

Impressive Luton exploit Newcastle's naivety

Luton Town	2
Newcastle United	0

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THE Endsleigh Insurance League is taking a mighty revenge in the FA Cup. Luton last night joined their first division brothers in the fifth round by defeating high-flyers from the Carling Premiership, the abandoned League clubs making monkeys out of the self-elected elite.

Make no mistake, David Pleat's well-schooled blend of ageing and youthful players were superior to their lofty rivals from Newcastle United at Kenilworth Road.

The first half belonged consummately to Luton. Their pitch may

resemble Morecambe Sands, but it was far from the excuse that Newcastle had laid on St James' Park in the first match ten days ago. It was possible to play good football on this sanded turf.

Luton proved it. Again and again their two experienced midfielders, Harper and Preece, directed the play, using the willing youth around them, using particularly the effervescent runs of Oakes, now darting to the right flank, now the left, to exploit what increasingly became naivety in the Newcastle ranks.

What Newcastle lacked was an anchor in front of their back four, the role expertly played for Luton by Harper. The absence there of Bracewell was not adequately filled by Elliott, and so Hartson, a teenager from Swansea, was able to

appear without adequate marking in the Newcastle goalmouth.

He had been denied with a shot on the turn after 11 minutes by Watson's block and he was denied in the 36th minute by an acrobatic clearance off the line from Venison. But between these efforts he scored a goal more reminiscent of Beardsley than of an 18-year-old playing only his fourteenth senior game. The ball had been played between the Newcastle centre backs by Peake, Hartson strode into the gap and Hooper came, as he had to do, outside his area to attempt a clearance.

The goalkeeper was deceived; Hartson flipped the ball past him and with almost casual assurance guided it into the net for his fourth senior goal.

Newcastle's touch was erratic.

They were hustled out of their customary midfield flow, they were naive in defence and, with Cole nursing a damaged shoulder after an early collision with Dreyer, they had only Beardsley to worry about.

How he tried. One minute before Hartson's goal he had run at the defence and chipped the ball inches over the bar. A minute after the goal he chipped again, like a golfer using a nine-iron, but again over the top.

In the 37th minute, Beardsley demonstrated his vision again with a superb ball towards the penalty spot where Clark had made a run but Peake, 37 today, timed his tackle perfectly to dispossess Clark.

Sheer desperation drove Newcastle forward in the second half and Luton enjoyed one moment of luck on the hour when Beardsley eluded

the defence and struck the inside of the near post.

That, and a sprawling dive from Sommer at the feet of Cole, allowed Luton to hold, and then to break with devastating riposte. Their conclusive second goal was testimony to the quality of Oakes. The 21-year-old skipped past the tackle but Hooper made a reflex save. However, Linton was on to the rebound and from his return ball, Oakes had only to side-foot the ball in. Luton, deservedly, were home and dry.

LUTON TOWN (4-4-2): J Sommer — D Linton, T Peake, J Dreyer, J James — P Telfer, A Harper, D Preece, J Campbell (sub: T Thorpe, 82min) — J Hartson, S Oakes (sub: S Houghton, 87).

NEWCASTLE UNITED (4-4-2): M Hooper — S Watson, B Venison, S Howey, J Beresford — R Lee, R Elliott, L Clark, S Sellars — P Beardsley, A Cole. Referee: E Parker.