

Morgan sinks Southampton

05/06

By John Ley

LUTON TOWN	3
SOUTHAMPTON	2

SOUTHAMPTON received another reminder of how difficult an immediate return to the Premiership might be as they were left still searching for their first win in the Championship. Four days after being held by Wolves, newly promoted Luton came from behind twice to secure a deserved victory.

A draw seemed likely until the last minute when Dean Morgan, signed recently from Reading, weaved his way past two defenders and sent a curling half-volley into the top corner.

Southampton had taken only 18 minutes to register their first goal of the campaign through Matt Oakley. It gave Southampton a boost in

a psychological battle between teams whose fortunes last season could not have been more varied. Luton, at home for the first time since winning League One, finished their title-winning season with six wins and a draw and lost only six times all season. By contrast, Southampton managed only six Premiership victories.

As a consequence, manager Harry Redknapp has lost 15 players and the side who started last night included only four players from last season. One of those, goalkeeper Antti Niemi, had been expected to join the exodus but he is still on the books and was soon called into action, blocking shots from Warren Feeney and Steve Robinson.

Play was halted briefly when referee Steve Bennett handed an object, believed to be a coin, to

police, but when the game resumed, Rory Delap had a shot deflected for a corner before Oakley scored. It resulted from patient approach play involving Nigel Quashie, Danny Higginbotham and David Prutton before Oakley dispatched the volley into the top right-hand corner.

Luton almost replied 10 minutes later when Morgan raced into the area before unleashing a low shot which Niemi did well to hold.

Southampton, for whom Dennis Wise was making his full debut, had to rely again on Niemi when the Finn made a marvellous save from Feeney's powerful header.

That Niemi had been forced to make some fine saves hinted at a Luton revival and it came in the 41st minute when Feeney fed Kevin Nicholls and the former Wigan midfielder finished in style. But in

the second minute of first-half added time, Southampton regained the lead. Wise crossed, Dean Brill failed to collect and Kenwyne Jones netted with a firm header.

Luton were frustrated soon after the restart when Ahmet Brkovic was cynically blocked by Tomasz Hajto. But the Croatian got the last laugh in the 53rd minute when he met Nicholls' free-kick at the far post to restore parity. After coming from behind a second time, Luton were in the ascendancy and Feeney and Steve Howard both went close before Morgan struck.

Luton Town (4-4-2): Brill; Foley, Davis, Heikkinen, Underwood; Brkovic, Nicholls, Robinson, Morgan; Howard, Feeney (Showunmi 88). **Subs:** Perrett, Vine, Seremet (g), Holmes. **Booked:** Nicholls, Davies.

Southampton (4-4-2): Niemi; Delap, Hajto, Powell, Higginbotham; Oakley, Wise, Quashie, Prutton (Walcott 62); Jones (Blackstock 67), Fuller. **Subs:** Smith (g), Cranie, Belmadi. **Booked:** Hajto. **Referee:** S Bennett (Orpington).