

Luton so lucky

LUTON manager David Pleat confessed after this fortunate win that his side could get a hiding from Arsenal in the FA Cup on Saturday if they play as they did at The Dell. "I must be one of the luckiest men in football," said Pleat after striker Brian Stein had poached the winner three minutes from time in Luton's only second half raid.

"I feel for Southampton's manager Chris Nicholl. It was a fortunate victory for us and I had no thought of winning in the second half. If we play like this against Arsenal we'll get done."

Saints boss Nicholl has every reason to feel numbed by this defeat.

He wanted victory badly to avenge a 7-0 thrashing from Luton at Kenilworth Road last October.

"That was my worst moment in 20 years in the game. The result also offended our supporters and we owe them something for that," said Nicholl at the time.

But after Luton had completed the double he groaned: "We were not ruthless enough. We set about them after the interval but it just didn't work out and there are a few broken hearts in the dressing-room."

Spoiler Stein struck after Luton had been on the rack for almost the whole of the second half.

Mike Newell, Luton's £85,000 capture from Wigan, grabbed their first goal and made the winner by breaking through the home defence and feeding Stein, who drew 'keeper Peter Shilton before scoring easily.

For most of the match, Southampton had battered

Southampton 1 Luton 2: by HAROLD SWAN

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away at a well-organised defence superbly marshalled by Steve Foster, playing with his broken hand strapped up.

Foster denied Saints time and again but Steve Moran had the cruellest luck of the afternoon, hitting the bar and having two other efforts saved.

Saints might have taken the lead after only two minutes when Danny Wallace headed into the path of the industrious Glenn Cockerill, whose firm drive was partially parried by Luton keeper Les Sealey and Foster was on the line to mop up.

Slammed

A disastrous back-pass, one of two made by England centre-half Mark Wright, gave Luton the lead after 28 minutes.

His weak effort fell to Mick Harford and Wright's England colleague Shilton was forced to give away a corner.

Shilton could only punch out the kick and Newell slammed the loose ball home.

Wright had almost presented Luton with a gift goal after only seven minutes. He back-headed a Mal Donaghy lob and Shilton had to grow a few inches to catch the ball before

it sailed over his head into the net.

A minute after Newell's goal for Luton, Saints had a great chance to equalise when Moran went through after a Jimmy Case free-kick, but Sealey saved the rasping drive with his feet.

Then it was Luton's turn as Peter Nicholas sent a 25-yard screamer over the Southampton bar.

Moran was out of luck again in the 53rd minute when his shot rattled the Luton bar and then a David Armstrong corner bounced along the goal goalline before being cleared.

Nick Holmes, extracting the ball from a tangle of legs and arms in the Luton penalty area, could only lob it over.

But Saints finally scored a deserved equaliser in the 63rd minute when Armstrong rifled a low shot past Sealey.

There was an amazing penalty incident in the 79th minute that bordered on farce when Southampton's Mark Dennis was brought down in the area by Mitchell Thomas as a linesman flagged for offside.

Ref Lester Shapter overruled the linesman and awarded a penalty—only to discover that there was no penalty spot painted on the pitch.

Play was held up for two



DAVID ARMSTRONG

minutes while groundsman came out with a paint pot, brush and a tape measure to fill in the spot. The hold-up obviously affected Armstrong's concentration and when he was finally allowed to take the kick he drove it weakly and Sealey dived smartly to his right to save.

Southampton continued to dominate play but three minutes from the end, Newell broke away to give Stein the chance for the winner and leave manager Pleat blessing his luck.

Sad Saints boss Nicholl must wait a little longer to avenge that crushing 7-0 defeat.

SOUTHAMPTON.—Shilton: Forrest, Dennis, Case, Wright, Bond, Holmes, Cockerill, Moran, Armstrong, Wallace. Sub: Lawrence.

LUTON.—Sealey: Breacker, Thomas, Nicholas, Foster, Donaghy, Hill, Stein, Harford, Newell, Preece. Sub: Johnson.