

Hatters finish 'em off!

By ERIC HARRIS

LUTON took full advantage of Norwich City's successful attempt to get their Carrow Road pitch playable by winning 3-1 in East Anglia yesterday to re-open their seven-point lead at the top of Division Two.

Lethal finishing gave the Town a three-goal lead in the first 13 minutes as they severely punished a Norwich side which never recovered from this whirlwind start.

This was Luton at their impressive best. They struck after only two minutes with an effort from Raddy Antic, which would walk away with the goal of the season award, added two more from Steve White and Brian Stein before Norwich

knew what had hit them and later hit the woodwork twice.

But when Norwich pulled their tattered pride together just before halftime, the Town also showed their defensive qualities, with Clive Goodyear outstanding at the centre of the back four.

Norwich may have had some justification for arguing that their contribution to a highly entertaining holiday game was scant reward for a 3-1 defeat.

Tackles

But no-one could have competed against Luton's finishing and they recovered their form swiftly after a period of inactivity which saw them lose three League matches to the weather.

MATCH DETAILS

NORWICH CITY: Woods, Symonds, Downs, McGuire, Walford, Watson, Barham, Nuzinic, (Mendham), Deehan, Berschin, Bennett.

LUTON TOWN: Findlay, Stephens, Aizlewood, Horton, Goodyear, Donaghy, Antic, Stein, White, Fuccillo, Moss. Sub: Ingram.

ATTENDANCE: 19,348. **GOALS:** Antic (2), White (9), Stein (13), Deehan (43). **REFEREE:** M. Scott (Nottingham). **BOOKING:** Goodyear (foul on Bertschin).

Both teams mastered difficult pitch conditions after the surface appeared to rule out the possibility of tough tackles. But there were plenty of those as 22 players succeeded in providing a fine afternoon's entertainment for over 19,000 fans.

The result left Luton manager David Pleat bubbling with enthusiasm and paying tribute to this team, their skilful, all-round ability and destruc-

tive finishing in front of goal.

"As we travelled from Luton the players refused to accept there wasn't any snow on the Norwich pitch," he said.

"But it is a tribute to their own ability and self-injected discipline that they played well after a lay-off."

Despite Luton's early domination, it was often left to big Jake Findlay to help them keep their

noses in front as Norwich began to piece together their game.

The keeper produced an excellent save in the 20th minute when he turned away John Deehan's fierce shot from one of City's 11 first half corners.

Sitter

A minute later Findlay was in acrobatic action again when he made a low stop from Keith Bertschin who, just before halftime, missed a proverbial sitter when he failed to get his head to a floating centre.

Hundreds of fans were still trying to get into the ground when the Town struck after only two minutes.

Drazen Muzinic conceded a free kick for a foul on Lilly Fuccillo, who slipped the ball to Antic.

The wily Yugoslavian looked up, set his sights and beat Chris Woods with a shot which moved in about five different directions before hitting the back of the net.

Five minutes later Norwich were two down — and Antic was behind the second goal when he supplied White with a peach of a pass.

The ex-Bristol Rovers youngster ran on smoothly and inside his marker to beat Woods with another crisp shot for his 14th goal of the season.

Blitz

The Town's art of fine passing was demonstrated again in the 13th minute when Mal Donaghy found Stein, who avoided Woods' lunging dive to slip the ball between two defenders into the net.

That early blitz, however, failed to kill the game as a contest and City's pressure was rewarded when Deehan pulled one back from close range two minutes from halftime.

There could have been a turning point at the start of the second period when Findlay made two more excellent saves.

But he frustrated Norwich sufficiently to retain Luton's two-goal advantage and the Town could have claimed another couple when skipper Brian Horton and David Moss both struck the woodwork.

The last words were reserved for Norwich manager Ken Broan, who said: "At halftime I was thinking of calling for more volunteers to sweep the snow back on to the pitch."