

Fine away win for United as Luton's promotion hopes dented

KENILWORTH TEA PARTY

COLCHESTER United welcomed back long-term injury victims Scott Fitzgerald and Karl Duguid for this afternoon's Division Two contest at Luton Town.

Club Captain Fitzgerald had not figured at all this season after injuring a knee at Canvey Island in pre-season while Duguid was finally back after suffering medial ligament damage at Tranmere during the first week of the campaign.

The U's were missing left wing-back Joe Keith, who had failed to recover from a hip problem, and there was no place in the squad for last season's leading scorer Scott McGleish. Although McGleish travelled with the team, he was not in the final 16.

Ex-Colchester keeper Carl Emberson, who made 192 league appearances for the Essex Club, was on the substitute bench for Luton. He lost out in the starting line-up to Mark Ovendale. Another former Colchester player, Aaron Skelton, was out injured.

It was a damp, gloomy afternoon in Bedfordshire, but the U's were wearing their distinctive red away shirts.

The Hatters earned a corner in the very first minute, but the U's easily cooped with an inswinging delivery from Nicholls and Izzet completed the clearance.

On three minutes, home striker Fotiadis brushed past the challenge of White and unleashed a terrific shot which Brown did well to cling onto.

Luton were dominating in the early stages and front runner Crowe got the better of Fitzgerald inside the area before aiming his shot across goal and wide from a very narrow angle.

Duguid was behind United's first attack of the match in the seventh minute. He won a free kick and then delivered the set piece into the box, only for keeper Ovendale to punch away in emphatic fashion.

Morgan did well to rob right-back Boyce near Luton's penalty area, and then appeared to be impeded as he ran towards goal. Referee Mr Coburn waved play on, much to Morgan's disgust.

Duguid curled over another free kick, following a foul on Morgan, from which Rapley volleyed back into the six-yard box from the far post, only for Luton to scramble the ball away.

The Hatters won their second corner in the 14th minute. Midfielder Spring eyed up the

target from the edge of the box following the corner routine, only to drag his low shot well wide of goal.

That was the last that was seen of Spring as he was replaced shortly afterwards by sub. Hughes. Spring was obviously carrying an injury.

White, playing his 100th game for Colchester, ironically at his old club, looped forward a useful ball which defender Kimble was happy to smash away for a corner, United's first of the game. But Ovendale punched away the ensuing cross.

At the other end, Brown pulled off a fine save in the 20th minute. Brkovic's cross from the left was allowed to float into the six-yard box and Robinson's downward header was superbly palmed away by Brown.

Hatters midfielder Nicholls had committed a number of fouls in the first 25 minutes, without being booked. He conceded another free kick for a challenge of Warren, from which Duguid tried his luck from 25 yards out with a shot that Ovendale caught at the second attempt.

The U's had a lucky let-off on the half-hour mark. Brown showed good reactions to block

a shot from Robinson at point blank range, following a low cross by Boyce, and then Brkovic saw his shot from the rebound take a deflection over the bar.

Substitute Hughes delivered Luton's fifth corner of the game and United were relieved to see centre-half Coyne's header balloon over the bar.

Luton were stepping up the pressure and Warren was hasty in hoofing away a cross by Fotiadis with Crowe lurking in the penalty area.

The Hatters deservedly took the lead thanks to a smart finish from FOTIADIS in the 35th minute.

The U's defence allowed Boyce to run at them and his low cross was controlled by Fotiadis who beat Brown with a precise low shot into the far corner of the net.

It was no more than Luton warranted for their dominance during the first period.

White was the first player to be booked when he crudely brought down Boyce near the right edge of the U's penalty area. The U's half-cleared this free kick and Brown then got his body behind Boyce's downward header from eight yards out.

Colchester had not played well in the first half so they were handed a life-line in the fifth minute of stoppage time. DUGUID was the hero with a fine equaliser.

The goal stemmed from Robinson's loss of temper. Luton's midfielder was booked for dissent after arguing with the linesman, and as a result referee Mr Coburn brought the free kick forward another 10-yards.

This gave Duguid a chance to curl a free kick from just inside the penalty area around

the defensive wall. And he did this with a delightful effort that left keeper Ovendale rooted to the spot as the ball flew low past him.

It was a cracking finish from Duguid in what was his first start for four months following his injury anguish. He struck the free kick cleanly with his right foot and celebrated in style in front of the U's travelling supporters. Half time:

Luton Town 1, Colchester United 1
Colchester made a substitution at the start of the second half with Baldwin replacing Warren in central defence.

A strong run by Morgan earned Colchester a corner within seconds of the restart. Duguid's cross was too deep for White, who was lurking at the far post.

Crowe should have regained the lead for Luton in the 51st minute. He was standing in front of goal but the cross came to him a little too quickly and his effort flew at an angle off his head and away from the net.

A neat turn by Rapley started a Colchester break-away. Duguid and Morgan showed some strong running, ferrying the ball to the edge of the penalty area, but Stockwell was unable to benefit with keeper Ovendale breaking off his line to gather.

However, some excellent work from veteran Stockwell led to United scoring a second goal in the 58th minute.

Stockwell skipped past the onrushing Ovendale and managed to cross the ball from the by-line with Luton's keeper hopelessly out of position.

The alert MORGAN was on hand to nod home Stockwell's cross bravely from just a couple of feet out. It was

CARL MARSTON REPORTS FROM KENILWORTH ROAD

Luton 1
Colchester . . . 2

Luton Town: Ovendale, Neilson, Spring, Nicholls, Robinson, Coyne, Fotiadis, Crowe, Boyce, Brkovic, Kimble. Subs: Emberson, Holmes, Hughes, Hillier, Mansell.

Colchester United: Brown, Fitzgerald, Warren, White, Duguid, Stockley, Izzet, Bowry, Stockwell, Morgan, Rapley. Subs: Pinault, Coote, Atangana, Baldwin, McKinney.

Referee: Mr M Cowburn

Attendance: 5,890

02/03

Colchester United were under the cosh for most of the match, but they defended manfully to snatch a precious win at Luton Town this afternoon.

Luton dominated for large chunks and deservedly took the lead when striker Andrew Fotiadis fired home in the 35th minute.

Yet Colchester, over-run in the first half grabbed an equaliser in first half stoppage time thanks to a marvellous free-kick from Karl Duguid who was playing his first game for four months following a knee injury.

The U's continued to defend impressively in the second half, and they came up with an unlikely winner in the 58th minute. Dean Morgan was in the right place to nod home Mick Stockwell's cross with keeper Mark Ovendale out of position.

The Hatters spurned countless chances to peg the U's back. Visiting keeper Simon Brown made several fine saves on what was his 100th game for the club, and Scott Fitzgerald enjoyed his return to first team action with a rock solid display in the heart of defence.

It was Colchester's third away win of the season and their second on the trot following a three two success at Notts County last month.

Morgan's fourth goal of the season.

A minute later and Luton midfielder Hughes was the third player to be booked, for a foul.

U's manager Whitton introduced his second substitute of the afternoon on the hour mark, striker Coote came on for Stockwell.

Ex-Cambridge left-back Kimble lifted across into the penalty area, aiming for Croatian danger-man Brkovic, but there was White to head emphatically away for Colchester.

Luton were pressing for an equaliser and Nicholls screwed a shot wide from 20-yards out in the 70th minute.

The U's were at times hanging on desperately and White was again in the right place to snuff out a cross by Boyce.

Shortly afterwards, Fitzgerald performed acrobatics when hooking away a cross from goalscorer Fotiadis.

The U's did enjoy a little spell of pressure and Duguid was narrowly off target with another long range free kick that had keeper Ovendale scurrying across the goal.

The ball flew only a foot wide of target.

Boyce trapped a cross with his back to goal in the 78th minute. He tried to get in a shot from only six yards out, but substitute defender Baldwin intervened with a fine block.

Seconds later and Fotiadis headed over from point blank range, while under pressure from Stockley.

Brown scampered off his line to prod away before Fotiadis could pounce, and then on 82 minutes U's keeper Brown arched back to finger-tip away a powerful 20-yard shot from defender Coyne. That looked a goal all the way.

Luton were encamped in Colchester's half of the pitch and when Nicholls curled over their tenth corner of the game Brown punched away under his own bar before Boyce volleyed wide for Rapley.

In the 88th minute U's striker Rapley was booked for kicking the ball away. In the final minutes of normal time, Rapley was withdrawn to be replaced by substitute Pinault.

There was to be three minutes of stoppage time and in the first of these keeper Brown rather scuffed his clearance into touch.

From this throw-in Coyne again unleashed a thunderous shot from long range. The ball skidded across the turf but Brown was in the right place to smother the effort.

The U's held on to record only their third away victory of the season. Result:

Luton 1, Colchester 2