

PALACE STILL HAVE A PULSE

Crystal Palace2
Luton1

CLINTON Morrison scored a wonderful double as Crystal Palace maintained their faint play-off hopes with victory over 10-man Luton at Selhurst Park.

In a first half bereft of an attacking spark, the Republic of Ireland international broke the deadlock with a quick turn and shot in stoppage-time.

Luton had provided little as an attacking threat but were handed a gift of a goal when Mark Hudson comically put through his own net 10 minutes after the interval.

But the match found its turning point just moments later when Luton midfielder Richard Langley was sent off after a terrible late challenge on Matthew Lawrence, who left the pitch on a stretcher.

Peter Taylor's side made the most of their numerical advantage with Morrison scoring his second of the game in the 68th minute to ensure they ended a three-game losing sequence against the Hatters.

Tom Soares returned to the Palace line-up after completing a three-game suspension, while Luton were boosted by the return of young centre back Leon Barnett, who had not played this month due to a knee injury.

The hosts were dealt an early injury blow

when winger Mark Kennedy was forced to leave the pitch after he was on the receiving end of a clumsy challenge and was replaced by Danny Butterfield.

After a drab opening half-hour, Palace carved out a wonderful opportunity when James Scowcroft flicked the ball on to Morrison, who had found space with an opportunistic run but his shot looped just wide.

Both sides had failed to create much in front of goal in the opening period but Palace broke the deadlock when a free kick found its way through to Morrison, who swivelled and blasted his shot into the net.

After the break, Palace looked to build on their advantage with Butterfield feeding a pass to Dougie Freedman, who squirmed his way into the area before unleashing a shot which was expertly blocked by the impressive Barnett.

Moments later, Leon Cort saw a goalbound drive well saved by Marlon Beresford as the visitors managed to keep a slight grip on the game.

And they were gifted a way back into the match when Hudson scored a calamitous own goal in the 55th minute.

Lewis Emmanuel bent an innocuous looking cross into the area but Hudson nipped in ahead of goalkeeper Gabor Kiraly and deflected the ball into his own net with no Hatters players in sight.

But just seconds after the restart, Luton were reduced to 10 men when Langley, who had been earlier booked, was ordered off for an horrendous late challenge on Lawrence.

The challenge sent the Palace midfielder sprawling to the turf and after a lengthy delay he was taken from the pitch on a stretcher with what looked to be a bad injury.

Palace cashed in on their numerical advantage soon after when Morrison proved his poacher's instinct in the 68th minute.

Freedman, who was orchestrating most of Palace's best moves forward, sent in a ball

which Cort flicked on and a fully-stretched Morrison stabbed his shot into the net for his 83rd goal in Palace colours.

Palace then controlled proceedings against a disjointed looking Hatters outfit with Scowcroft unlucky to guide his 85th minute shot wide of the mark when his tireless workrate up until that point was worthy of a goal.

CLINTON MORRISON
 (right) celebrates scoring the second goal against Barnsley



Symons says Morrison should be applauded

CRYSTAL Palace assistant manager Kit Symons paid tribute to Clinton Morrison after the striker claimed a double at Selhurst Park.

He said: "Morrison comes alive in the box. It's been a frustrating season for him, but hopefully he can kick on from here. "We didn't play

fantastically well today, but we did more than enough to win the game.

"Until it's mathematically impossible to get promotion, we're going to keep grinding away."

Luton manager Mike Newell felt his side had been harshly treated, both by the result and the referee.

He said: "I thought we had enough of the game to take something from it.

"It was always going to be hard after we'd gone down to 10 men. The tackle was a clear booking.

"But I don't know what the first yellow card was for. I'm told it was for dissent, but surely you're allowed to contest a decision."