

Webb masterminds the Forest flourish

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NOTTINGHAM FOREST gave Brian Clough his first trophy for nine years at Wembley yesterday, and the taste was all the sweeter for the two goals that came from his son Nigel, the official man of the match.

But, while Nigel played extremely well, the lifting of the Littlewoods Cup had at least as much to do with Neil Webb, who had an outstanding second half, and the unfortunate Luton goalkeeper Les Sealey.

A year ago Luton had beaten Arsenal in the final with the crucial assistance of a penalty save from Andy Dibble, who was deputising for the injured Sealey and, shortly afterwards, left the club for Manchester City. Yester-

PATRICK BARCLAY reports from Wembley

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day Sealey gave away a penalty when his team were ahead nine minutes into the second half. Clough scored. And from that moment Forest were in control.

Webb put them ahead with a superb goal in the 68th minute, and eight minutes later Clough made sure that Forest would complete a hat-trick of League Cup victories under his father, who had been in charge when they beat Liverpool in 1978, then Southampton in 1979 before losing to Wolves in 1980.

This match, while lacking the

stunning climax Luton provided last season, was all that Wembley could have expected: skilful, controlled, a great credit to both sides and their managers, who have remained aloof from the biff-bang football that threatens to consume the English game.

But while Clough was rewarded for his principles, Ray Harford must somehow lift his men for the struggle against relegation. One

THE FA told Luton after their Wembley defeat yesterday that they would not support the club's attempt to play in Europe next season. Luton had written to UEFA suggesting they should become a test case for the readmission for English club sides.

could see why they are third from bottom of the First Division, three points behind Southampton with one more match played and only six to go. For all their creative ability in midfield, where Danny Wilson had a splendid first half, and the power of Mick Harford up front, the vulnerability of their defence became all too obvious as the afternoon wore on and those in front could no longer protect them from the thrusts of Webb, Clough and Steve Hodge.

Yet for 54 minutes Luton had the better of things. After Ashley Grimes's fierce drive had brought a sharp save from Steve Sutton, a delightful run and pass from Kingsley Black released Ricky Hill, who in evading the 'keeper took himself too wide to shoot. When Luton went ahead in the 36th minute, they deserved it, and none more than Wilson, whose perfect cross was headed in by Harford with Sutton and his defenders slow to react.

A Webb header was cleared off the goal-line by David Beaumont almost immediately, and Luton's anxiety to protect their advantage was manifest in spoiling fouls by Wilson and David Preece. But Harford almost scored again after half-time when Brian Laws got back to extricate Sutton from trouble, and it was not until the

penalty that the tide turned.

Webb's pass sliced into the right side of the area, putting Hodge in a dangerous position and giving Sealey a difficult choice. Sealey is always prone to impetuosity and this led him to choose wrongly, he lunged for the ball which the speedy Hodge touched past him before spinning jubilantly to the ground.

Forest emphasised their authority with a goal of high quality. Clough won the ball back from Black deep in the Forest half and gave it to Tommy Gaynor, who had hitherto plodded innocuously down the right flank usually occupied by Franz Carr yet who now wasted no time in finding Webb with a flighted ball that matched the enterprise of the England midfielder's run through the middle. Webb controlled the ball with his first touch, half-volleyed it home with his second.

The third goal caricatured Luton's disarray. While they tried vainly to replace Grimes with Darron McDonough, Gaynor cut inside the full-back and found Clough, who shot across Sealey with devilish accuracy.

Afterwards Ray Harford said his team had shown a patience for much of the match that they had been lacking during their recent run of League defeats. But he added: "We lost that patience in the period between Forest's first and second goals."

Neither of the Cloughs appeared at the press conference but Webb did and said he thought this victory might lead Forest to even better things, beginning next Saturday when they meet Liverpool in the FA Cup semi-final. Forest lost to Liverpool at this stage last season but Webb said: "We are better equipped now, both mentally and physically."

■ Yesterday's crowd of 76,130 was the smallest for a League Cup final, in all its guises, since it was taken to Wembley in 1967.

Nottingham Forest: Sutton; Laws, Pearce, Walker, Wilson, Hodge, Gaynor, Webb, Clough, Chapman, Parker. **Substitutes not used:** Chettle, Glover.

Luton Town: Sealey, Breacker, Grimes (McDonough, 77), Preece, Foster, Beaumont, Wilson, Wegerle, Harford, Hill, Black. **Substitute not used:** Meade.

Referee: R Milford (Bristol).

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Luton's Ashley Grimes tries to bring Nigel Clough, who scored twice for Forest, down to earth yesterday