

HAPLESS Hatters became the latest victims of Liverpool's title charge as they were sent crashing to their heaviest defeat of the season at Anfield on Tuesday night.

Ace marksman John Aldridge grabbed a hat-trick to take his tally to 11 in the last eight games and further goals from Peter Beardsley and Steve McMahon completed the rout to leave Luton facing an end of season relegation battle.

But for the first half an hour of the game Ray Harford's reshuffled side, with Marvin Johnson drafted into defence and Darron McDonough back in midfield, had given as good as they got with both McDonough and Mick Harford going close.

But Aldridge signalled the danger with an 11th minute header against the post before putting his side ahead with a controversial goal after 34 minutes.

The Hatters defence was

Liverpool.....5

Luton.....0

left appealing vainly for offside against the Republic of Ireland striker as he slid the ball home from Ray Houghton's cross.

But there was no doubting the quality of Liverpool's second just seven minutes later with Aldridge striking the ball home from close range after Les Sealey had parried John Barnes' shot.

The second-half was one-way traffic towards Sealey's goal and Kenny Dalglish's side wrapped the game up with three more goals in the space of seven minutes.

Beardsley made it 3-0 after 69 minutes and McMahon added the fourth just five minutes later and it was left to Aldridge to seal the game with a 76th minute penalty.