

Palace lose their way

89/90.

Palace 1, Luton Town 1

FOR the first 20 minutes or so at Selhurst Park on Saturday it really looked as though Palace were back on the winning trail.

They put almost constant pressure on the Hatters defence. And when returned to the scoresheet after a four match absence, Palace seemed on their way.

But the wait for a second which would have clinched the points was in vain.

Luton weathered the worst of the storm and took over as Palace inexplicably lost their grip in midfield, leading to alarming flusters in defence again.

Twelve minutes after the break Luton scored a bizarre equaliser, after which anyone coming in off the street, not knowing the identities of the teams, would probably have concluded that the Whites (Luton) were having the better of things.

Palace fans must have been both puzzled and disappointed at seeing their team playing like an away side happy to settle for a point.

The onus was on Palace, as the home team, to make the running and push men forward. But all too often there was a lack of understanding, their passing lacked accuracy, and there was always the athletic figure of Marvin Johnson barring their way in the Luton defence.

A disappointing result, then, with one of the few redeeming features being a competent debut performance at left back by Mark Dennis, whose pace should increase if he keeps reading the slimming book.

And goalkeeper Brian Parkin did well, too, under the circumstances in his first senior game for 11 months.

He came very close to preventing Luton's equaliser, getting his fingers to Kingsley Black's initial shot, touching it on to the bar.

Alex Dyer lunged at the rebound, the ball again came back off the bar, and this time Luton skipper Danny Wilson beat his Palace counterpart Geoff Thomas to the ball and bundled it over the line.

This cancelled out Palace's first-half goal, which stemmed from an enormous clearance by Parkin. Bright headed on, Ian Wright touched it back to him, and Bright beat Alec Chamberlain with a tantalising lob.

Bright received the only booking, for a foul from behind on Steve Williams, in a game well controlled by George Courtney.

Palace — Parkin, Pemberton, Dennis, Gray, Hopkins, Dyer, McGoldrick, Thomas, Bright, Wright, Pardew, Subs: Barber, Shaw (not used).

Luton — Chamberlain, Breacker, Dreyer, Wilson, Johnson, Beaumont (Hervey), Williams, Dowie, Elstrup (Wegerle), Kennedy, Black.

Att: 11,346.

JOHN HULLS