



■ No 1 . . . a solo effort as Brian Stein reduces the arrears



■ No 2 . . . Luton are level with Stein's spot kick

UNITED SENT PACKING WITH PENALTY CLAUSE

By Eric Harris

FIVE goals, three penalties and a pitch invasion by jubilant Luton fans at the end of the game added fire to a memorable 3-2 victory over Newcastle at Kenilworth Road on Saturday.

A hat-trick from Brian Stein almost sealed the Town's promotion hopes as manager David Pleat talked about the distinct possibility of now going for the Second Division Championship.

But when John Trewick increased United's lead in the 58th minute, none of the Luton supporters would have given a bean for the Town's chances of taking at least a point.

They hadn't reckoned

with the battling Hatters fighting qualities on an afternoon where passion from both sides provided the crowd with full value for their money.

We will never know what Newcastle manager Arthur Cox thought of a result which virtually killed his promotion dreams because he refused to grant Pressmen an audience as he stormed out of the ground.

But Pleat had the satisfaction of watching his team fight back from two goals down, although there was an air of doubt surrounding Luton's

second penalty which provided the winning goal.

"It was a good game and full of passion," said Pleat. "There was a lot of fire coming from their bench and three penalties suggested the game was full of hacking and pushing.

Cheated

"But it wasn't like that and, when we equalised, I was always optimistic we could win. Newcastle had good pace up front and may feel disappointed at the result.

"But we felt cheated

when they knocked in an injury time winner in our earlier meeting this season after we had fought back from two down.

"We didn't flow today and haven't done for weeks but the results have still gone our way and I was thrilled with the way my players performed today.

"They showed bite and enterprise after our second goal and were finally rewarded for hard work. For 30 minutes we really played."

The victory was achieved without Ricky Hill and David Moss, both recovering from Achilles injuries. The Town played without a recognised winger because Billy Jennings, Moss's deputy, was also ruled out through injury.

Pleat drafted Raddy Antic in to the team as an auxiliary striker with Wayne Turner taking Hill's position in midfield.

"Considering we were under strength, I think the victory was well earned," Pleat added. "We didn't have time to think how we would progress without a natural flank player.

"If we can win our next two matches, we can start to think about going for the Championship."

Stein's hat-trick — his first of the season — sank any hopes Newcastle had of winning. And although

United probably deserved to hold a two-goal lead, Luton's fierce pressure late in the second half emphasised that defeat was never taken for granted.

There's no love lost between Luton and Newcastle and when Pleat was asked how he thought Cox felt, he replied: "If I was him, I'd take a pill."

Cox would have found it had to swallow after seeing a victory snatched from him by the sheer aggression of the Town's attack which could have finally taken a greater reward when shots from Steve White and Antic rebounded fiercely from under the bar.

United's Mick Martin must have wondered whether he should have been playing.

After David Mills had given Newcastle the lead in the 23rd minute when he took advantage of slack marking at the back, Martin was responsible for securing their penalty when he was bundled off the ball by Clive Goodyear and Richard Money.

But he was also responsible for giving the Town both their penalties after Stein had reduced Newcastle's lead with a fine solo goal in the 64th minute.

He knocked skipper Nobby Horton flying after 81 minutes to allow Stein to knock in the first spot kick. Then referee Alan Seville decided he deliberately handled a cross.

The incident incensed Newcastle. But Stein stayed calm to beat Kevin Carr again with only five minutes left on the clock.

But Stein should have scored earlier when Luton were battling to get back into the game. He intelligently rounded Carr but shot wide with an empty net at his mercy.

Newcastle were finally floored by their time wasting tactics after building a two-goal lead. Carr and Wharton were booked for the offence which led Pleat to add: "We have a responsibility to the supporters to entertain."

The way Luton achieved their victory and another three priceless points may not have fully satisfied Pleat. But the fans had no reason to complain and will face tomorrow's home game against Chelsea with relish.



■ No 3 . . . hat-trick time for Stein with another penalty

MATCH DETAILS

LUTON: Findlay: Stephens, Money, Horton, Goodyear, Donaghy, Antic, Stein, White, Fuccillo, Turner. Sub: Bunn.

NEWCASTLE: Carr, Brownlie, Saunders, Trewick, Barton (Wharton), Haddock, Mills, Martin, Varad' Cartwright, Waddle.

REFEREE: A. Seville (Birmingham). ATTENDANCE: 13,041. GOALS: Mills (23), Trewick (58 — pen), Stein (64, 81 and 85 — both pens). BOOKINGS: Carr, Wharton (timewasting), Mills (dissent), Varadi (retaliation).