

DELIGHT AND 81/82 DESPAIR IN 40 SECONDS

NEWCASTLE UTD 3 LUTON TOWN 2
Half-time: 2-0

AN AMAZING final 40 seconds at Newcastle in which the Town equalised, then conceded a winner when they might have pinched a point, saw the end of the last unbeaten away record in the Football League.

But the Town left St James's Park with another large addition to the unofficial Luton Town fan club. Newcastle's skipper Mick Martin said: "They're the best footballing side we have seen this season. When we went two up I expected the game to be over, but Luton kept playing their football, and kept coming back at us.

"We raised our game to meet them, and they still came close to taking a point. If that's the way they normally play they won't lose many games this season, and I think they could do well in the First Division, too."

Martin, whose prompting from midfield gave Newcastle their early supremacy, wasn't to know that the Town's overall performance was not the best we have seen this season, although it improved sharply after the interval.

When you equalise in the last minute and then lose you may be entitled to feel choked. But on the general run of play I thought Newcastle deserved to be winners.

FORECAST WAS RIGHT

Manager David Pleat had talked before the game about the dangers which Imre Varadi and Alan Brown might pose, and his forecast was only too accurate.

They became the only attackers I have seen this season capable of getting through and around the Town defence through sheer pace, with Varadi adding an edge to his game against the club that turned him down as a 16-year-old trialist.

He was my choice as man of the match, laying on both goals which gave Newcastle their 2-0 half-time lead. Clive Goodyear and Mal Donaghy were the men beaten for speed as Varadi raced down the flank and crossed, and each time Brown, on loan from Sunderland, was given much too much space, and his scoring shots were formalities.

The first came after only 45 seconds and the second in the 37th minute, and between the goals Chris Waddle hit the post when he should have scored.

The Town's only serious goal attempt of the first half was a free kick by David Moss, tipped over the bar by Kevin Carr.

Not much went right for Moss, but in the second half Ricky Hill started to get going, and with Newcastle's biggest crowd of the season getting frantic the game was fought at a cracking pace.

Newcastle defended stoutly and pulled extra men back with the result that for all their pressure the Town rarely got a clear sight of goal.

Steve White was inches short with a lunge which would have scored as a cross by Moss flashed across the goal area, and Raddy Antic, put on as sub for Goodyear in the 61st minute, had a stinging drive deflected over the bar.

The late drama started in the 83rd minute when Brian Stein, trying to find a way through on the right, was tripped by Wes Saunders and Moss scored from the penalty to pull it back to 2-1.

Suddenly Newcastle were frightened by the Town's all-out attacks. On my watch the match was 20 seconds short of 90 minutes when a cross-shot by Moss was pushed out but met by Donaghy for an equaliser that was a credit to a full-back.

My watch had reached exactly 90 minutes when Newcastle re-started, and with fans standing on their seats in excitement the Town's jubilation disappeared as the ball was pumped forward for Varadi to hit a spectacular winner, a 20-yard drive.

DETAILS

TOWN: Aleksic; Stephens, Goodyear (Antic, 61 mins), Donaghy, Alzlewood; Hill, Horton, Fuccillo; Stein, White, Moss.

NEWCASTLE: Carr; Brownlie, Carney, Haddock, Saunders; Trewick, Wharton, Martin; Brown (Shoulder, 70 mins), Varadi, Whaddle.

THE GOALS: Brown for Newcastle, 45 seconds and 37 mins; David Moss penalty, 83 mins; Mal Donaghy, 89 mins; Varadi, injury time.

OTHER STRIKES: Town six saved and two wide; Newcastle six saved, five wide, one hit the post. Corners 7-6 to Newcastle.

REFEREE: Trevor Fitzharris, Bolton.

ATTENDANCE: 21,037, highest for any Town match this season.

ENTERTAINMENT: Tremendous, especially in the second half.