

LATE, LATE SHOW EASES THE PAIN

82/83

SUNDERLAND 1, LUTON 1

By JOHN WARDLE

SUNDERLAND left it late to finally lift some of the gloom which had settled over Roker Park this week.

With just three minutes remaining defender Ian Atkins moved forward to head home a controversial equaliser.

Luton complained the ball had not crossed the line before it was headed out by Wayne Turner. Yet they could have no real complaint about the fairness of the final result.

Until the 87th minute Luton had looked certain to pile on the agony at the end of one of the worst weeks in Sunderland's history.

Defeat at Swansea, a dismal home draw against Norwich then news of a £1½m. overdraft that is getting worse every day.

As if that wasn't bad enough, along came David Moss to turn the knife in Sunderland's wound with a 78th minute goal.

If it had stayed that way it would have been an injustice. Sunderland were always second best in the skill stakes but, more than compensated with their determination and work rate after they had survived a bad opening.

In those first 15 minutes, Luton should have sewn up the game.

Mistake

Billy Kellock shot straight at Chris Turner from a good position, then Moss capitalised on a bad mistake by Venison to break clear, only to cross when he should have gone on alone.

Walsh's header was short of power, as was Kellock's two minutes later when Turner pulled off a good save from six yards.

Luton lacked conviction and confidence with those early chances and the trouble spread through the rest of a side, which promised so much, but eventually allowed Sunderland to take over.

Alan Durban's side could easily have gone ahead before the interval. Kirk Stephens hooked the ball off Ally McCoist's toe on the six-yard line after Cummins had crossed well from the byline.

That was in the 17th minute and 10 minutes later McCoist was again the unluckiest player when a fierce shot was deflected narrowly wide by a defender.

On the half hour, keeper Alan Judge

pulled off his best save of the match from a low shot by Atkins, but was lucky to see West shoot wide two minutes later after Rowell had created a 12-yard chance.

The first half had provided more entertainment than Sunderland fans saw in the entire 90 minutes on Wednesday night, but the second half was less enterprising—until the closing stages.

In the 72nd minute Judge reacted quickly to tip over a brilliant overhead kick by Rowell after Colin West headed on Nick Pickering's corner.

The value of the save was increased six minutes later when Luton took a lead they hardly deserved.

Moss started the move with a pass to Kellock, who sent Walsh clear down the right.

His cross was missed by Brian Stein, but Moss was there to score with a quick shot from the penalty spot.

Brilliant

Stein should have clinched three points five minutes from the end, but Turner saved his weak finish and gave Atkins his chance of glory.

Luton only half cleared a corner and Atkins reacted quickest to head towards goal from six yards only for Turner to head away.

The linesman gave a goal and sparked off an angry protest from the entire Luton side earning a booking for Moss to go with earlier ones for team-mates Kellock and Turner and Sunderland's Jimmy Nichol and Atkins.

But the goal counted and it was left to Turner to produce yet another brilliant save only 60 seconds later to rob Walsh of the winner.

It was fitting that Atkins should be the man to get Sunderland's goal because his calmness made him the pick of the back four.

Nichol matching Brian Horton in midfield (and not many do that), Gary Rowell and, of course Turner, also did well.

But, despite that final flourish, there is still no disguising the fact that a long hard winter stares Sunderland in the face unless they can improve on this show.

SUNDERLAND: Turner, Nichol, Munro, Atkins, Elliott, Pickering, Cummins, Rowell, McCoist, West, Venison.

LUTON: Judge, Stephens, Money, Horton, Turner, Donaghy, Hill, Stein, Walsh, Kellock, Moss.

TOP MEN
Sunderland—Turner.
Luton—Horton.



● **MONEY TROUBLE**—Sunderland's Nick Pickering is beaten to the ball by Luton's Richard Money.