



Canaries whistle to Hatters' tune

Luton Town 4, Norwich City 1
BY DAVID CUFFLEY

MILITARY music, at times strident and occasionally sombre, floated through the autumn air to keep the audience entertained before the curtain rose at the quaint soccer theatre of Kenilworth Road.

Whether or not it was piped through to the dressing rooms was difficult to tell, but if Luton Town came out with all the gusto of the "Thunderbirds" theme, the anguished strains of the Last Post were more in keeping with previously unbeaten Norwich City's grim afternoon.

The Canaries' proud defensive record on their travels was ended after little more than three minutes. Kingsley Black's drive took a wicked deflection off skipper Ian Butterworth and wrong-footed goalkeeper Bryan Gunn to give the Hatters the lead.

One sensed it was going to be one of those afternoons — and sure enough, City crashed heavily to their first defeat since last season's trip to Luton.

And, despite their indifferent pitch and controversial "home only" rule for fans, this was one occasion when it was hard to deny the Hatters their success.

Already without four senior players, they lost defender Graham Rodger and Northern Ireland international Black with injuries in an eventful 90 minutes, but still had more than enough composure to brush aside City's fitful challenge.

A similarly black day for Liverpool and Arsenal was perhaps of some consolation to Dave Stringer's side, and after treading uncertainly on the astroturf, they will be grateful for the chance to iron out their problems on grass twice in the space of four days this week.

But the few City followers who infiltrated the stadium in the hope of seeing an historic achievement will still have been very disappointed with what they saw.

In the latter stages of the first half, there were signs that Norwich were far from out of the contest, and had Robert Rosario hit the target when Ian Crook and Butterworth combined to present him with a free header on the half-hour, we might yet have witnessed a different result.

Referee Brian Stevens had certainly seen enough. He became the plastic



Norwich's Dale Gordon (centre) looks for a way past Luton's Steve Williams (left) and Kingsley Black.

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pitch's latest ankle injury victim four minutes before the break — and it saved him the job of keeping count after the interval, when Luton added three excellent goals.

Defender John Dreyer beat Gunn and a static City defence to Steve Williams' 54th-minute free-kick to stab home the second with his outstretched left boot.

Roy Wegerle and David Preece set up

skipper Danny Wilson for a cracking right-footer from 25 yards 11 minutes later, and the impressive Williams curled in a left-foot drive from a similar distance after 76 minutes, following Scandinavian assistance from Lars Elstrup.

City replied seven minutes from time, thanks to two substitutes making their first senior appearances of the season. Malcolm Allen squeezed home his penalty after Jeremy Goss had been pushed in the back by Dreyer.

It was small consolation for Norwich, but Luton boss Ray Harford was happy enough. He dashed off to celebrate a joint

birthday party for his father and son.

"His Dad's 70 today," said assistant boss Terry Mancini. "So's Dave Stringer after that," came one reply.

Luton Town — Chamberlain, Breacker, Dreyer, Wilson, Rodger (Harvey, 15 mins), Beaumont, Williams, Wegerle, Elstrup, Preece, Black (Dowie, 57 mins).

Norwich City — Gunn, Sherwood, Bowen, Butterworth, Linighan, Fox (Goss, 61 mins), Gordon, Fleck (Allen, 69 mins), Rosario, Crook, Phillips.

Referee — Brian Stevens (Stonehouse); replaced by Ron Coaten (41 mins).

Attendance — 9038.