



Luton's Brian Stein on the attack, with Paul Walsh in support against Birmingham at Kenilworth Road today

HATTERS BID FOR PEACE TALKS ON PLAN TO MOVE

LUTON v BIRMINGHAM
Eric Harris reports

LUTON's directors issued a dramatic clear-the-air invitation to their supporters over the proposed move to Milton Keynes just before this afternoon's game against Birmingham.

The Board will next week ask representatives of the Kenilworth Suite, Club 82, Century Club, Supporters of Luton Town 1983, shareholders and members of a local business consortium to meet them to discuss the future of the club.

It is understood that the directors are still unanimous in their decision to move to Milton Keynes.

But the board are anxious to meet all interested parties in an attempt to bridge the growing gap between the board and the club's supporters.

The announcement of the Directors' action, issued over the PA system, was met with a chorus of boos by Luton fans.

On the pitch, there were problems for manager David Pleat.

In addition to being without David Moss and Frank Bunn, the Hatters' boss was also without skipper Nobby Horton and striker Trevor Aylott.

Mitchell Thomas came in at full-back with Rob Johnson operating in midfield. It allowed Wayne Turner to move forward and there was also a place for Gary Parker who made a big impression in his first senior appearance of the season at QPR last week.



Pre-match fears of a mass boycott by supporters who had met earlier in a demonstration at Popes Meadow were unfounded. Seven minutes before the kick-off, the interior of the stadium was well populated.

The Town attacked the Oak Road end and figured prominently in several opening raids.

It took Birmingham three minutes to retaliate with a cross from Hopkins which gave Sealey no problem.

Relief

Luton could have been in trouble moments later when Phillips was left with a clear vision of goal. But to Town's relief, his shot was hopelessly off target although the return ball brought Birmingham the game's first corner which Sealey dealt with adequately.

After being involved in so many early attacks, there was a severe shock for Luton when they fell behind in the 8th minute.

In the middle of some extremely hectic action Khul saw his effort

charged down by the Town's defence.

But the ball ran loose to HOPKINS who took full advantage of an easy opportunity to beat Sealey with a solid shot.

Four minutes later, Luton were extremely unfortunate not to equalise following some intelligent approach work by Stein.

He took advantage of a bad Birmingham clearance and cleverly lobbed the ball over Coton's head. The striker followed up, but to his agony, saw his second effort clip the bar and bounce over to safety.

But Luton did not have to wait much longer for the equaliser which came after Birmingham had conceded a free-kick.

Donaghy was the recipient of the short kick and his full-blooded drive was blocked. But STEIN, who ran into space, was perfectly placed to beat Coton with a short-range dig in the 16th minute.

Luton, after the bonus of an equaliser, kept pressing forward and Hill was unlucky to see his hooked effort charged down by a Birmingham defender.



Fans March against the Hatters move to Milton Keynes

With seven minutes left to half time, Luton appeared to have lost some of their earlier sharpness, although there was still many enterprising things behind their approach work.

Precision

A though-ball from Parker was directed with so much precision that it found its way through two Birmingham defenders.

It was chased energetically by Stein who finally relinquished the battle for possession when he was beaten in the race for the ball by Coton.

HT: Luton 1, Birmingham 1.

Walsh made energetic efforts to create an opening immediately the second period opened.

But he found his path blocked by Hagan who dispossessed him to give Birmingham temporary and valuable breathing space.

Then Turner also tried to prise a gap in the visitors' defence when he chested the ball down before turning. But his cross lacked direction and was cleared without too much difficulty.

Birmingham retaliated with a free kick at the Oak Road end but Wright, who attempted to beat the defensive wall, ruined any hope Birmingham had of regaining their lead by blasting the ball well over.

Luton could have counted themselves extremely unfortunate not to have gone in front for the first time in the 52nd minute.

Birmingham were placed in serious trouble by an atrocious backpass from Handysides which Stein quickly intercepted.

He ran forward quickly

and beat the outcoming Coton with a shot which looked destined for the net. But Hagan ran across to concede a corner by lashing the ball off the line.

A slip by Stephens on the greasy surface could have put Luton in trouble until Hill displayed creditable calm to complete the defensive operation which brought the Town a free kick.



Walsh's trickery on the ball again brought him close attention, this time from Wright who blatantly tripped the striker to give the Town another free-kick.

Then Elliott broke quickly a couple of yards inside Birmingham's half. He motored on with speed but ruined the move with his final shot which was two yards off target.

HOW THEY LINED UP

LUTON: Sealey, Stephens, Thomas, Johnson, Elliott, Donaghy, Hill, Stein, Walsh, Turner, Parker. Sub: Antic.
BIRMINGHAM: Coton, Hagan, Van den Hauwe, Blake, Wright, Stevenson, Gayle, Phillips, Khul, Handysides, Hopkins. Sub: Rogers.
REFEREE: T. Spencer (Salisbury).

'We shall not be moved'

By EDWARD DAVENPORT

A LARGE crowd of about 1,500 angry Hatters fans rallied in Luton today to protest against the proposed move to Milton Keynes.

The fans gathered at Pope's Meadow, Old Bedford Road, and heard speeches from local political leaders and North Luton Tory MP John Carlisle.

Then a coffin draped in the Luton Town colours led a march to the ground where the fans obeyed repeated calls not to cause trouble and filed through the turnstiles.

The march held up traffic in the centre of Luton as it made its way

through Cromwell Road, Waldeck Road and Oak Road into the ground, but there were no incidents and a light police presence was all that was needed to keep it in order.

At the rally Mr Carlisle said he would press the Government to give the money which is going via the Milton Keynes Development Corporation to help fund the move to the club so that it could stay in Luton.

Mr Carlisle said: "What the directors must never underestimate is the enormous feeling and affection

we all have for our team and our message must not stop here.

"Keep up your support for the team and keep being responsible — as we on this platform will continue to be. We will fight and fight and fight again and at the end of the day we shall win."

Luton's Mayor Councillor Frank Lester said: "We have to show the directors they have greatly underestimated the feeling in the town about their decision and I will do my best to make this clear and to support your pressure to convince them of their folly.