare before this afternoon's Second Division home derby against Luton when stand-in right-back Steve Spriggs ricked his back in training.

But, after treatment, Spriggs declared himself fit for the job of marking Luton's dangerous left winger David Moss. Utility player Ian Buckley was named as substitute.

Luton had their own problem with a late injury which put out £100,000 goalkeeper Jake Findlay and brought in former Everton keeper David Lawson.

With Anglia's Match of the Week cameras filming the game, United kicked off towards the Allotments end with a bright sun shining in goalkeeper Malcolm Webster's eyes.

Alan Biley and John Cozens quickly combined to give centre-forward Bill Garner an early chance, Garner firing an angled shot into Lawson's arms as he was bundled over by a defender.

HELP OUT

The greasy surface made turning difficult, but Biley produced some fine passes against his former club and ran back to the edge of his own penalty area to help break up one Luton move.

But Derrick Christie was less successful when he astonishingly lashed a 60-yard back pass wide of Webster to concede a 16th minute corner. Bob Hatton's header from the corner was blocked in the United goalmouth.

Christie won a corner at the other end soon afterwards, however, the first of two in succession which came to nought for United.

There was little to catch the imagination in a scrappy first 20 minutes, neither side managing to build moves with any fluidity and both defences getting a grip, despite some good work in the air by the lanky Garner for United against the powerful Chris Turner.

Left-back Lindsay Smith was on hand to clear up at the back for United when Luton threatened a couple of times halfway through the half.

BEST SPELL

Christie turned brilliantly to beat right-back Kirk Stephens on the left wing after 31 minutes, but his cross curved across the face of goal and to safety with nobody able to get on the end of it.

The industrious Smith was on the spot to save United in the 34th minute, helping Webster block on the line a header from the unchallenged Hatton following a Moss corner.

Luton had their best spell

By MIKE FINNIS

78/79

so far as they got control of the muddy midfield patch.

But United responded with the best move of the half, started and almost finished by Christie five minutes before the interval.

Tom Finney latched on to Christie's crossfield ball on the right, beat his man and laid the ball back for Spriggs. Christie dummied over the low pass into the area and followed up on the rebound when Lawson dived at Biley's feet.

SCRAMBLE

The winger drove his shot at goal — only for Turner to throw himself full length and head the ball away from the gaping goal.

There was an alarm in the United goalmouth right on half time when Webster dropped a cross, but a scramble ended with Donaghy smashing a 25-yard shot wide.

Half time: Cambridge United 0, Luton 0.

A rare touch of Finney magic almost brought an instant breakthrough after half-time, the Irish striker spinning and lobbing a clever shot just wide of the far post from the edge of the area.

Mick Leach then had a fine chance of a run on goal when a long ball from Garner put him clear. But he lost out to a last ditch tackle.

HANDBALL

Luton hit back when Donaghy powered forward from midfield to send Hatton through on the left — and again Smith had to step in for United, tucking the low cross away from Steve Taylor and behind at the far post.

Soon after Moss swung a dangerous free kick into the United goalmouth, the ball glancing from a pack of flying heads and inches wide of the far post.

United hit the net in the

59th minute but Biley's volley was disallowed because Cozens had punched the ball through to him.

There was a bitter edge to some of the tackling particularly between Taylor and the United centre-backs.

Another long quiet spell ended with Biley latching on to a Cozens' pass but shooting wide from 20 yards in the 70th minute.

Lawson then dropped a Fallon back-header in the Luton goalmouth but recovered to drop on the ball at the feet of United's lunging forwards.

Ricky Hill pounced on bad midfield marking to stride forward for Luton and almost catch out Webster with a 30-yard chip just wide in the 77th minute.

But spectators began streaming from the ground well before the end as the tiring sides got locked in a dour stalemate.

Both Fallon and Smith got in unsuccessful headers at a late United corner, but the busy Spriggs had to rush across to stop Hill breaking away for Luton.

Christie almost snatched both points with a tremendous shot in the dying minutes, but Lawson managed to block the effort.

Full time: Cambridge United 0, Luton 0.

THE LINE-UP

CAMBRIDGE UNITED: Webster, Spriggs, Stringer, Fallon, Smith, Cozens, Leach, Finney, Biley, Garner, Christie. Sub: Buckley.

LUTON: Lawson, Stephens, Turner, Price, Alzewood, Hill, Donaghy, West, Taylor, Hatton, Moss. Sub: Stein.

Referee: Peter Richardson (Lincoln).