

Luton win puts U's under pressure again

U'S SCORE TWO 99/00 BUT STILL LOSE

LUTON 3
COLCHESTER . . . 2

LUTON: Roberts, Boyce, Watts, Doherty, M. Johnson, George, McLaren, Spring, Gray, White, Taylor. Subs: McGowan, McIndoe, Kandol, Scarlett, Abbey.
COLCHESTER: Brown, Keith, R. Johnson, Dozzell, Gregory, Duguid, Lock, Skelton, McGavin, G. Johnson, Sodje. Subs: Walker, Arnott, Moralee, Dunne, Lua Lua.

Referee: Mr. Graham Barber (Tring, Herts.)

Attendance: 5,125.

CARL MARSTON REPORTS FROM KENILWORTH ROAD

COLCHESTER United centre-half Efe Sodje was back at the club that released him just a few weeks earlier as the U's took on Luton at Kenilworth Road this afternoon.

Sodje was named in a three-man central defence with manager Steve Whitton keeping faith with the same side that beat Gillingham 2-1 last weekend. That was Sodje's United's debut.

The one change was on the bench with defender Joe Dunne back in the squad for the first time in four matches since twisting an ankle at Preston.

Luton included Alan White in their starting line-up. Defender White played five games on loan for the U's earlier in the season.

However, another ex-U's star Adam Locke was not playing because of a strained hamstring.

It was a mild afternoon in Bedfordshire and the pitch had been well watered before kick-off. There was a good Colchester following in the end that the U's were defending in the first half.

Keith won the visitors a free kick on two minutes, from which Skelton's shot was charged down before it could cause keeper Roberts any problems.

It was an encouraging opening few minutes for Colchester and only the woodwork denied them the lead in the fourth minute. Midfielder G. Johnson's low angled drive beat Roberts but thudded off the near post and neither he nor Jason Dozzell could bury the rebound.

But Luton responded in clinical fashion by taking the lead with their first attack of the game, following a free kick conceded by Sodje.

Spring's free kick from the right looped over Dozzell and defender WATTS headed home

unmarked from the edge of the six-yard box. It was a case of poor defending from the U's.

Dozzell squandered an excellent chance to equalise soon afterwards when he scooped the ball over the bar from Lock's low cross.

A slip by Sodje enabled Doherty a clear route to goal, but his shot was superbly blocked by covering defender Skelton. There was still danger for the U's, but McLaren slammed the rebound wide.

On 20 minutes, Gregory almost sneaked on the end of a Dozzell through ball deep inside the Luton penalty area, but the U's skipper was unable to apply the finishing touch.

It was an entertaining first period and Brown almost spilt a cracking long range drive from the impressive Spring. He gathered at the second attempt.

Home fans were appealing for a penalty when Boyce took a tumble in the box under a challenge from Hatters' old boy Sodje. However, referee Graham Barber was not amused.

Brown had to be at his best to deny Luton a second goal in the 26th minute. M. Johnson dribbled past a couple of U's defenders and tried to chip Brown, but the U's keeper was alert enough to save on his goal-line.

Sodje had been caught in possession a few times in this half, much to the delight of the home crowd, and he was again robbed on 33 minutes by Boyce. However, his cross was too deep and the threat was ended when Taylor miscued a shot several feet wide of the far post.

Luton were looking by far

the more creative and target-man Doherty turned Skelton before firing goalwards with a low shot that Brown did well to divert away for a corner at his near post. It was a fine save from Brown.

The U's earned the first corner of the game in the 38th minute. Keith's cross found its way through Sodje, but his shot was charged down.

United earned a flurry of corners towards the end of the half, and keeper Roberts flapped at the fourth of these delivered by Duguid from the right. But the U's could not capitalise.

The U's fifth corner in the 43rd minute broke to G. Johnson on the edge of the box, but his pile-driver was blocked by a melee of defenders.

In the last minute of the first period, U's wing-back Duguid was booked for chopping down Taylor. Half time:

**Luton Town 1,
Colchester United 0**

The U's made a substitution for the start of the second half with Dunne replacing Gregory. The U's skipper seemed to pick up a foot injury before the break.

Dunne's introduction led to a change of formation. Duguid was pushed into attack to make way for Dunne at right wing-back, while Dozzell was moved from the front-line into central midfield.

Within a few seconds of the restart, it needed a combination of Brown and the woodwork to deny Luton a second goal. Watts let fly with a cracking drive from Spring's corner, but Brown somehow managed to palm the ball onto the post. It was an instinctive save from Brown and the U's managed to scramble away the loose ball.

McGAVIN equalised for Colchester in the 53rd minute with a delightful finish.

Lock created the chance,

running at the Luton defence before squaring for the onrushing McGavin to hit a right-footed shot first time into the roof of the net from just inside the box.

It was McGavin's 15th goal of the season and he celebrated in style behind the goal that was accommodating the visiting supporters.

The U's were breathing a huge sigh of relief in the 56th minute. Boyce's crisp header clipped the far post with Brown well beaten, and the ball rolled to safety.

LOCK capitalised on hesitation in the Hatters' defence to put the U's in front on the hour mark.

Keeper Roberts and former U's defender White got in a mix-up with neither prepared to meet a through ball. Lock took advantage, nipping in between the two and rounding Roberts to slot into an empty net.

It was Lock's second goal of the season, and in fact his second in successive matches.

The U's made a second change in the 63rd minute with Arnott coming on for G. Johnson in midfield.

Stunned by this turnaround, Luton looked for a quick equaliser and George was not far off target with a 20-yarder in the 69th minute that flew over the bar.

At the other end, Duguid stabbed a cross from Arnott across the face of goal, and then McGavin forced a diving save from Roberts with a swirling 25-yard shot.

It was end-to-end stuff. McGavin sent Lock clear with a sweet through ball, but Roberts gathered the cross before Duguid could pounce at the far post.

Sodje left the pitch to receive treatment and it was while he was off and the U's were down to ten men that Luton grabbed an equaliser in the 75th minute.

Keith lost possession

on the left edge of the penalty area and Spring's cross was bundled home by Irishman DOHERTY from point blank range.

United made their third and final substitution two minutes later when Lua Lua came on for the injured Sodje.

George squandered a guilt-edged opportunity to steal the lead for Luton in the 80th minute. George sprung the U's offside trap and was clean through on goal, but he lifted his shot over the bar with just Brown to beat.

But Luton did take the lead in the 82nd minute when TAYLOR blasted home despite appeals for offside from Colchester players.

Taylor beat Brown all ends up with a ferocious drive from the narrowest of angles that flew into the top corner of the net.

Dunne was booked for dissent for arguing his case for offside.

On 85 minutes, Lock had a goal-bound drive deflected over the top for a corner.

And seconds later the same player was booked for an off-the-ball incident with Taylor. The Luton midfielder was also shown the yellow card following this incident.

Arnott sliced a 30-yard shot wide on 88 minutes as the U's sought to retrieve the situation.

In stoppage time, Luton cleared their lines after a goal-mouth scramble with neither Lua Lua nor Duguid able to apply the finishing touch.

In the second minute of stoppage time, Duguid dragged a left-footed shot wide. That proved to be the U's last chance. Result:

**Luton Town 3,
Colchester United 2**