

Luton caught in Heath fire

LUTON again found the knock-out blow beyond them yesterday after having Everton on the ropes in an FA Cup tie. Now, few would expect them to keep the best team in the country out of the semi-finals when they renew the argument at Goodison Park on Wednesday.

It was in last season's semi-finals that Luton were beating Everton until the 85th minute of another thrilling struggle. Then Sheedy equalised and Mountfield sent the Merseysiders to Wembley by a goal in extra-time.

Neither of those scorers was playing yesterday, but the depth of Everton's talent and resolve is such that they came back from being two down on Kenilworth Road's unfamiliar artificial surface to score twice in the last 25 minutes and very nearly make a replay unnecessary.

Although the Luton defence was never very sure of itself, Nicholas, Hill, King and Preece



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By **COLIN MALAM**
Luton 2, Everton 2

gave the home team enough of the midfield to make Everton's salvage operation a compelling demonstration of the class and determination which have taken them back to the top of the First Division.

With Luton two up after 63 minutes, the match seemed destined to be a triumph for their strikers, the experienced Harford and his new partner, Mark Stein, 20, younger brother of the injured Brian.

Harford whose aerial power has already underlined his permanent claim for inclusion in the England squad, scored the goal that gave Luton their 1-0 lead at half-time, and Stein got the second with remarkable speed off the mark.

Everton, however, are now such a resilient, confident team that nothing seems beyond them. Sharp got them back into the game with a powerful headed goal, and Heath equalised with a poacher's stealth 13 minutes after coming on as substitute.

This crescendo of telling activity was in marked contrast to the scrappiness of the early play. Little to rouse the blood happened before Harford opened the scoring after 22 minutes.

He did so with a tap-in from the rebound when Southall was unable to hold a shot that Hill owed to Nicholas's long throw and Foster's head-on. Everton ought not to have been behind for long, but the prolific Lineker could do little right in front of goal.

In the space of a couple of minutes, Lineker first failed to beat Sealey and Donaghy from no more than a couple of yards

out. Then he glanced the ball wide when Richardson's centre from the left offered him a free header.

Those misses seemed more costly than ever when Donaghy and Nicholas suddenly split Everton down the middle with two piercing passes. Nicholas's final ball sent Stein running clear of an Everton defence trying in vain to play him offside.

The inexperienced youngster was not exactly a model of coolness, but he recovered quickly when Southall came out at his feet and turned the loose ball into the empty net from the edge of the area.

Everton allowed Luton only two minutes to daydream about the semi-finals. An angled free-kick from out on the right by Gary Stevens was headed cleanly into the far corner of the net by Sharp, despite Foster's strong challenge.

Stein missed a chance to make Everton's task almost impossible, and North came on for the injured King, before Heath again demonstrated the value to Everton of his sharpness in the box. The busy little forward home the equaliser in the 77th minute when the otherwise faultless Foster chested down Lineker's overhead kick and the ball ran away from him.

Reid, belatedly getting into the game, then put Lineker clear, but Sealey came out quickly enough to deny Everton the victory that on balance they probably deserved.

□ Everton manager Howard Kendall said: "The players have shown that never-say-die, we will not be beaten attitude. It will take something special to beat us, but it isn't over and done with yet. Arsenal drew here and thought they were through, but they went out.

"In all honesty we played ever so well. The character of the side you tend to take for granted, but the ability shown here was excellent too. You have to adapt to certain pitches, to get on with it, and we have done just that."

Luton: Sealey, Johnson, Thomas, Nicholas, Foster, Donaghy, Hill, M. Stein, Harford, King, Preece. Sub: North/King, 68.

Everton: Southall, Stevens, Pointon, Harper, Van Den Hauwe, Reid, Steven, Lineker, Sharp, Bracewell, Richardson. Sub: Heath/Pointon, 64.

Referee: K. Hackett (Sheffield).



TYPICALLY EVERTON: Peter Reid battling all the way