

Le Tissier hits finest form to destroy Luton

By Martin Smith

Southampton 6 Luton Town 0

MATTHEW Le TISSIER lasted just 62 minutes of last night's FA Cup replay at The Dell, but it was still sufficient to inspire Southampton's annihilation of Luton Town.

Le Tissier scored twice and played a prominent part in two more before manager Alan Ball decided to conserve his energies after a bout of flu that had threatened to keep him on the sidelines.

Illness or not, this was a Le Tissier masterclass. It had Ball drooling. "The lad is special," he said. "I can't champion his cause [for a place in the England team] any more.

"I can't think you will see a better ball player anywhere than for the fourth goal. That is what I call world class from a lad who is a bit special."

That goal, four minutes before half-time with the fourth-round tie already effectively over as a contest, was a beauty.

Le Tissier appeared to have two options — to chip Jürgen Sommer for his hat-trick or float the ball beyond the far post for the on-rushing Neil Heaney.

He chose the latter, the ball delivered to perfection for Heaney to steal in unobserved and bury his header

beyond the exposed and disorientated goalkeeper.

Le Tissier had started the goal rout after six minutes, side-footing the ball through a crowd of players after Neil Shipperley had capitalised on Julian James's slip and rolled the ball back to the edge of the penalty area.

The third goal, a penalty, was also Le Tissier's. It was his 21st of the season and the one that ended Luton's resolve after Mitchell Thomas had handled a cross. Predictably it had been sent over by Le Tissier.

In between, Jim Magilton had scored the second — the only one, while he was on the pitch, that did not have Le Tissier's mark on it.

This time Heaney crossed from the left for Magilton to slot home from 15 yards. Half-time barely disrupted Southampton's rhythm, the fifth goal arriving five minutes after the break.

Le Tissier's cross was missed at the near post by Shipperley, but his air shot still put off Sommer and Ken Monkou merely had to nudge the ball over the line.

Le Tissier departed the scene to a standing ovation but within five minutes David Hughes, the man who had replaced him, completed the rout with a drive from the right-hand side of the penalty area.

Southampton eased up after that and Kerry Dixon, a half-time substitute, might have cut the deficit when put through by David Preece, but he chipped his shot wide from 25 yards. It was one of the few chances Luton had.

Ball found praise for the whole team: "They are young boys, hungry boys. You know what hungry fighters are like, they are like that. Once they had them by the throat, they wouldn't let them go."

Southampton play Tottenham at White Hart Lane in the fifth round on Saturday week. They will not travel up to North London without hope, having won there in September.

Southampton: Grobbelaar; Dodd, Hall, Monkou, Kenna; Magilton, Widdrington, Maddison (Tisdale 69), Heaney; Le Tissier (Hughes 62), Shipperley. **Sub:** Beasant (g). **Booked:** Hall.

Luton Town: Sommer; James (Dixon 45), Peake, Johnson, Thomas; Telfer, Oakes, Waddock, Preece; Biggins (Thorpe 69), Marshall. **Sub:** Davis (g). **Booked:** James, Telfer.

Referee: G Ashby (Worcester).