



● **NEW KID'S ON THE BALL:** Jimmy Cox (left, with ball) starts his first league game, while (right) Luton's young tigers get stuck in to the heat of battle during yesterday's game.

**BLACKPOOL 1
LUTON TOWN 0**
By BILL COLE

IT was the irresistible force against the immovable object at sunny Bloomfield Road yesterday.

With both sides going into the match on a five-game unbeaten league run, it looked all over the predictable goalless draw until two minutes from time when Blackpool grabbed an undeserved win.

Graham Alexander was the villain of the piece.

He allowed Chris Malkin to rob him inside the penalty area 17-year-old Adam Nowland took his pass and beat Kelvin Davis comprehensively from ten yards out. It was a fairytale finish from substitute Nowland, only on the field for four minutes previously.

The Hatters made their usual fast start and with Matthew Spring prompting attacks in outstanding fashion, they threatened to take an early lead.

Jimmy Cox, making his full league debut and playing down the Town right, produced a cross that posed the home defence some problems, the ball fell to Stuart Douglas.

But he couldn't get any power into his shot.

Worthington's best too strong for Town

Then Spring fed Phil Gray with a great ball but the Northern Ireland international's shot was brilliantly turned aside by Steve Banks.

With Blackpool showing limited ambition for a home side by playing a back four plus a sweeper, their main threat came from set plays, including long throws from either wing.

But the Town defence soon learnt that ploy, from an early chance created for the Seasiders, when a long throw was flicked on into the area.

Town were soon back on the attack themselves though, and Steve Davis foraged forward to bring another save from Banks.

The Hatters one-touch football was being countered by some close and sometimes physical attention from the Tangerines' back line.

Spring worked himself an excellent opening on 23 minutes but his deliberate shot from the edge of the area fizzed wide.

Sean Evers and Steve Davis then combined to give Phil Gray another opportunity but his fierce scissor-kick was also marginally off target.

Blackpool then went on to create three great chances themselves before the break.

Firstly, Kelvin Davis saved well at Malkin's feet, then Malkin and Martin Aldridge both had golden chances.

They both fired wildly high and wide from right in front.

In the second half, the match had nil-nil written all over it.

Both defences had tightened. But before the goal that settled it, the Hatters created the best chance of the half.

After good work from a corner from Davis and Marvin Johnson, Gray just couldn't turn the ball in.

The Town started with the same line-up that narrowly lost at Ipswich on Tuesday night.

This meant that 18-year-old Jimmy Cox continued to deputise for the injured Ray McKinnon, making his full league debut in the process. Thus, the Luton midfield consisted of three 18 year olds and a 'veteran' of 20.

As it turned out, there was just too much inexperience in the side to get the result they deserved and cautious tactics allied to superb defending by the home side just prevailed.

Before the interval, Luton at least forced the home keeper to save, whereas the Seasiders' forwards were guilty of missing the target

from some good positions. The Seasiders' manager Nigel Worthington had obviously done his homework and after the break, his defenders put theory into practice.

Whenever Luton played their powerful tactics of pushing their skipper Steve Davis up front, he was superbly marked both in the air and on the ground.

By doing this, the Tangerines negated the Town's main threat. After the game, Worthington said: "It was a good result because Luton are an excellent side and we had to ride our luck at times to get the win." Luton Town: K. Davis, Alexander, McGowan, Spring, S. Davis, Johnson, Cox, Evers, Douglas (Marshall 69), Gray (Bacque 82), McIndoe (Thomas 78). Booked: McIndoe (66). Att: 5,695.