

Saints are Wright on the mark

SAINTS 2, LUTON 1

MARK WRIGHT and **Steve Williams** strengthened their claims for England places as Saints ended a two-month famine without a home win. Wright and **David Armstrong** got the goals which earned them a deserved victory, although **Mal Donaghy's** strike a minute from time sparked a late flurry.

David Armstrong shook off an ankle injury to retain his place in a Saints' side unchanged for the sixth consecutive game.

Luton made one change from the team which drew 0-0 with Liverpool last week, Clive Goodyear dropping to substitute to make way for the return of **Emeka Nwajiobi**.

SAINTS: Shilton, Mills, Dennis, Williams, Agboola, Wright, Holmes, Moran, Worthington, D. Armstrong, Wallace. Sub: Puckett.

LUTON: Sealey, Stephens, Thomas, Horton, Elliott, Donaghy, Hill, Stein, Walsh, Daniel, Nwajiobi. Sub: Goodyear.

Referee: K. Cooper (Pontypridd).

Wright and Walsh, both hoping for a place in England's side in Paris on Wednesday night, came face to face after just six seconds with the Luton striker being fouled on the edge of the area.

Stein took the free-kick and guided it wide of the defensive wall but also of Shilton's left-hand post.

Saints' first attack threatened real danger as Wallace sped on to a Moran through-ball. But goalkeeper Sealey spread himself well at the winger's feet to save.

Wallace provided the impetus for Saints' next attack, latching on to a lovely lay off by Worthington to curl in a teasing cross which Sealey did well to snatch away from Moran.

In the 12th minute, there were problems for Saints when Wright had to receive lengthy treatment for a damaged right ankle after a challenge on Stein.

Holmes dragged a left-foot shot well wide of target, Williams repeated the feat and then Moran's bicycle kick bounced just wide as Saints began to apply the pressure.

DUMMY

In the 31st minute Saints took the lead after the referee overruled his linesman and awarded a free kick on the edge of the Luton box, wide of the right, after a foul by Horton on Mills.

Moran's dummy run to the near post dragged Luton players away and gave **WRIGHT** the time and space to head home at the far post for his first

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By **CHRIS STRATFORD**

goal of the season.

The young defender almost gave a goal away within a minute when his back pass lacked weight and Stein challenged Shilton, prising the ball away from him.

Nwajiobi slotted the ball home only for the referee to somewhat kindly award Saints a free kick for a foul on the goalkeeper.

In the 37th minute, Holmes was booked for a foul on Hill and even the Luton midfielder protested that it was an innocuous challenge.

Stein brought a fine save from Shilton as the half drew to an end but **ARMSTRONG** gave Saints a 2-0 lead with 26 seconds to go to the interval nodding a firm header past Sealey from a right-flank cross by Mills.

Half-time:

SAINTS 2
LUTON 0

Saints survived an early and hopeful penalty appeal by Luton for a challenge by Agboola on Stein.

Williams's deft little chip put Worthington clear and the veteran striker hammered in a shot which Sealey somehow managed to parry. When Wallace scrambled the ball back across goal Luton strung

enough bodies across the line to keep out a couple of follow-up shots.

On the hour, Worthington produced yet another fine lay-off and Wallace's snap-shot swerved just wide.

Saints were in full flow and when Stephens misjudged Williams's pass on the edge of the box, Moran hit a left-foot shot into the side-netting.

Luton were unable to clear their line and Worthington was within an ace of scoring again with a fine right-foot half-volley which bounced back off Sealey's crossbar with the goalkeeper deceived by its dipping flight.

Saints should have had a third goal after 67 minutes when Sealey misjudged a through ball by Williams. Moran mishit his shot but it fell straight to Armstrong a couple of yards out but he stabbed the ball wide.

Dennis was booked for a foul on Horton in the 89th minute and when Stephens floated in the free-kick Goodyear nodded it back for **DONAGHY** to head past Shilton.

Final:

SAINTS 2
LUTON 1
Attendance: 17,947.

SAINTS VERDICT

SAINTS registered their first home win for two months thanks for first half goals from Mark Wright and David Armstrong in an impressive display against Luton.

As well as strengthening their challenge at the top of the table, both Wright and Saints skipper Steve Williams must have laid stronger claims to places in England's side against France in front of watching manager Bobby Robson.

Wright overcame an early ankle injury to give a sound performance on the rare occasions Luton came forward while Williams was an inspiration in midfield as he has been on so many occasions this season.

Wright's goal, his first of the season, came from a flighted free-kick by Williams. Armstrong kept up his run of goals against the Hatters by nodding home a cross from Mick Mills on the stroke of half-time.

Armstrong has now scored on each of the four occasions he has faced Luton in Saints' colours and also in the last three matches — all viewed by Robson — and must have reminded the England chief that he's there if needed in the coming World Cup campaign.

Unluckiest player was veteran striker Frank Worthington, who struck the bar with a fine right-foot shot and had another attempt well saved by Les Sealey.

A goal, a minute from time by Luton's Mal Donaghy, sparked the final flurry from the visitors which Saints survived to earn all three points.