

RAMPANT REDS HAVE THE HATTERS REELING



IAN RUSH . . . first half hat-trick for the champs

LUTON, already without David Moss, received another cruel blow this morning when Trevor Aylott pulled out of today's game at Liverpool with a pelvic strain.

It was a problem manager David Pleat, who had the bonus of including Paul Walsh after suspension, could have done without against the second placed Reds.

Liverpool boss Joe Fagan also had his problems. He was without Craig Johnson through suspension and brought in Steve Nicol.

This game received First Division star billing because Luton were only two places and one point

LIVERPOOL v LUTON By Eric Harris

behind Liverpool before this afternoon's match.

The Town attacked the Kop and attempted to break down the left through Walsh and Turner. The move quickly broke down to give Liverpool some early breathing space.

But there was a sensational opening when

Liverpool went in front after only 74 seconds.

Neal was given far too much space in which to manoeuvre and his shot was charged down.

But the ball rebounded to RUSH who promptly pushed it past Sealey with Luton appealing for offside.

But the linesman, right in line with play, kept his flag down and the goal was allowed to stand.

TODAY'S TEAMS

LIVERPOOL: Grobbelaar, Neal, Kennedy, Lawrenson, Nicol, Hansen, Dalglish, Lee, Rush, Robinson, Souness. Sub: Hodgson.

LUTON TOWN: Sealey, Stephens, Thomas, Horton, Elliott, Donaghy, Hill, Stein, Walsh, Turner, Antic. Sub: Goodyear.

REFEREE: J. Key (Rotherham).



Poor Luton never had a chance to recover from that blow before conceding a second goal four minutes later.

Dalglish was behind the build-up with a fine cross to the far post which Souness headed against the bar.

The ball again rebounded to RUSH who gleefully accepted the opportunity of increasing the Liverpool lead.

The Reds, showing some delightful touches, were in rampant mood and Robinson forced their first corner in the ninth minute.

It was cleared without too much difficulty by an overworked Luton defence who watched with relief as Lee's shot flashed wide of the post.

Rush could easily have recorded his hat-trick in the tenth minute with a rising drive which grazed the bar.

With 15 minutes gone, Luton had so far failed to test Grobbelaar with a single shot although the keeper was forced to punch away the Town's first corner.

Attack

Then the Liverpool keeper ran backwards to make a fine catch from Stephen's far-post cross.

Liverpool immediately counter-attacked when Sealey dived at Rush's feet to prevent the lively striker from knocking another hole in the Hatters' defence.

There was no let up in Liverpool's relentless attack and Sealey had to stand firmly on his line to collect a long-rang effort from Nicol.

Sealey was in action again when he managed to tip Lee's ferocious shot over the top as Liverpool made another serious attempt to increase their lead.

Luton, however, made a brief counter-attack when Stein — who looked suspiciously offside — broke on the right.

He secured the Town's second corner which again brought the frustrated Hatters no reward.

Turner made a brave attempt to pull a goal back after Grobbelaar raced out of his area to make a hectic clearance.

The Luton player spotted that the keeper was well off his line and attempted to lob the ball over his head.

In the circumstances it was the right thing to do, but Turner lofted his effort yards wide.

Luton looked to be completely out of the game when Liverpool increased their lead in the 36th minute.

Nicol started the Town's downfall by beating Stephens to push over a cross which was met by RUSH whose powerful header gave Sealey no chance for the striker's hat-trick.

Worse was to follow because, within 60 seconds, Luton were four down.

DALGLISH'S shot appeared to be well covered by Sealey who, however, allowed the ball to slip through his fingers and over the line to give the Town an impossible task of making any comeback.

HT: Liverpool 4, Luton 0.

But the Reds were far from finished and RUSH struck again in the 54th minute.

Kennedy provided the danger to the Town's defence with a telling pass and Rush smashed it ferociously past Sealey with a superb volley.

Three minutes later Rush could have added yet another when he just failed to connect with a vicious cross from the left.

But there was one moment when the Hatters looked capable of pulling a goal back. Thomas did well to square the ball back to Hill who finally ruined the move by pushing the ball well wide.

The Town were having great difficulty in breaking out of their own half, and Liverpool could easily have had a sixth goal when Sealey held Nicol's fierce drive.

Thomas was again prominent in another attempt to engineer an attacking move.