

Luton cower before the Roker roar

LUTON, who stayed up on goal difference, came to Sunderland who got up courtesy of Swindon's sins, and of the two pre-season favourites for relegation, it was Sunderland who emerged with by far the healthier First Division prospects.

On a sodden pitch and exposed to the full blast of the partisan roar, Luton developed that homesick look of a team that longs for the tranquil security of its own plastic backyard. Their rearranged defence never got to grips with the pace and invention of Marco Gabbiadini and Peter Davenport, who pulled the Hatters' defence apart almost at will.

The tenor of the afternoon was established after just 12 minutes. Although Davenport's ball inside Dreyer was too fine, the big defender dithered

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By Frank Dobson 90/91

long enough for Gabbiadini to whip it away and hit a spanking angled shot across Chamberlain's dive. Dreyer soon had a chance to make amends on one of Luton's rare breakaways but sliced his shot wide.

Another combination of Sunderland's two blindingly fast strikers brought their second goal on the half-hour, Davenport clattering a flicked pass into the roof of the net.

It just did not seem to be Luton's day, even when they got forward to create something. Elstrup spurned one good chance when he hit the bar from

six yards and Black blew another by directing his shot straight at Norman.

The enterprise of Gabbiadini and Davenport continued to upset the visitors well into the second half. But for Chamberlain, Gabbiadini might have had a hat-trick. Twice within 10 minutes the keeper tipped over his shots. Denis Smith said of his side's second victory in the top flight, "This was a real First Division performance which has been coming for some time."

Sunderland: T Norman; J Kay, A Smith, G Bennett, K Ball, G Owers, P Bracewell, G Armstrong, P Davenport, M Gabbiadini, P Hardyman. **Subs not used:** T Cullen, D Rush. **Manager:** D Smith.

Luton Town: A Chamberlain; M Johnson, R Harvey, S Williams, D Beaumont, J Dreyer, L Elstrup, D Preece, I Dowie, C Hughes (D McDonough 77 min), K Black (J Rees 65 min). **Manager:** J Ryan.

Referee: W Burns (Scarborough).

Goals: Gabbiadini (1-0, 12 min), Davenport (2-0, 31 min).