

MAGPIES STEAL A PRECIOUS POINT

86/87

Luton T O Newcastle 0

By DOMINIC BIGGS

Keeper's star show blunts Town attack

It began in the 15th minute.

Stein was denied twice in quick succession before Nwajiobi's spectacular overhead kick was brilliantly tipped over.

On 25 minutes came the first of Newell's openings, when he was let in by a back pass.

Perhaps his best chance came in the 32nd minute, when he met a cross on the far post and was astonished to see Thomas get across to cover his half-hit shot.

Newell had two more chances but there was a narrow escape at the other end, when Newcastle's England World Cup star Peter Beardsley popped up, in what was otherwise an anonymous performance.

The second half followed much the same pattern. Nwajiobi had the ball in the net twice, both efforts being ruled out.

The Nigerian then drove from close in at the keeper's body and Foster's header was tipped over.

More saves came from Newell, Stein twice and Wilson missed perhaps the clearest chance, driving wide seven minutes from the end.

Newcastle, whose play for the most part was the same hue as their unusual all-grey strip, showed some life in the final minutes.

But right on time Stein burst through and flashed another shot across goal, to sum up Luton's afternoon. To their credit, the all-Hatters crowd still found a warm ovation for keeper Thomas as he left the field.

LUTON: Sealey, Breacker, Johnson, Nicholas, Foster, Donaghy, Hill, Stein, Newell, Wilson, Nwajiobi. Sub: M. North.

NEWCASTLE: Thomas, Anderson, Bailey, McCreery, McDonagh, Roeder, Bogie, Gascoigne, Whitehurst, Beardsley, Wharton. Sub: Stewart.

THE extra police, who Luton's new membership scheme intends to make superfluous on match days, ought to have been at this one — to apprehend daylight robbers Newcastle United.

They emerged from a battering by the home side with a share of the points in the bag, to make good their escape back to the north east.

In fact, with the town and the football ground showing at least the usual numbers of officers on duty, it looked as though no chances were being taken with Luton's first Saturday home fixture, against a club well known for its large following.

But there was no apparent aggression inside the ground, among the 9,254 watching: just over 1,000 down on last season's attendance at this fixture. That could have been accounted for by the number of visiting fans kept away, set off by a few more Hatters supporters encouraged to come out of hiding.

The all-home audience probably left feeling much the same as frustrated Town boss John Moore. His disgruntled expression contrasted vividly alongside the wry grin sported by Magpies chief Willie McFaul, following the goal-less draw.

Moore said: "I haven't been critical of my players at all. I'm very pleased with everything they have done, except not taking chances. That's the only way they've let themselves down."

And McFaul could afford to be generous, saying: "Luton have got to take a lot of credit for playing good football."

He admitted candidly: "We tried to frustrate them and stop the service to the front men. They went through us on the deck in the first half and we couldn't do anything about it."

Both managers and everyone else watching were agreed the only reason Newcastle took anything from this game was the inspired form of their goalkeeper Martin Thomas.

The Welsh under 21 player defied Luton with a string of breathtaking saves in both halves.

Mike Newell and Brian Stein in particular were made to suffer time and time again during Thomas's virtuoso display.



● Newcastle keeper Martin Thomas foils Hatters again.