

LUTON SEEM TO BELONG AT THE TOP

85/86

By **BILL MEREDITH**

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LUTON have a new pitch this season, and a new confidence. At last they give the impression that they really belong to the First Division, not hanging on to their status by the skin of their teeth.

The highest they have ever finished in the top section is eighth, the position they occupy now after a run of 12 games with only three defeats.

Manchester City, of course, have seen it all before. They have been champions twice (in 1937 and 1968), but at the moment they are struggling to haul themselves out of trouble.

After taking seven points from three matches they arrived on Luton's artificial surface reasonably buoyant. Though they were never overwhelmed, the loss of Wilson, their clever midfielder, with concussion just before the interval upset their balance.

Elliott impresses

Luton had a match-winner in Stein, who scored twice (3 and 65th minutes) and never stopped worrying Nixon, who made half-a-dozen good saves from the former England striker.

Elliott, who decides this morning whether to join Aston Villa for £400,000, shaped up well after a shaky start in only his third first team game in 15 months since breaking a leg. Thomas, already earmarked by Bobby Robson for England, also made his presence felt, both in defence and attack.

City, to their credit, never stopped trying, although Davie and Lillis hardly had a clearcut chance between them before Lillis slotted home a late penalty after Breacker had fouled Power.

Luton.—Sealey; Breacker, Thomas, Nicholas, Elliott, Donaghy, Hill, Stein, Harford, Nwajioke (Daniel, 69), Preece.

Manchester City.—Nixon; Reid, Power, Johnson, McCarthy, Phillips, Lillie, May, Davies, McNab, Wilson (Baker 41).