

Sealey blunder hands Cup to Clough and son

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By Colin Gibson

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goalkeeper sent Hodge tumbling over.

Yesterday, in much more important surroundings and with much more at stake, Hodge and Sealey clashed again. The result was the same: a needless penalty.

Clough, calmness personified, took one pace and stroked the ball into the centre of the net — and the course of the game changed there and then.

Luton, watched by Dibble, the goalkeeper whose penalty save contributed to their Wembley victory last year, became the second successive holders to fail to defend their trophy.

It was such a terrible waste. For, until that moment, Luton had out-thought a Forest side who had spent the first half struggling to come to terms with Harford and Wegerle.

Harford's height was unsettling for Wilson and Walker, who are happier controlling matters a little closer to the ground. Wimbledon had spotted the weakness in a League game a fortnight ago — and Luton capitalised on it.

After 36 minutes of inconclusive sparring, Luton struck. Preece's corner was cleared only as far as Wilson, who was once sold by Mr Clough to Brighton. His cross was perfect.

Harford barely needed to lift himself off the turf to steer the header powerfully past the startled Sutton.

The favourites were in trouble, but Mr Clough, wearing his favourite green goalkeepers jumper, never flinched.

Instead, he watched impassively as his son dropped deeper, to lose the attentions of the wily Foster and allow Hodge and Webb to profit from the inviting acres this opened up in front of them.

Before Clough's penalty, Luton squandered chances to go further ahead. One fell to Harford five minutes after half time. Only the quick thinking of Laws, fit after a hand injury, prevented the ball spinning over the line.

But then Hodge, Clough and Gaynor, a stand-in for the injured Carr, took over.

Many believed Carr's speed would be missed. But Gaynor, who had rarely ventured more than a couple of yards from the right touchline, began to find space to move effectively.

His 70th-minute long pass, after Clough had robbed the unimpressive Black, was of devastating quality — and Webb made the most of it as he galloped through the Luton defence to score.

Last year, when Arsenal took a similar lead in the final, Luton bounced back with passion and panache. But yesterday the road to a comeback was firmly blocked off.

Gaynor, again on the right, cut past Luton's defenders and pulled his cross into the path of Clough. When the ball hit the back of the net, 14 minutes remained but they contained no solace for Luton.

Amid Forest's celebrations, Mr Clough set off on his own lap of honour, heading for the dressing room and leaving the third Littlewoods Cup final as a story about two men in goal-keeper's jerseys.

Nottingham Forest (4-4-2): Sutton; Laws, Walker, T Wilson, Pearce; Gaynor, Webb, Hodge, Parker; Clough, Chapman.

Luton (4-4-2): Sealey; Breacker, Foster, Beaumont, Grimes (McDonough, 76); Wilson, Hill, Preece, Black; Wegerle, Harford.

Referee: R Milford (Bristol)

Outrageous showman ducks out

By Christopher Davies

IN WHAT appeared to be a premeditated and outrageous piece of showmanship, Brian Clough became the first winning manager at Wembley in memory not to witness the presentation of the Cup to his successful team.

Mr Clough, having accepted the cheers and applause of the adoring Nottingham Forest supporters, disappeared down the tunnel as his captain, Stuart Pearce, led his jubilant side up the Wembley steps.

The Forest manager was always destined to dominate the Littlewoods Cup Final and, in trying to avoid the spotlight, Mr Clough inevitably attracted even more publicity — as if he needed it.

Mr Clough, restored to his touchline seat after the FA ban imposed following a scuffle with fans — Wembley was not included — was a model of good behaviour.

He showed no emotion at any of Forest's goals, even the two scored by his son Nigel. The only time Mr Clough stood up during the action was when Breacker tripped Nigel.

Even at the end, when Forest had won their first major trophy for nine years, Mr Clough sat unmoved while those around him could not control their delight.

Mr Clough was the focal point all afternoon. Obviously aware of this, he did not disappoint his audience.

He led out his team wearing a club blazer before changing into his favoured track suit bottoms and green jumper in a tunnel while the National Anthem was played, but no-one should be surprised at anything this extraordinary character does.

In the predictable absence of Mr Clough from the after-match Press conference, it was left to Ray Harford, Luton's manager, to lament the moment that changed the course of the Final.

He said: "Les Sealey has accepted the blame and admitted he did not have to bring down Steve Hodge for the equalising penalty.

"It killed us and lifted Forest who were losing patience at the time."



Nottingham Forest striker Lee Chapman head and shoulders above the rest at Wembley