

Battling Town deserve point

By PETER KENYON

Luton 2 Huddersfield 2

THE ten men of Luton gritted it out in a Kenilworth Road mudbath after skipper Steve Davis departed for an early bath just four minutes into the second half.

Referee David Allison's questionable decision to give Davis the red card for a professional foul on Andy Booth looked likely to lead to defeat.

Two quality Huddersfield goals in 15 minutes proved that point all too clearly and Hatters were reeling.

But substitute David Oldfield served up a late Christmas cracker of an equaliser 11 minutes from the end.

With Hatters 2-1 down, Dwight Marshall steamed down the right flank and whipped in a low cross.

Braving a possee of boots at the near post, Oldfield risked head and shoulders and dived in to rocket a bullet like header into the net.

New boss Lennie Lawrence's decision to throw Oldfield and Boncho Guentchev into the frame in place of Paul McLaren and John Taylor looked to have backfired badly when barely a minute after the switch - on 64 minutes - Lee Makel drew Ian Feuer and chipped the visitors into a 2-1 lead.

Having already sacrificed the impressive Tony Thorpe immediately following the sending off, Lawrence seemed to have played his cards too early.

The plan to shore up the defence with the introduction of Richard Harvey and cling on to Marshall's 36th minute goal was all too soon foiled by Huddersfield.

On 57 minutes England under 21 international Andy Booth launched a fierce left foot shot into the top corner to level things up.

And when Makel added the second, Luton faced the prospect of relying on two reserve strikers in their quest for a share of the points.

On 74 minutes Guentchev had the crowd in hysterics after his clear effort on goal ended 20 yards high of the target.

Earlier it had all looked so bright

for Hatters with Taylor, Thorpe and Marshall all creating chances.

Oakes seemed to revel in his new role on the right wing, and Mitchell Thomas, recalled for only his second League appearance of the season, added attacking thrust down the left.

On 36 minutes, Darren Patterson turned two men inside his own half and released McLaren in the middle of the Huddersfield half.

McLaren powered forward, looked up and flicked Marshall clear down the right of the box.

Marshall raced outside the challenge of Steve Jenkins and as keeper Steve Francis raced off his line to smother the danger, he fumbled, leaving Marshall to poke into the empty net.

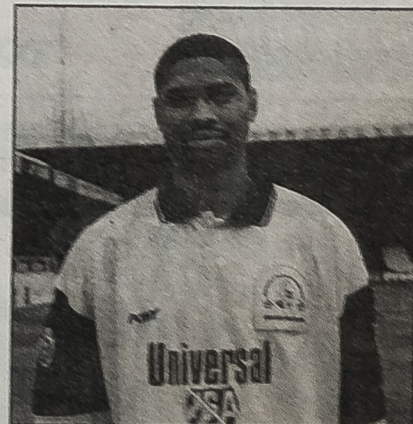
Five minutes before the break, Paul Dalton had the ball in the net only to be flagged for offside.

And a minute before the break, Feuer palmed away another Dalton effort at full stretch.

Luton's battling display will have given the new manager a good deal of satisfaction, even though he will be disappointed that all three points were not secured.



● David Oldfield



● Dwight Marshall