

BLACK CATS GO UP AS CHAMPIONS

Luton0
Sunderland5

By TOM COLLOMOSSE

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ROY Keane crowned his first season as a manager by leading Sunderland to the Championship title after their crushing win over relegated Luton saw them overtake Birmingham at the summit.

The Blues' 1-0 defeat at Preston meant Keane's team, who prevailed at Kenilworth Road thanks to a double from Daryl Murphy and goals from Anthony Stokes and substitutes Ross Wallace and David Connolly, finished two points above them, a week after both clubs had secured automatic promotion to the Premiership.

A remarkable run of just one defeat in 20 matches was the catalyst for Sunderland's march up the table, and the difference in class between Keane's side and their opponents was colossal.

The Black Cats boss made four changes to his side, recalling his former Manchester United team mate Dwight Yorke, as well as Grant Leadbitter and Stephen Wright, while Marton Fulop replaced Darren Ward in goal.

Sunderland fans packed out the 1800-capacity Oak Stand, and several pockets of them also made themselves heard among the Luton supporters in the main stand.

Unfortunately, it took less than five minutes for trouble to flare in that area, as two men threw punches at one another before one was ejected.

Shortly afterwards, six men were led out of the ground from the Kenilworth Stand lower tier behind the goal, which is supposed to contain only home supporters.

By that time, Sunderland were 2-0 up. Stokes gave them the perfect start by drilling home from 15-yards after exchanging passes with Murphy in the fourth minute.

Sunderland celebrate



And two minutes later, Murphy scored a brilliant second, collecting former Luton man Carlos Edwards' lay-off before unleashing a powerful drive from 25-yards which flew past Dean Brill and into the corner of the net.

Sunderland were clearly the superior side, and they almost scored a third when Edwards and Wright combined for Edwards to earn a corner when his angled shot was deflected past the post.

Luton had not troubled Fulop, but the goalkeeper was lucky in the 29th minute when he flapped at Chris Coyne's long free kick, although Calvin Andrew could not take advantage.

At the other end, Edwards set up Stokes, whose well-struck effort drew a sharp save from Brill, who then did well to hold onto Leadbitter's effort from the edge of the penalty area seconds later.

Sunderland began the second half as they had ended the first, scoring their third goal within a minute of the re-start.

Leadbitter released Stokes on the left, allowing the former Arsenal man to square the ball for Murphy, who tapped in from four-yards.

Stokes, Edwards and substitute David Connolly all wasted chances to make the scoreline more impressive as Sunderland continued to outclass their opponents, while for Luton, Coyne headed Matthew Spring's cross wide in the 73rd minute.

Sunderland scored their fourth 12 minutes from time when Wallace produced an outstanding strike from 30-yards a minute after replacing Edwards.

In the 86th minute, Connolly underlined Sunderland's superiority even further by heading in Leadbitter's free kick from the left.

Trophy debacle leaves Keane fuming

SUNDERLAND manager Roy Keane branded the failure to present his side with the Championship trophy "a disgrace" after their thumping win at Luton.

"It is a PR disaster that we did not pick it up today," said Keane.

"The supporters paid good money to travel here to watch us.

"I cannot get my head around why we were not able to receive the trophy. It is a disgrace.

"People mentioned safety, but I don't think that would have been a problem."

Luton manager Kevin Blackwell admitted the match had been "men against boys" as his relegated side were outclassed in virtually every department.

But the former Leeds boss was quick to heap praise on the work done by Keane and chairman Niall Quinn on Wearside.

He said: "Keane has been different class, but Quinn has to take monumental praise, because he has done a fantastic job.

"They have a good manager and a dynamic young board, and, at the moment, it looks like the perfect marriage."