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Liverpool leapfrog Mersey rivals

CRAIG JOHNSTON scored his first League goal of 1986 to boost Liverpool in their attempt to dislodge rivals Everton at the top of the First Division.

His strike after 17 minutes removed some of the anxiety from a Liverpool side having their first experience of the plastic pitch at Kenilworth Road

Pressure

Luton, understandably, looked more at home and at the start Liverpool's player-manager, Kenny Dalglish, was particularly uncomfortable.

Twice in the first 14 minutes Luton's big striker Mick Harford threatened but first his low shot went straight to Bruce Grobbelaar and then he flashed the ball just wide from the edge of the penalty area.

But Liverpool then went forward in numbers and had

Luton 0
Liverpool 1

By COLIN WOOD

men putting pressure on the Luton defence.

It produced the early breakthrough for Johnston. Dalglish tried to find Ian Rush on the left of the penalty area. Luton's Rob Johnson intercepted and appeared to be seeking out fellow full-back Mitchell Thomas on the other side of the area.

But Johnston beat him to it and hit the ball crisply into the net.

It was the Liverpool player's eighth goal of the season but his first in the League since December 7. His only other score this year was in the Milk Cup semi-final against QPR.

Luton came strongly again, bidding for the equaliser with the main danger coming from the aerial power of Harford.

Mike Newell, who trained with Liverpool as a youngster, wasted the best chance

of the first half, lashing the ball wide from a few yards after 39 minutes.

Luton increased the pressure at the start of the second half and Liverpool found great difficulty keeping the ball away from the danger area.

Even when Brian Stein had to limp off with another injury, it did not detract from Luton's attacking powers.

After 52 minutes they were within inches of an equaliser when skipper Steve Foster went forward and headed against the crossbar from a corner by David Preece.

Scramble

A minute later Foster and Newell both failed to make effective contact in a scramble just a few yards out.

Counter-attacks from Liverpool were few and far between, but somehow the breakthrough eluded Luton.

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	P	W	D	L	Pts
Liverpool	38	22	10	6	76
Everton	37	23	7	7	76
Chelsea	37	20	10	7	70
Man. Utd	38	20	8	10	68
West Ham	35	20	6	9	66



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