

CHAMPIONSHIP

United rekindle promotion fire

05/06

By Richard Holdsworth

SHEFFIELD UNITED

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LUTON TOWN

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THE charge of the Red and White Brigade continues. Two successive draws and the loss of their 100 per cent record at home against Cardiff last Saturday have had little effect on the confidence of Neil Warnock's Sheffield United, who relit the fires of their promotion campaign with an emphatic victory against Luton Town at Bramall Lane.

With two automatic promotion places in the offing and United and Reading already distancing themselves from the rest of the Championship, third-placed Luton knew this was a good opportunity to reduce the 10-point gap between themselves and the leaders.

The early signs were good for the Hatters, who played with an admirable willingness to attack. A promising start to the season has added to the belief that a play-off place is not beyond them, and Kevin Foley's brutal seventh-minute tackle on United's Alan Quinn suggested Mike Newell's side had no intention of being intimidated.

However, the quality Neil Warnock has at his disposal – highlighted before the game by his decision to drop Keith Gillespie to

accommodate the talented Paul Ifill in midfield – gradually began to tell. Ifill repaid his manager by performing with effortless style, setting up Phil Jagielka's close-range finish in the 34th minute and causing Luton problems throughout.

Sheffield United began the second half as they had finished the first, attacking on the break with alarming pace, and were rewarded with the all-important second goal when Alan Quinn's free kick was headed in by their captain, Chris Morgan. Any lingering hope for Luton was extinguished dramatically by substitute Vincent Pericard and Jagielka, who both finished with aplomb as they scored towards the end.

The pressure of front-running appears to be water off a duck's back to Warnock, who praised his side's second-half performance. "The opening 45 minutes were the worst we have played all season, despite leading," he said. "At half-time I asked them to play as a team and they responded with a cracking display."

Sheffield Utd (4-4-2): Kenny; Unsworth, Bromby, Morgan, Geary (Wright, 76); Quinn, Montgomery, Jagielka, Ifill; Shipperley (Pericard, 60), Kabba. **Subs:** Webber, Tonge, Gillespie.

Luton Town (4-4-2): Beresford; Underwood, Barnett, Coyne, Foley; Berkovic (Showunmi, 70), Heikkinen, Holmes, Edwards; Feeney (Vine, 70), Howard. **Subs:** Keane, Morgan, Brill (g).

Booked: Foley (15).

Referee: M Dean (Wirral).



Over the top: Kevin Foley of Luton goes in high on United's Alan Quinn