

TEAMS



MARK Allott, pictured, was a surprise inclusion in the Spireites starting 11 after missing three games with a

hamstring injury, which was expected to keep him out until the seasons end.

Player of the season Ian Evatt made a welcome return to central defence alongside Steve Blatherwick.

Gareth Davies could consider himself unlucky to be dropped to the bench after a decent display at Oldham last week. But the right back berth went to Kevin Dawson.

Mark Innes was also dropped to the bench to make way for Allott.

Lutons leading scorer Steve Howard, who scored the only goal against Chesterfield earlier this season, was ruled out with an ankle injury.



Chesterfield

Muggleton
Dawson
Blatherwick
Evatt
O'Hare
Allott
Hudson
Niven
Brandon
Reeves
Hurst

Subs. Innes, Davies, De Bolla, Robinson, Richmond



Luton Town

Brill
Neilson
Coyne
Boyce
Davis
Foley
Nicholls
S. Robinson
O'Leary
Forbes
Showunmi

Subs. Mansell, C. Davies, Keane, Leary, Hydgard

Referee:

Mr E N Evans (Manchester)

Spireites pull off their great escape

THE chances of Chesterfield avoiding the drop looked as cricked as the Town's steeple prior to the home side's noisy reception on to the Saltergate pitch.

After 45 games, it had come down to the last day, just like it did last year.

But this time, not only did the Blues have to win but they also had to rely on play off outsiders Port Vale to get at least a draw at Rushden and Diamonds and Tranmere to avoid defeat at home to Grimsby Town.

Brentford, fitting 2 points above the Spireites in the table were also in the equation, but they were expected to at least get the point they needed at home to Bournemouth.

The pre-match tension was tangible as an impeccably observed minutes silence was held for club president the Duke of Devonshire who passed away in the week.

Then came the Saltergate roar and the stage was set for the final episode of the great escape. Or at least that was how the script was written.

The home side started as if their lives depended on it. A swift move forward after just 40 seconds saw the ball break for Reeves who swept a deflected shot just wide from the edge of the box.

Evatt got close to connecting with O'Hares resulting corner but Boyce got his head in the way to concede a flag kick from the other side.

They came to nothing but another sweeping move in the 4th minute finished with a deep cross for Allott but he needed to be a foot taller to get any conviction on it.

A moment later, Allott was felled by Coyne 25 yards from goal after an industrious run by Brandon.

Hudson smacked the free kick harmlessly over the bar.

From a short corner in the 10th minute for Luton, Blatherwick won a commanding header that found Brandon on the left flank.

The little man instigated a flowing move up field that involved Hudson and Allot before the recalled right midfield man crossed for Hurst to some how get ahead of his marker and win a header but it needed Hudson,



who had continued his run to connect with the ball but he was inches short.

Another piercing run by Brandon was curtailed illegally by Luton's player of the year Boyce, for which he recieved the game's first booking. This time, O'Hare had a go and his left foot curler was well kept out by Brill diving to his right.

The return of Allot meant the return of the long throw and Hurst got on the end of one in the 23rd minute but his



MATT EVANS

at Saltergate

shot was tame and Brill saved easily.

O'Leary was booked two minutes later for going in late on Dawson, who did well to keep his cool.

The home crowd were not missing a trick and a huge penalty shout went up when

Boyce appeared to handle the ball.

The pleas were waved away by the referee.

Evatt send Hurst away with a raking pass and he cut the ball back for the on-rushing Brandon who was chopped down by Neilson right in front of the referee. Suprisingly, Mr Evans waved play on.

Forbes had Lutons best first half opportunity in the 49th minute but his 25 yard shot flew wide of the target.

O'Hare delivered an

On the attack . . .
Chesterfield's Evatt tries to get past Bridge

Picture: Dean Atkins

excellent ball into Lutons box a minute later and Hurst got there but his header was aimed straight at Brill.

Robinson then curled a shot just over Muggletons half.

Half-time

Chesterfield0 Luton0

It was pinball in the Luton box for the first five minutes of the second half as Evatt twice went close, first from Allott and then from O'Hare's ball.

In the 59th minute Niven conceded possession needlessly and Robinson worked an opening for Showunmi.

Evatt threw himself in at the ball and Muggleton narrowed the angle and their combined effort was just enough to direct the lanky strikers shot inches passed the post.

It could have been curtains for Chesterfield but with news filtering through that Tranmere had leveled at home to Grimsby and with Rushden loosing against Port Vale the Spireites desperately needed to score.

Evatt was certainly doing his best going close with another two half chances through headers.

Credit to Luton who defended as if they had more the play for than a top half of the table finish.

In the 74th minute, Showunmi went down under a challenge from Dawson and right back joint Blatherwicks name in the referees note book.

Brandon was sent packing a minute later by Neilson in the Luton box but the referee was having non of it as the kop pleaded.

Evatts determination shone again when he baldly charged down a Showunmi's free kick.

From a 79th minute corner, Evatt rose brilliantly but O'Leary cleared off the line with a fine header.

A long ball out of defence was flicked on by Evatt and HURST got a vital toe end to direct the ball past the keeper and to show the greatest of escapes to keep the Spireites in the second division.