

HATTERS SERVE UP TASTY FINISH

LUTON handed Liverpool three goals on a plate and then gave them indigestion with a spirited revival.

Reshaped Hatters had only themselves to blame for surrendering the first-half and allowing Liverpool to gallop in to a 2-0 lead.

At that stage it seemed a real possibility that Hatters would be on the receiving end of a pasting similar to that inflicted on Southampton a week earlier.

But the second half was a different story as Hatters found a determination and pace previously absent and suddenly Liverpool had a team to play.

Anfield is not the ideal place to experiment, but Mitchell Thomas's suspension and Peter Nicholas' injured ankle forced changes.

Rob Johnson came in at left-back and was sound, while David Preece was switched to the centre of midfield with Ray Daniel taking the left spot.

The Hill-Preece-Daniel combination showed plenty of craft, but no one tackles in the midfield quite like Nicholas.

Although Liverpool enjoyed 99 per cent of the first half Luton had two good chances to score.

First, after nine minutes, Nwajiobi broke past Liverpool's square defence but screwed his shot wide.

Later Daniel was put clear but his tame shot was gathered by Grobbelaar.

However, a goal from either of these chances would have been against the run of play as Whelan forced Sealey into a finger-tip save, McMahon belted a drive that the keeper did well to hang on to and then Molby thudded one against Sealey's chest.

A Liverpool goal was a cast iron certainty and Hatters' old boy Paul Walsh did the damage, twice in four minutes.

First, after 31 minutes, he stuck the ball between

But it's too late for a takeaway!

Sealey's legs and then connected with a hard, low cross from Johnston to make it 2-0.

The Kop anticipated a massacre but Hatters had other ideas as the second half began. It was only a minute old when a Preece corner was headed on by Nwajiobi and in the confusion that followed Foster lashed the ball into the net.

Jinked

Now Luton looked well capable of saving the game but with 54 minutes gone Walsh convinced referee Maurice Robinson he had been fouled as he jinked his way round the edge of the box.

Molby blasted the kick round the wall and past a presumably unsighted Sealey.

Luton were not finished and Harford and Foster both hit the bar during one astonishing attack.

Prospects of a Hatters revival flickered again when Harford, in more space than he had been allowed all afternoon, hit a curious shot which went in off a post.

The volley was slightly mis-hit and Grobbelaar seemed deceived by the flight, reacting hopelessly late.

The small but vocal contingent of Luton fans optimistically looked for an equaliser and although it could have

happened, it was equally possible that Liverpool could have extended their lead, with Whelan heading against the bar.

Not many Lutonians expect much from Anfield, but the fact is that if Luton had played for two halves instead of just one, an upset was certainly within their grasp.

LIVERPOOL: Grobbelaar, Nicol, Molby, Lawrenson, Hansen, Beglin, Johnston, McMahon, Whelan, Dalglish, Walsh. Sub: MacDonald.

LUTON: Sealey, Brecker, Foster, Donaghy, Johnson, Hill, Preece, Daniel, Stein, Harford, Nwajiobi. Sub: Grimes.