

LUTON BLAST AWAY FROM DANGER ZONE

STOKE 0 LUTON 4 84/85

LUTON HAULED themselves out of the bottom three for the first time this year by destroying First Division whipping boys Stoke.

This victory was as easy as it sounds and the margin could have been wider had Luton displayed more ruthless finishing in the closing stages.

Goal difference could turn out to be crucial and Hatters may possibly regret stopping at four.

But this victory, Hatters' second double of the season, did lift

By GRAHAM PUNTER

them to fourth from bottom, ahead of Sunderland on goal difference.

It was a re-shaped Luton outfit at the Victoria Ground from the side that lost 1-0 to Southampton last week.

David Preece returned after shaking off flu. But the big shock was the absence of Steve Foster who apparently injured a thigh in training.

That ended a run of 22 consecutive games since Foster joined Luton and created a centre-half problem. The solution was to play Peter Nicholas alongside Donaghy with Wayne Turner taking the central midfield role he will be asked to perform against Everton.

Another reshuffle was required during the game when Ricky Hill suffered a thigh muscle injury.

That enabled David Moss to make his first appearance since the cup replay at Stoke in January.

Watching Everton manager Howard Kendall saw Luton go ahead after 16 minutes

How they stand after the Easter programme:

Division One — bottom seven	P	Pts
Watford	33	38
West Ham	32	37
Ipswich	32	36
LUTON	32	35
Sunderland	34	35
Coventry	31	34
Stoke	34	17

● Luton's goal difference is -12 compared with Sunderland's -14.

when the man on form, Mick Harford, scored his seventh goal in seven league games.

Hill began the move, finding Harford whose headed pass found Stein. Stein attempted to return the ball to Harford but Dyson intercepted. Then, to Stoke fans' dismay, the centre-back pushed a back-pass to keeper Siddall that stuck in the mud and quick Mick rapped the ball into the net.

The injury scare involving Hill came 10 minutes before half-time when Bertschin and the Luton player collided. Hill carried his injury for five minutes but had to be replaced.

Substitute Moss soon made an impact when he took a corner a minute after the break. The ball was flicked on by Stein and Harford tapped it over the line giving him his third scoring double in four games.

Harford was denied his hat-trick after 57 minutes when he connected with a Moss cross but the powerful header struck Siddall. The opportunity was created when Thomas fought valiantly to win the ball from Chamberlain in the quagmire of a midfield.

Six minutes later Luton did get their third and this time it was slick play between Moss and Stein that carved open the Stoke defence, leaving the Luton winger to keep his cool and plant the ball low past Siddall.

After 68 minutes a brilliant crossfield ball from Preece found Nwajiobi who set off on a scintillating solo run, turning Maskery inside out before notching Luton's fourth.

With nine minutes remaining, Stoke in tatters and the home crowd chanting for the board's resignation, Harford was once again denied the hat-trick he so richly deserved when a pile-driver was turned away by Siddall for a corner.

Thomas was unlucky to be booked with five minutes remaining. He certainly fouled Chamberlain but more because the ball stuck in the mud and his timing was upset than because of any malice.

STOKE: Siddall, Bould, Dodd, Dyson, Maskery, Hudson, McIlroy, Heath, Chamberlain, Bertschin, Painter. Sub: Parkin.

LUTON: Sealey, Breacker, Nicholas, Donaghy, Thomas, Hill, Turner, Preece, Stein, Harford, Nwajiobi. Sub: Moss.



● FOUR up! Meka Nwajiobi blasts past Stoke keeper Siddall.