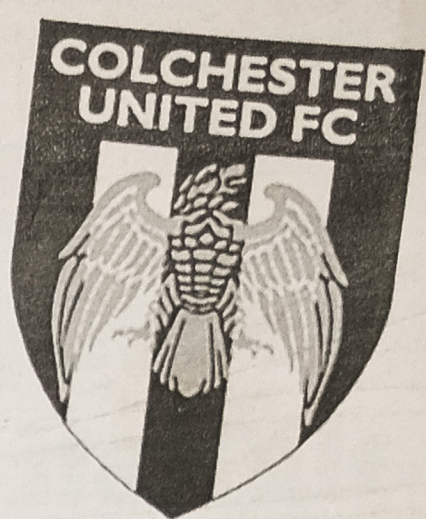


U's fail to break down 10 men



HATTERS ARE JUST TOO STRONG

98/99

Luton Town 2 Colchester 0 by CARL MARSTON

COLCHESTER United had not played a league match at Kenilworth Road for 32 years, although they had visited for a Coca-Cola Cup tie last season.

The U's, fifth before the start of play, were unchanged for this afternoon's Division Two clash in Hertfordshire. It was the same starting line-up that had been unluckily edged out 1-0 by Fulham last weekend.

However, there was a change on the substitutes bench. Striker Tony Adcock missed out with a strained hamstring, and his place was taken by fellow front runner Karl Duguid.

United were also without long-term casualty Aaron Skelton (knee injury), who used to play for Luton, striker Tony Lock (ham string) and Dutchman Arafath Heuvel (calf).

Hosts Luton were without winger Dwight Marshall and midfielder Paul McLaren.

Both suffered injuries

Luton Town: K. Davis, Alexander, McGowan, Spring, S Davis, Johnson, McKinnon, Evers, Douglas, Gray, George. Subs: Fotiadis, Bacque, Thomas.

Colchester United: Emberson, Dunne, Stamps, Williams, Greene, Buckle, Wilkins, D Gregory, Sale, N Gregory, Abrahams. Subs: Haydon, Duguid, Forbes. Referee: Roger Furnandiz (Doncaster).

during the previous Saturday's 3-0 defeat at Reading.

It was a special occasion for Colchester centre-half David Greene. The Irishman was celebrating his 100th league appearance for the U's at his former club. Greene was signed from Luton for £30,000.

Luton pressed forward early on and created two good scoring chances within a few seconds of each other. First, U's skipper Wilkins blocked McGowan's low drive, and then Emberson saved well from Spring's cleanly-struck shot.

Dunne conceded the games first corner on four minutes, from which Spring fired harmlessly wide from ten

yards out.

At the other end, keeper K. Davis was put under pressure by Dunne's looping cross into the six-yard box. He dropped the ball but was able to recover before Sale could capitalise.

Otherwise, United were forced to defend in numbers and Emberson was forced into another smart save when gathering a goal-bound shot from Spring.

In the 12th minute the ball broke kindly for Abrahams in the box but he cracked a shot well wide from the narrowest of angles.

It was an ideal afternoon for playing and watching football. The sun was out and the U's supporters were in good voice Emberson's goal in the first half.

Youngster George was seeing a lot of the ball on the left flank for Luton and Emberson was relieved to catch one of his dangerous crosses in the 17th minute. Full-back Dunne certainly had his work cut out dealing with the tricky winger.

The Hatters almost scored from their third corner of the game in the 20th minute.

Johnson side-footed from 20 yards out through a crowd of players and Emberson seemed to get the faintest of touches to divert the ball around his far post.

The U's enjoyed their first real pressure of the match midway through the first period. Stamps delivered a pin-point cross from the left for Sale to attack, but his header ballooned over the bar.

A neat build-up from Sale and Dunne carved out an opportunity for D Gregory. However, his volley disappeared over the stand and into the road beyond, no mean feat.

Stamps needed treatment after taking a knock on his right leg in the 32nd minute, which he received from Brian Owen on the touch-line.

And Davis squandered a golden chance to break the deadlock while the U's were down to ten men. McKinnon swung over a heaving cross and S Davis escaped his marker to head over the bar from eight yards out. It was a glaring miss from the Luton defender.

The U's earned their first corner as late as the 35th minute, but Greene could not direct his header on target from Buckle's cross.

A goalmouth scramble in the U's box caused Emberson to stretch in the 40th minute. He seemed to damage his leg in the process, but was able to continue after treatment.

A deep cross by Alexander caused problems in the Colchester penalty area on 44 minutes. Gray rose high to head back across goal, only for Emberson to comfortably save.

Luton should have scored in the third minute of injury time. Emberson could only block Spring's powerful drive and Gray only had to tap in. But he somehow managed to place the ball wide with the ball taking a deflection on its way for a corner. It was a lucky let-off for the visitors.

It had been a fairly subdued first half. The U's had not registered a shot on target, and had been content to soak up the pressure.

Luton had earned nine corners but had found no way past Emberson. Half time: **Luton Town 0, Colchester United 0**

The U's made a change at the start of the second half. Stamps, who had taken a knock during the first period was replaced by Haydon at left-back.

The visitors were awarded a free kick in a dangerous



Colchester's David Greene celebrated his 100th league appearance at Luton today

position on 46 minutes. Buckle's shot clattered against the wall and Luton managed to scramble the ball away.

N Gregory sprung the Hatters offside trap in the 50th minute. He squared for Williams, and the former Ipswich mid-fielder's shot was deflected wide off a defender's boot.

Keeper K Davis made a marvellous save to deny Greene a goal from the ensuing corner. Greene met Buckle's cross with a powerful header that K Davis did well to fingertip over his bar.

Luton were reduced to ten men in the 53rd minute when Johnson was shown the red card by referee Roger Furnandiz.

N Gregory escaped the attention of Johnson, and the U's striker was then hauled to the ground by the Luton centre-half. Otherwise, N Gregory would have had a clear route to goal. Therefore, the referee had no hesitation in sending off Johnson.

That meant Luton having to reshuffle at the back. In the 56th minute Thomas came on to replace striker Gray. Substitute Thomas was employed as a central defender.

On the hour, Abrahams

capped a strong run with a shot that whistled several feet over the top.

Ten-man Luton then took the lead in the 61st minute with DOUGLAS netting from eight yards out.

Evers worked his way into the U's box and when the ball broke for Douglas he calmly slotted home past Emberson into the far corner of the net.

Despite their numerical disadvantage, Luton continued to attack and Emberson had to save at his near post from Alexander's cross.

The visitors made a second substitution in the 65th minute with Forbes replacing Dunne, and attacking measure.

Wilkins spurned a good chance to equalise seconds later when he headed wide from Buckle's corner.

Front runner Douglas could have bagged his second goal of the game in the 68th minute. Greene misjudged an attempted clearance and suddenly Douglas was free. He homed in on goal but dragged his shot wide of the far post.

In the 71st minute Sale burst into Luton's penalty area. He shrugged off two challenges but could not beat keeper K Davis with his final

shot.

Fotiadis replaced goal-scorer Douglas in the 74th minute, and a minute later Colchester made their third and final substitution when Duguid came on for N Gregory.

Substitute Forbes was in the action in the 78th minute. He directed a free header wide of goal from Buckle's corner as United began searching desperately for an equaliser.

The game's final substitution came in the 79th minute when Frenchman Bacque replaced George.

S DAVIS scored a killer second goal for Luton in the 81st minute.

Luton's centre-half climbed high to meet McKinnon's corner with a thunderous header that soared into the far corner of the net. Emberson was at full stretch but he could not get his hands to S Davis's accurate effort.

Abrahams had a shot saved by K Davis in the last minute but Colchester never looked like finding a way back into the game during the later stages.

Result:

Luton Town 2, Colchester United 0.

Attendance: 5,005

MARSTON'S AFTER-MATCH ANALYSIS

U's fail to take their chances

COLCHESTER United were sunk by ten-man Luton Town at Kenilworth Road this afternoon.

As is so often the case the team reduced to ten men received a lift from their misfortune, and United could not cope with Luton's fired-up but depleted side.

Hatters defender Marvin Johnson was sent off in the 53rd minute after hauling down Neil Gregory when the U's striker had a clear route to goal.

But the home side responded in devastating fashion. Stuart Douglas swept home the opener in the 61st minute and centre-half Steve Davis added a

second with a superb header from Ray McKinnon's corner on 81 minutes.

Colchester had not created a chance of any note in the first half, but they had opportunities in the second period.

Mark Sale burst clear of Luton's defence only to shoot straight at impressive keeper Kelvin Davis and both Richard Wilkins and Steve Forbes were off target with free headers.

All in all, this was a disappointing afternoon for Steve Wignall's men.

It was United's second successive defeat following the 1-0 reverse at home to Fulham from the previous weekend.