

Fantastic Hatters stay in top flight BLACK THE HERO AS LUTON MAKE A GREAT ESCAPE

Derby County 2 Luton Town 3 89/90

GUTSY Luton Town sent their army of travelling supporters delirious this afternoon as they won 3-2 at the Baseball Ground, avoiding relegation to Division Two.

Two goals by Kingsley Black, the winner in the 74th minute to break the 2-2 deadlock, gave the Hatters the points they needed as Sheffield Wednesday crashed 3-0 at home to Nottingham Forest.

Stuart Pearce killed off Wednesday with his second goal in the 65th minute and Forest's Nigel Jemson made it 3-0 in the 82nd minute, but Luton knew they had to win despite the drama at Hillsborough, and brilliant Black capped a marvellously brave attacking performance by the Hatters with the winning goal.

Luton were cheered off the pitch by their supporters at the end of a game which recalled the dramatic scenes at Maine Road under David Pleat's management when a Raddy Antic goal secured Luton's First Division status. The Hatters, after weeks in the condemned cell, were given joyous hope of a late reprieve when full-back BREACKER drove them into the lead after only 66 seconds of their last game of the season.

Luton knew that they must win and Sheffield Wednesday must lose for first division soccer to remain at Kenilworth Road and their army of 4,000 travelling fans went wild with delight when David Preece tapped a 25 yard free kick to his right and Breacker scored off the underside of the bar with a thunderous shot which Peter Shilton had no chance of stopping.

When Derby won a free kick from similar range in the 7th minute Dean Saunders fired narrowly wide and in the 14th minute Luton went close again. Kingsley Black went on a 40 yard run before crossing to the far post but Iain Dowie was a yard short of making contact as he lunged forward.

Mike Harford, sold to Derby by Luton earlier this season, had a goal-bound header cleared by Breacker and the tension showed through in the 16th minute with a booking for Luton defender Dave Beaumont for a foul on

The teams
Derby County; Shilton, Sage, Forsyth, Williams G, Wright, Hindmarch, Davidson, Saunders, Harford, Williams P, Ramage. Subs: Hebberd, Francis.
Luton: Chamberlain, Breacker, McDonagh, Beaumont, James, Dreyer, Wilson, Rees, Dowie, Preece, Black. Subs: Elstrup, Kennedy. Ref. B. Stevens (Stonehouse, Gloucester).

Geraint Williams.

Derby, saved from regulation by victory last weekend, lacked Luton's fire and sloppy marking in the 19th minute handed the visitors another priceless coil of life-line.

Luton went two up when Derby midfielder man Craig Ramage lost possession in midfield and Derby's marking was exposed as BLACK darted through to prod his shot past the hopelessly exposed Peter Shilton.

Craig Ramage was the culprit, losing the ball in midfield and Shilton raged at his defenders when Black was left unchallenged.

Derby were stung into retaliation with England defender Mark Wright moving into midfield with dramatic results. Mike Harford, sold to Derby by Luton for £480,000, battled to win possession in the air and WRIGHT strode forward to hammer a low shot out of the reach of Alec Chamberlain.

Wright then had a powerful header brilliantly finger-tipped to safety by the goalkeeper while at the other end Iain Dowie beat the ground in fury after steering an unchallenged header wide of the post from only 10 yards range.

That miss was all the more crucial when Derby delivered a stunning blow to Luton's

DIVISION ONE										
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pt			
Liverpool.....	38	23	10	5	78	37	79			
Aston Villa.....	38	21	7	10	57	38	70			
Tottenham.....	38	19	6	13	59	47	63			
Arsenal.....	38	18	8	12	54	38	62			
Chelsea.....	38	16	12	10	58	50	60			
Everton.....	38	17	8	13	57	46	59			
Southampton.....	38	15	10	13	71	63	55			
Wimbledon.....	38	13	16	9	47	40	55			
Nottm Forest.....	38	15	9	14	55	47	54			
Norwich.....	38	13	14	11	44	42	53			
QPR.....	38	13	11	14	45	44	50			
Coventry.....	38	14	7	17	39	59	49			
Manchester U.....	38	13	9	16	46	47	48			
Man City.....	38	12	12	14	43	52	48			
Crystal Pal.....	38	13	9	16	42	66	48			
Derby County.....	38	13	7	18	43	40	46			
Luton.....	38	10	13	15	43	57	43			
Sheff Wed.....	38	11	10	17	35	51	43			
Charlton.....	38	7	9	22	31	57	30			
Millwall.....	38	5	11	22	39	65	26			

DIVISION TWO										

escape plan in the second minute of injury time.

A linesman spotted an offence off the ball, David Preece being pointed out as the culprit, and the free kick from the left was vollied into the roof of the Luton net by young Derby midfielder Paul WILLIAMS.

Half-time
Derby 2
Luton 2

Derby brought on Trevor Hebberd instead Ramage for the second half as Luton tried desperately to get back in front and revive their hopes of first Division survival.

Much of the first division may be happy to think of avoiding Luton's plastic pitch next season but there was nothing synthetic about the effort they poured into the game or about the magnificent support of their fans.

They should have gone back in front in the 54th minute as Black again got through on the left but Dowie, beyond the far post, could make only glancing contact with a header which flashed a yard wide.

Derby were still dangerous, especially when Mark Wright was involved, but superb tackling by John Dreyer prevented Saunders from breaking clear.

Again Luton piled forward and Black brought a magnificent diving save from Shilton as time ticked away.

The more Luton pushed men into the attack the greater was the danger of being caught out at the back as the heading ability of Harford twice enabled Saunders to run into the box in pursuit of half chances.

First Dreyer and then McDonagh intervened with sharp tackles and Luton worked their way forward to earn a left wing corner which caused more panic for Derby.

Wilson crossed from the left but Shilton rose majestically to pluck the ball from the head of Dowie.