

Wilson nerve saves Luton

Luton..... 1
Norwich 0

Brendan Gallagher

LUTON'S computer age electronic scoreboard told an emotive story. "We're safe, we're safe" was its screaming message after the exciting victory over Norwich secured their place in the First Division.

A second-half penalty from Danny Wilson was the manna from heaven for Luton after an increasingly frustrating first half of missed opportunities.

The penalty was controversial to say the least. Kingsley Black's driven centre always spelt danger, but only referee Michael Bayley found fault as Rosario and Wilson challenged for the ball. Rosario was deemed to have pushed the Northern Ireland international.

Wilson stepped up to beat Bryan Gunn, a nerve-racking moment for the industrious midfielder who had missed an earlier and much more blatant penalty after 10 minutes.

Norwich manager Dave Stringer pulled no punches: "Middlesbrough have been sent down by that decision. It shows the cruel side of football. None of my players knew what it was for."

Luton had attacked frantically in the opening 45 minutes, with the early news that West Ham had taken the lead at Everton doing little to soothe frayed nerves.

Mick Harford immediately secured aerial dominance over the Norwich defence which actually promised more than it delivered. His powerful header after 15 minutes grazed the post, but the many chances he created continued to go begging.

Another player working well for Luton was Ricky Hill, playing his 500th game for the club in midfield.

With Rosario consigned to defence following the surprise substitution of England squad member Phelan, Norwich seemed unwilling or unable to press the attack button.

As Luton gradually adapted to the tension of the situation, their game became more fluid and a goal seemed more likely. Unfortunately for the match as a spectacle, Mr Bayley continued to be affected by the occasion.

The industrious official booked seven players in a game without obvious malice. During one frantic 20-minute period in the first half he issued four yellow cards and then, to the amusement of everyone, lost his little black book.

Luton Town: Chamberlain, Breacker, Dreyer, Preece, Foster, Beaumont, Wilson, Wegerle, Harford, Hill, Black.

Norwich City: Gunn, Culverhouse, Crook, Butterworth, Putney, Townsend, Gordon, Fleck, Rosario, Phelan (Coney 30), Cook.

Referee: M Bailey (Cambs).