

Hatters super show on new turf

A TOUCH OF CLASS

Luton 2, Arsenal 2

SUPER-CONFIDENT Hatters earned praise from Arsenal boss Don Howe after making the running in a pulsating First Division thriller.

"It was a terrific game," said Howe after seeing Luton force the glamorous Gunners to roll their sleeves up and twice claw themselves back into the match.

"It was great entertainment all the way through and very competitive. We have to be satisfied with a point."

And Luton's new artificial turf also got a pat on the back from the Arsenal manager.

In these early days it looks a good surface," he said. "You can wear proper studs on it and most of the players tonight were able to do the things they can do on grass."

Injury problems in the defence had forced Luton boss David Pleat to put off naming his side until less than two hours before Tuesday night's kick-off.

But right from the start, Hatters tore at Arsenal with a deadly blend of velvety skill and iron will which should have wrapped the game up in the first half hour.

Inventive

The first breakthrough came after just two minutes as Emeka Nwajiobi ghosted on to Preece's pass through a static defence and stroked Hatters into the lead.

That was the signal for the Luton attackers to outshine Arsenal's stars with a dazzling period of inventive one-touch football.

For 25 minutes Arsenal were swamped. But they held on and came surging back to finish the half the stronger side.

Stewart Robson volleyed against the Luton post from close range. And just a minute from half-time Andy Dibble pulled off an astonishing reflex save to clutch a point-blank shot from Arsenal's man-of-the-match Tony Woodcock.

Arsenal came out fighting again after the break, and eight minutes into the second half they were level. Mal Donaghy, who otherwise had a fine game at the heart of the



ONE-NIL . . . Nwajiobi (right) scores Luton's first.

Hatters' defence turned a ball from Woodcock into his own net.

The last half hour was a real humdinger which thrilled the 10,000 crowd.

Stein put Luton back in front with a shot under Lukic's body at the near post after 68 minutes.

But four minutes later the Gunners were back on level terms with a piece of Woodcock magic.

The England striker floated the ball wide of Dibble's despairing dive to crown a fine move.

The one sour note in an entertaining match was facial injury which forced Arsenal's Irish international centre-back David O'Leary out of the game with only five minutes gone.

Don Howe claimed the injury was caused by a Luton elbow.

"I had a word with the referee about it afterwards," he said. "It's something they've got to clamp down tight on."