



● Stuart Douglas challenges Colchester keeper Carl Emberton



● Luton players look on as Marvin Johnson is shown the red card

■ Thrills galore: Luton gain first win of the season in exciting clash with Colchester

**Luton Town 2
Colchester United 0**
HATTERS gained their first home win of the season in a thoroughly entertaining and controversial match.

After Marvin Johnson was sent off for a professional foul on 53 minutes, Luton finally added fire to their good football, and goals from Stuart Douglas and skipper Steve Davis earned them a well-deserved victory.

Luton started as brightly as the afternoon sunshine. Within the first few minutes Matthew Spring had a fierce drive stopped by Scott Stamps.

Gavin McGowan then forced an excellent save out of Carl Emberson from the rebound, and both Spring and McGowan blazed wide from the edge of the box.

Evidently a shoot on sight policy was being employed by the Hatters.

McGowan was looking much the better for his run of games in the first team but he was caught out of position on 12 minutes, leaving Paul Abrahams with only Kelvin Davis in front of him. Fortunately, the shot was hurried, wide and high.

Right on the half-time whistle, Luton should have taken the lead. Spring fired in a rocket shot that Emberson could only Pary. Phil Gray then produced the miss of the season as three Hatters' forwards were queuing up to touch in the rebound.

The second half started with goal-chances at either end. Firstly, David Greene had let his old side off the hook with a poor pass after the Luton keeper had missed his punch from a partially blocked free-kick.

At the other end, Ray McKinnon's drive was kicked off the line, but the whistled had already blown for a Stuart Douglas foul.

Out of the blue, Johnson was sent off leaving Luton with ten men and 37 minutes to play. He had control of the ball just inside of his own half, but instead of passing back to Davis he elected to try to beat Neil Gregory. When he failed, he pulled the United striker back when he had a clear run on goal.

This brought the fight out of the

Hatters turn in a sparkling display

Report by BILL COLE

remaining Hatters. They defended as if their lives depended on it and hit Colchester time and again on the break.

Stuart Douglas combined with Sean Evers to score the lead goal on the hour, and skipper Steve Davis headed in a corner to clinch the points with nine minutes to go.

Luton started with one change from the 11 who finished the game at Reading. The ill-fated Marvin Johnson resumed in central defence after taking a knock in the win at Oxford.

There is better news of the Hatters injured from last week, with Dwight Marshall now expected back in a fortnight with a hamstring only strained not torn.

Paul McLaren's knee problem, after looking career-threatening at one stage, will probably only keep him out for around six weeks.

After Luton's flying start yesterday, it soon became evident that Colchester would be content with a goalless draw. They defended in depth and played long balls up to the 6ft 5ins Mark Sale when they could.

Despite Luton's polished football producing little where it mattered, they should still have turned around in front.

Steve Davis nodded over when well placed and when another of his headers

was drifting wide of the far post, Liam George was prevented from getting to the loose ball by the United keeper.

Gray's miss of the season and Johnson's dismissal was only the precursor to a grandstand finish.

With the adrenaline flowing, Luton broke clear with men over, but when Evers found George in front of goal the youngster made a hash of his finish.

But it mattered not. Seconds later an interchange of passes between Evers and Douglas took a kind bounce off a defender and Douglas, clean through, joyfully found the corner of the net with a low drive on the hour mark.

Douglas, with a splendid run, nearly made it two. He beat Greene and took the ball on into the area, but this time he shot wide at the far post.

Big United striker Sale, yards off side but with no sight of a flag, had all the time in the world to put United back in the game. But he hesitated and was beaten by a combination of the two Davis'.

That miss became even more important when moments later Luton earned a corner. McKinnon's kick was firmly met by Davis' forehead and his aim was true to produce his second goal of the season and clinch the points.

Luton: K Davis, Alexander, McGowan, Spring, S Davis, Johnson, McKinnon, Evers, Douglas (Fotiadis 72), Ray (Thomas 56), George (Bacdque 79).

Attendance: 5,005.



● Steve Davis puts in a challenge with ex-Hatters player David Greene