

Luton 1, Oxford 2

MILK CUP finalists Oxford maintained the bubbling spirit of their midweek triumph over Aston Villa with their third successive away victory at Kenilworth Road yesterday, writes Robert Alexander. 85/86

Playing with determination and confidence, they took full advantage of Luton's FA Cup hang-over and out-powered them with an excellent demonstration of compact teamwork and accurate passing on the synthetic surface.

Luton, disappointed by their defeat at Everton on Wednesday, were only a shadow of their normal selves and faded alarmingly. Indeed, with more luck and steadier finishing, Oxford would have won by a wider margin than that supplied by second half goals from Aldridge and Charles.

But Luton took the lead in the 15th minute when Preece curled a superb free-kick beyond Judge from 18 yards. But Oxford responded quickly, Thomas clearing off the line from Shotton and Aldridge hitting a post to announce their intentions.

Oxford finally equalised three minutes after the interval when Aldridge dummied Sealey with a penalty awarded when he was fouled by Nicholas for his 24th goal of the season.

The winner followed on the hour. A long ball by Rhoades-Brown split Luton's tired defence and Donaghy's hesitation allowed Charles to steal a yard before rolling his shot comfortably wide of Sealey.

Within minutes, Thomas and Foster were required to clear off the line from Houghton as Oxford pressed to enlarge their lead.

Luton had nothing left, and their frustration was completed by bookings for Harford — his 10th of the season — and Newell. Referee Colin Downey also booked Oxford's Phillips and Slatter, but it was never a dirty game.

Luton: Sealey; Breacker, M. Thomas, Nicholas, Foster, Donaghy, Hill, M. Stein, Harford, Newell, Preece.

Oxford: Judge; Trewick, Slatter, Phillips, Briggs, Shotton, Houghton, Aldridge, Charles, Hebbard, Rhoades-Brown.

Referee: C. Downey (Hounslow).