

GEMMILL BLUNDER FROM THE SPOT

KEITH Bertschin's 25th minute goal gave Birmingham City vital advantage in the Second Division promotion battle with Luton at St. Andrew's.

But there should have been more goals for Blues. They kept the visitors under constant pressure and in the 69th minute Archie Gemmill's penalty was saved by Jake Findlay. Findlay had earlier been booked for a rugger-style tackle on Bertschin when a second goal looked certain.

There were also near misses by Kevin Dillon, Colin Todd and Joe Gallagher.

BIRMINGHAM CITY: Wealands; Broadhurst, Dennis, Curbishley, Gallagher, Todd, Ainscow, Worthington, Bertschin, Gemmill, Dillon. Sub: Lynex.

LUTON TOWN: Findlay; Stephens, Donaghy, Grealish, Saxby, Price, Hill, West, Stein, Hatton, Moss. Sub: White.

Referee: Mr. J. B. Worrall (Warrington).

Broadhurst had recovered from an ankle injury which kept him out of last week's match at Leicester, so he returned to Blues' defence at the expense of Towers.

Luton, at full strength, were led by former Birmingham striker, Bob Hatton.

Luton were first to show when Donaghy fed Hatton down the left, but the striker's cross shot was saved low down by Wealands.

Blues, playing a 4-4-2 formation with just Bertschin and Worthington up front, were facing a strong headwind which was making their progress extremely difficult.

Luton were down to 10 men in the fifth minute when Saxby had to go off for treatment to his right leg.

As Luton returned to full strength, Blues had the ball in the net in the sixth minute, but the effort was disallowed.

Dillon crossed from the left, Bertschin headed forward and as he went for a second chance, the ball bounced back to Ainscow to shoot home.

But referee Worrall had already blown for a foul by

Bertschin on Findlay.

The Luton 'keeper again had to be alert to nick the ball off the toe of Bertschin after Curbishley had slipped a pass into the danger area. Then, as Blues kept up the pressure, Donaghy was forced to boot away Dillon's centre.

It was a highly enterprising start from Blues, and in the 12th minute a superb run down the left by Dennis set up a chance for Bertschin, but Grealish was in quickly to concede a corner.

There was a 15th minute booking for Price after the Luton defender had hacked down Worthington. But from the free kick, some 30 yds out, Gemmill could find only Findlay, who gathered cleanly.

A mistake by Todd put Luton on the attack, but Hatton, receiving Hill's through ball, managed to turn quickly but shot well wide.

Blues' efforts were finally rewarded in the 25th minute with a fine goal from **BERTSCHIN**.

Dillon found space on the left, and crossed deeply.

Bertschin stormed through the Luton defence and threw himself forward to head home at the far post.

Blues were soon back on the attack, and a first-time shot from Dillon took a deflection which inched its way past Findlay's right hand post for a corner.

From the kick, Gallagher again had the ball in the net.

Once more it was disallowed, presumably for pushing by Blues' defender.

Blues again went close in the 33rd minute when Curbishley's centre found Bertschin, who powered a header

Luton had a chance seven minutes before half-time when Gallagher fouled Stein on the edge of the area.

But Moss's shot drifted wide of Wealands' left hand upright.

A brilliant move down the left, involving Dennis, Dillon, Gemmill and Worthington, had a disappointing end when Worthington's cross, intended for the lurking Bertschin, went behind for a goalkick.

Luton should have got back on terms in the 43rd minute when Stein's cross from the right fell straight into the path of the unmarked Hill.

But the close-range effort was first blocked and then cleared by Blues' defence.

**Half-time: Blues 1
Luton 0**

Blues pushed forward eager to increase their lead. Dillon's volley from Ainscow's cross was wide and then Ainscow darted into the area only to be checked by a timely tackle from Donaghy.

Dillon wormed his way through to cause Luton more problems and, as the ball rebounded, Ainscow's first-time effort went over the top.

Blues should have gone further ahead in the 50th minute when a perfect through ball from Todd found Bertschin, but the striker's fierce angled drive cannoned back off the legs of Findlay.

It left the Luton keeper laid out clutching his left leg and there was a lengthy hold up while he received treatment.

Blues, now having the advantage of the blustery conditions, were keeping Luton at full stretch and the visitors were rarely getting out of their own half.

The home side went desperately close in the 57th minute. Neat work by Worthington set up a chance for Todd, who unleashed a terrific shot from the edge of the area which scraped the Luton bar.

Blues seemed certain to go two up on the hour when Bertschin beat the offside trap and raced clear.

But Findlay came well outside his area and brought down the Blues man with a rugger tackle that earned him a booking, although the red card would have been more appropriate.

In the 65th minute the visitors had a great chance to equalise. Hatton ran through, Wealands blocked effort on the edge of the area and, as the ball ran loose to Stein, the Luton striker, with the goal at his mercy, blasted the shot hopelessly over.

After their bad miss, Luton substituted West for White.

Blues were awarded a 69th minute penalty when Saxby brought down Dillon wide of the left post.

But Findlay dived brilliantly to his left and produced a magnificent save from Gemmill's spot kick.

GOALS AND THEIR SCORERS

Blues 1. Luton 0. Bertschin



● WELL HELD . . . Luton keeper Jake Findlay cheats Blues striker Keith Bertschin



● TAKE THAT . . . Joe Gallagher makes contact against Luton at St. Andrew's.