



Goal-mad Hatters sweep Merseyside off the carpet



Mike Newell

Luton — by a landslide

By STEVE CURRY: Luton 3 Liverpool 0

LUTON traded very profitably last night on Liverpool's paranoic hatred of plastic pitches.

They swept the FA Cup holders out of the competition in what looked like a spiritless surrender.

Luton today will accept the gratitude of every major club left in the competition, Liverpool, last season's double winners, really defeated themselves.

It was, perhaps, poignant, that this third round second replay should be staged on the eve of today's debate about the future of football on artificial surfaces.

Response

For it underlined that, along with all the other commercial benefits there might be, there is certainly a distinct soccer advantage to the home side. Look at the League tables and check the form of those who play on them.

With Stein his provider, Mick Harford was soon in the action, forcing Bruce Grobbelaar to save under his bar in the eighth minute and then shooting over from Ricky Hill two minutes later.

Liverpool's sole response was an off-target Rush header then, in the 34th minute, came the crucial goal.

Gary Gillespie was judged to have pushed Harford and Stein's dipping free-kick sailed over the massed Liverpool wall and into the top corner.

Some sign of Liverpool's impending alarm came with the replacement of John Wark by Alan Irvine still with 33 minutes to go but the fact Liverpool were probably on the way out was signalled with Mike Newell's 22-yard shot in the 59th minute which had Grobbelaar producing his best.

Sweetly

Even so, Luton should be given their hour of glory. In Saturday's fourth round they must meet QPR who are just as used to these pitches as they are.

But whether Brian Stein had stood on plastic, a prairie or a Wilton pile carpet, he could not have struck the free-kick that gave Luton their lead more sweetly.

It was that goal, after four hours of goalless deadlock, that was the real heart-breaker for Kenny Dalglish's Cup holders.

Stein, indeed, was more punishing to Liverpool than the pitch, instigator and inspiration, conducting the concerto with an impressive flamboyance.

Liverpool's response was flat and out of tune. They lacked heart for the battle, muted and strangely subdued.

Ian Rush, who passed himself fit, looked less than that and, as they rely so heavily on him for their goals these days, their chances were spasmodic and



GOAL . . . time for Luton to celebrate

Bitter Dalglish

LIVERPOOL manager Kenny Dalglish claimed Luton should have been kicked out of the FA Cup.

He was not referring to their plastic pitch but the fact that Luton failed to turn up for the first replay at Anfield two weeks ago because of the severe weather.

Dalglish said: "If you can't turn up for a match you shouldn't be in the competition. In amateur football if

you don't appear for a game you get kicked out. But I have to say Luton were better than us."

"Perhaps the full story will come out one day and perhaps the FA have brought the game into disrepute."

A subdued Luton manager John Moore was unable to celebrate. "We have only won one match. It doesn't mean a thing until we have won a trophy," he said.