

Brace from Bruce sinks poor Hatters

Manchester United 4 Luton Town 1
by Andy Roberts

A VICIOUS, spitting, first goal of the season from midfielder David Preece temporarily burst Manchester United's high flying balloon at Old Trafford this afternoon.

Ex-Town goalkeeper Les Sealey played and missed a Preece drive which hit a divot and wickedly reared up vertically to find the corner of the net.

Preece's fluke equalised an early goal by United skipper Steve Bruce as the home side searched for the seventh successive league win over the Hatters.

They finally achieved it in the second half with a further from Bruce, a third by substitute Mark Robins, and a fourth from Brian McClair in the 81st minute.

Sean Farrell replaced the departed Iain Dowie in the forward line as the Hatters looked to gain their first ever points at Old Trafford.

The Luton side showed one other change from that which lost 1-0 at home to Norwich last week, left back Richard Harvey deputising for hamstringing victim Darron McDonough with skipper John Dreyer moving into central defence.

European Cup Winners' Cup semi-finalists Manchester United also made one change from the team which overcame Montpellier in midweek, Danny Wallace introduced to midfield in place of the injured Paul Ince.

Both teams walked slowly out of the dressing rooms to a warm ovation on a bright afternoon.

David Beaumont's dicey back pass from distance after only 30 seconds almost let United in but Lee Sharpe lost control of the ball as it bobbled away from him in the sanded penalty area and Alec Chamberlain gratefully collected.

Wallace tested Chamberlain with a left foot drive and in the seventh minute but Marvin Johnson was forced to concede a corner after doing well to cut out a break by Sharpe.

The winger took the corner and after Gary Pallister had seen his head blocked in a scramble, BRUCE tidied it up with a low shot into the far corner of the net to register his 13th goal of the season.

For Luton, who have only ever beaten Manchester United once - at Kenilworth Road in April 1985 - it was a dreadful start not to mention an ominous one.

Lars Elstrup however, deceived Denis Irwin on the left and managed to cut inside, delivering a low hard cross to the far edge of the area where Johnson just failed to connect.

Then Kingsley Black's persistence enabled David Preece to float in a high ball to the far post where former Town goalkeeper Les Sealey lost out in a challenge with Farrell.

The chance was soon lost but within minutes Elstrup miscued a volley and the ball flew high on to the roof of the Stretford End much to the amusement of the healthy crowd.

Clayton Blackmore, scorer of that memorable goal in France, again tried

The teams

Manchester United: Sealey, Irwin, Blackmore, Bruce, Phelan, Pallister, Robson, Wallis, McClair, Hughes, Sharpe. **Subs:** Donaghy, Robins.

Luton: Chamberlain, Johnson, Harvey, Beaumont, Rodger, Dreyer, Elstrup, Preece, Farrell, Pembroke, Black. **Subs:** Rees, Allpress.

Referee: Ken Lupton, Cleveland.

Attendance: 41,752.

his luck following good approach play by Mark Hughes and Bryan Robson.

United were in control of the match and the Hatters were only allowed snatches of the action.

But all that changed in the 32nd minute when Mark Pembroke ran from the centre circle to hit a fine shot which flew narrowly past Sealey's left hand post.

But the United goalkeeper really stood no chance two minutes later when he was comprehensively beaten off the pitch by a hopeful 30-yard shot from former team mate PREECE.

The tiny schemer decided to take a leaf out of young Pembroke's book and Sealey was flummoxed when the ball, which he had covered, bounced in front of him and reared up off a divot before dropping softly into the net.

United's response to Luton's affrontery was swift as Johnson slipped to let in Sharpe who sized up his opportunity, but blasted wide of the far post.

Honours were then shared up to half time with the visitors going in clearly in a happier frame of mind.

Half-time:

Manchester United....1
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United soon took control with a 47th minute goal - Sharpe's corner from the left firmly directed into the net via Chamberlain's hand by BRUCE.

Sharp was beginning to come more and more into the game and Thompson, doing a good marking job, needed to be at his most watchful.

Bruce, on a rare hat-trick, was obviously enjoying himself but experienced the pain as well as the glory when Black lashed a shot into his midriff to conclude a neat Town buildup.

A rasping shot from Blackmore started United up again but they were kept on their toes by a Luton side working hard if not posing too much of a threat.

But Town were caught napping by a Sharpe exit in the 70th minute. Sharpe broke down the left and slid the ball inside to ROBINS, a first half substitute for Wallace, who did well to connect with the ball first time.