

KENILWORTH SHOW PUTS REDS ON TOP

LUTON 0 LIVERPOOL 1

THE Merseyside hoodoo that has twice blocked Luton's path to Wembley returned to haunt the Hatters in the First Division last night.

This time it was Liverpool, not Everton, who emerged after being outplayed, to throw the title race wide open once again.

David Pleat was able to field the side that drew with Spurs on Saturday, after Steve Foster shook off the effects of 'flu.

Liverpool, needing to win to lead the First Division, made one change from the side that trounced Coventry 5-0 on Saturday. John Wark, who cracked a bone in his leg in that game, was replaced by Kevin MacDonald.

Ian Rush overcame an ankle injury to partner manager Kenny Dalglish, which meant no place for fit-again ex-Hatter Paul Walsh, who watched the game from the stands.

Liverpool, desperate for victory, set the scene for an entertaining, open game.

Although they dominated the early play the



Reds had to wait six minutes for their first shot.

Luton threatened when Hill robbed Whelan and clipped

forward a cross, and Grobbelaar did well to keep out Harford's header.

Harford, in the thick of the action again, and then Stein forced the Liverpool keeper into action.

Liverpool ended this spell of Luton pressure by suddenly taking the lead after 16 minutes.

Rob Johnson raced to cut out a Dalglish pass intended for Rush. But the defender succeeded only in knocking the ball into the path of Craig Johnston, who rammed it low past Sealey.

The frantic pace never relented, as Luton immediately came back at Liverpool, Grobbelaar making another fine save from Stein's chip.

Harford drove a volley inches wide, while Liverpool's MacDonald spurned a good chance.

Luton exerted their pressure. Gillespie fouled Newell half-way inside the Liverpool half and although Hill got his head to Preece's free kick, Beglin was able to hack clear.

As the match wore on Luton were looking the more confident side, producing slick passing movements and forcing Liverpool into uncharacteristic panic clearances.

Steve Foster joined the fray and as he unsettled the Reds defence the ball fell to Newell. He turned quickly but fired wide when well placed.

Moments after the

Johnston goal gives points to Liverpool



● Dalglish — kept out Walsh.

● Foster (above left) — 'flu recovery.

● Mick Harford raids the Liverpool goal, policed by Gillespie, as Nichol looks on.

LUTON: Sealey, Johnson, Thomas, Nicholas, Foster, Donaghy, Hill, Stein, Harford, Newell, Preece. Sub: Breacker. LIVERPOOL: Grobbelaar, Gillespie, Beglin, Nichol, Whelan, Hansen, Dalglish, Molby, Rush, Johnston, MacDonald. Sub: Lee.

restart Hill had a chance to put Luton on terms when he cleverly nipped past Beglin but then produced a poor finish.

With 51 minutes gone, substitute Tim Breacker replaced Stein, who was struggling in only his second game after a two-month absence through injury.

Just after Breacker's arrival, Hatters were denied an equaliser by the crossbar.

Preece's corner was met by the white headband of Steve Foster and the ball thudded against the woodwork with Grobbelaar grovelling. The keeper was rescued by his defence as Harford tried to capitalise on the rebound.

As Luton pressed forward in search of an equaliser, Liverpool became increasingly dangerous with their lightning breaks. First Johnson, then Nicholas had to be quick to deny the Reds.

Liverpool's great Dane Jan Molby and the imposing figure of Foster squared up after a clash that left the Luton player needing treatment — and Molby on the end of a lecture from referee Paul Vanes.

Liverpool sent on Sammy Lee for Gillespie.

In the dying stages Liverpool, usually in the shape of Molby, were content to pass back from long distance or hoist the ball aimlessly

forward.

This scrappy finale was in sharp contrast to the majority of the game, which was full of pattern and purpose.