

Luton sunk by old boys as City strut their stuff

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Manchester City 3 Luton 1
by RICHARD BOTT

STRUTTING like peacocks in the Maine Road garden, Manchester City's emerging young side brought another vivid splash of colour to the season.

But they very nearly tripped over their own feet.

Eventually, they saw off Luton, who have not tasted success away from home for ten months.

Several of the City faithful turned up yesterday wearing T-shirts immortalising City's derby victory last week over Manchester United with the slogan "Mel's Marvels 5, Fergie's Wallet 1."

But as the waves of adulation wash over them, City's youngsters should recall the debt they owe to goalkeeper Paul Cooper for this latest victory when they were in danger of collapsing after an invigorating start.

Humour

Cooper, 36, deputising for injured Andy Dibble, is known as the scourge of penalty-takers.

He lived up to his reputation with a wonder save against his old club that put the bounce back into City's stride.

Roy Wegerle looked aghast after striking the ball firmly enough, only to see Cooper hurl himself to his right and claw it away.

A delighted Cooper said later: "That was my 56th penalty save in first-team football." The man could stop the cavalry!

Although Luton equalised, soon after that, Cooper's save had restored the home crowd to good humour and City to their old confident vein and they bounced right back with another goal on the stroke of half-time.

Much earlier, they had swept gleefully into the lead with a lovely goal from striker David Oldfield, who they bought from Luton for £650,000.

Stooping, then diving, to meet David White's cross, Oldfield sent a header



UNDER PRESSURE . . . Luton's goalkeeper Alec Chamberlain is in disarray as David White attacks

skidding out of Alec Chamberlain's reach.

Ironically, Oldfield has only found a niche in City's attack because £1 million signing Clive Allen has a groin injury.

All three of City's goals were created by David White.

"White was brilliant," exclaimed City manager Mel Machin. "He gets those crosses in, week in, week out. The difference is that he now takes a look first!"

Luton's Danish striker Lars Elstrup set up the equaliser for Kingsley Black, from Richard Harvey's splendid cross.

But another touchline gallop by White and an astutely-placed header by Ian Bishop sent City off at half time 2-1 up.

Elstrup rifled a shot into the side netting shortly after the restart to let City know Luton still nurtured a few ambitions.

But the Dane's finishing was sadly lacking and he was substituted with his international team man-

ager Sepp Plontek watching.

Brightwell scored City's third, not long after the restart.

For Luton and Ray Harford it was another away-day to forget.

"I am down-hearted because we keep losing away from home," he said

Edgy

"I thought this was a good day to come here because I couldn't see City scoring five goals two weeks running. After the first 15 minutes, I wasn't so sure. But we played better than Manchester United."

Mel Machin admitted his players had an edgy period. He declared: "I feel better now than I did a week ago, after we had beaten United.

"We have won another game and we are starting to get our reward for the way we have been playing since the start of the season."

City's main concern now is a thigh strain to Paul Lake.