

Luton enjoy 'year of the underdog'

93/94 (FAC)

By John Ley

Luton Town2 Newcastle United

THE dawn of a new era at Newcastle was clouded at Kenilworth Road last night as Kevin Keegan's side departed the FA Cup to join the growing litany of Premiership victims.

They began the day as second favourites to win the Cup for the first time since 1955; they left Bedfordshire comprehensibly beaten and without complaint after goals from John Hartson and Scott Oakes earned Luton a fifth-round trip to Cardiff.

Keegan, an FA Cup winner with Liverpool, said: "Like a lot of Premiership clubs we have to concentrate on getting into Europe and the only way left open to us now is by finishing near the top.

"I hope Luton go all the way and send us a couple of tickets; they certainly deserved to win. They are a small club with small resources and they turned us over."

Keegan's magnanimity was

honourable; in fairness, he could admit little else as his side, so entertaining and fresh on their day, succumbed to the power and directness of a team put together for next to nothing.

Luton played with all the free-flowing movement well-known of teams managed by David Pleat, whose side have now gone 10 games without defeat.

Pleat said: "The Chinese say it is the Year of the Dog; it isn't, it's the year of the underdog. I believe the gulf between the top and the next division is getting greater but what is happening this season is incredible, a quirk."

It was a highly-charged and thoroughly entertaining game throughout as Luton, enjoying their best run for six years, took the lead after 16 minutes when a long ball from Trevor Peake, an

FA Cup winner with Coventry in 1987, sent Hartson through.

Mike Hooper, the Newcastle goalkeeper, committed himself by rushing out and Hartson—playing only because Kerry Dixon was injured—took one touch, deflected the ball to his right and then rolled it home almost casually.

With their defence quickly coming to terms with the pace of Andy Cole, Peter Beardsley appeared the only threat to Luton.

In midfield, veteran David Preece was consistently menacing for the home side while Des Linton, a rangy left-back, was equally impressive.

Newcastle, by contrast, were strangely muted and dampened quickly by the early goal. They could so easily have fallen further behind before half-time. Oa-

kes's cross met Hartson and he beat Hooper to direct a header towards goal but Barry Venison stretched back to acrobatically clear off the line.

Newcastle responded briefly in the second half when Bearsdley struck the right post from an acute angle while John Dreyer had to make a superbly-timed challenge on Cole.

Luton rallied, though, and Oakes was sent chasing a through-ball down the left in the 79th minute. His shot was parried by Hooper but only as far as Linton. The defender could have shot but chose to pass into the goalmouth and Oakes responded to round off an outstanding display.

Luton Town: Sommer; Linton, Peake, Dreyer, James; Telfer, Harper, Preece, Campbell (Thorpe 82); Hartson, Oakes (Houghton 87). Sub: Petterson (g). Booked: Hartson.

Newcastle Utd: Hooper; Watson, Venison, Howay, Beresford; Lee, Clark, Elliott, Sellars; Beardsley, Cole. Subs: Robinson, Neilson, Srnicek (g). Booked: Venison.

Referee: J Parker (Preston).