

# Champions hand out title warning

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Liverpool 5, Luton 0

**JOHN ALDRIDGE** claimed his second hat-trick of the season as champions Liverpool moved ominously closer to the first division's top two, Arsenal and Norwich City, with a demolition job on Luton.

Liverpool now stand 10 points adrift of Arsenal with two games in hand and eight points behind the Canaries with one game in hand, and on last night's irresistible display they will take a lot of stopping.

And Luton manager Ray Harford warned the likes of Norwich last night: "Liverpool are back on the road again."

Football



They were terrific and they must have a good chance of retaining the title. They sunk us in and played around us. It was chessboard football."

Luton were without influential centre-back and captain Steve Foster — and it showed as Ronnie Whelan and Ray Houghton opened the way for Republic of Ireland striker Aldridge to claim his 19th of the campaign after 34 minutes.

It was Aldridge again making it 2-0 four minutes from half-time, cashing in from close range after Luton goalkeeper Les Sealey had pushed away a drive from John Barnes.

Aldridge's treble chance came from the penalty spot after 76 minutes. He was brought down by Kingsley Black and punished Luton by rifling a right-footed spot-kick into the left corner of the net.

That sealed a memorable showing from Liverpool that oozed the skill and confidence that took them to the title last season. Peter Beardsley and Steve McMahon also produced moments to thrill the fans.

Beardsley cheekily slipped a shot between Sealey's legs after 69 minutes, while McMahon's effort five minutes later spun off Beaumont and over the keeper.

It was Liverpool's first five goal showing of the season and stretches their unbeaten run to 10 games. Aldridge's other hat-trick came on the opening day of the season, at Charlton.

Liverpool manager Kenny Dalglish acknowledged: "We played well and got the goals to match the performance. But we have got to keep things in perspective."

Dalglish's delight at last night's result was tempered by bad news concerning striker Ian Rush, who was substituted during a run-out for the reserves against Manchester United at Old Trafford after knee trouble.