

Where there's life there's hope

NOTTS COUNTY 0

LUTON TOWN 2

Martin 24, Craddock (pen) 44

League Two
Meadow Lane

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IT was one less sorrow and two for joy as Luton Town proved to be the land's oldest Football League club that they're not done with the division yet.

First-half goals from Chris Martin and Tom Craddock, by way of a spot-kick, were the cherries on an emphatic first half, where Town passed their way around the Magpies.

The less said about the second half the better, except that it wasn't backs-to-the-wall stuff, nail-biting stuff – in fact it was probably the Hatters' easiest win of the season.

That was just one positive. The second was the blooming partnership between the two goalscorers who looked a class apart, and the third, the return of captain Kevin Nicholls who made a cameo appearance with seconds to go.

There was just one change from the defeat at home to Exeter at the weekend with Michael Spillane replacing Sam Parkin who had to be content with a place on the bench.

The early stages were dominated by the home side's penchant for direct football. They looked to utilise the large Meadow Lane

pitch and get pacy strikers Jonathon Forte and Delroy Facey in behind the Hatters' defence, but the tactic was dealt with well.

For 17 minutes Luton didn't reveal their hand, but then Craddock forced Kevin Pilkington into a neat save from with a low 20-yard drive, and that seemed to spark the Hatters into life.

The Magpies thought they had good cause for a penalty claim on 21 minutes after Matt Hamshaw's cross struck Sol Davis, but it would have been incredibly hard on the defender had the calls been acknowledged.

From that Town streamed up the other end where Craddock found Martin. The on-loan Norwich striker has had more shots than any of his team-mates this season and when he turned inside the box he fired the sweetest one of all into the top corner to put his tally into double figures.

His team-mates took his lead and they began to impose some dominance. Inside the next ten minutes Ian Henderson's snapshot forced a save from Pilkington before a flowing passing move ended with Keith Keane firing over from 25 yards.

County had their chances to level but Richard Butcher fluffed his lines either side of decisive blocks from Mark Bower and Spillane, whose last-ditch tackle on Forte after he had wriggled into the box was so strong that the striker's bones would still have been reverberating as he left the pitch at the interval.

Before that, however, Luton doubled their advantage. Another



STAYING ALIVE: Chris Martin scores Luton's first as the dream survives

incisive Luton move a minute before the break saw Henderson release Martin inside the area. The striker was duly scythed down by Adam Tann and there was no hesitation as referee Christopher Sarginson pointed to the spot. Craddock dispatched and the Hatters were in a rare position – the driving seat.

As has been the case so often this season Town clammed up from the restart, sitting back and forgoing their fancy football of the first half.

But for all the Magpies' possession Luton looked comfortable inviting the attention and then breaking on the counter.

The closest County came was not very near at all when Myles Weston blazed wildly over from an impossible angle.

That said, a tame drag wide from Martin on 69 minutes was the antithesis of his earlier wonder strike, notable only as Luton's first effort of the second period.

Four minutes later the striker was again involved as he picked

LEAGUE TWO TABLE

		HOME					AWAY					GD	PTS
		P	W	D	L	F A	P	W	D	L	F A		
1	Brentford	36	11	5	1	29	9	8	7	4	20	16	24
2	Wycombe	35	9	7	1	25	11	7	7	4	15	11	18
3	Rochdale	36	10	5	3	36	17	7	5	6	27	26	20
4	Bury	36	10	3	5	28	17	7	6	5	22	19	14
5	Gillingham	36	11	5	3	34	16	6	4	7	16	29	5
6	Bradford	36	10	8	1	34	15	6	2	9	23	27	15
7	Exeter	36	9	4	5	29	22	7	6	5	23	20	10
8	Shrewsbury	37	14	2	3	39	14	1	10	7	12	21	16
9	Day & Red	37	8	3	7	32	19	6	7	6	27	24	16
10	Morecambe	36	6	9	3	23	16	5	6	7	19	27	-1
11	Lincoln City	34	5	8	3	23	16	5	3	8	21	25	3
12	Chesterfield	32	5	5	5	23	21	7	4	6	27	23	6
13	Darlington	34	10	4	4	30	16	5	6	18	16	16	4
14	Aldershot	34	8	7	3	30	25	3	1	12	18	39	-16
15	Notts County	36	6	5	7	20	22	3	7	8	22	33	-19
16	Macclesfield	36	6	3	10	20	32	5	3	9	19	33	-26
17	Rotherham	32	8	4	3	21	12	7	5	5	21	17	13
18	Port Vale	34	5	2	11	18	30	5	3	8	17	23	-18
19	Accrington St	35	5	5	7	19	20	3	4	11	15	30	-16
20	Barnet	35	4	6	7	22	29	3	6	9	20	33	-20
21	Bournemouth	36	8	6	4	18	11	3	6	9	23	34	-4
22	Chester	37	4	5	9	22	27	2	4	13	13	40	-37
23	Grimsby	35	3	6	9	24	27	2	5	10	13	33	-25
24	Luton	35	5	6	6	28	27	5	7	6	20	25	-4

out Craddock steaming into the box only for the youngster to slice when perhaps an extra touch would have been the order of the day.

Luton saw out the final 15 minutes with barely a raised pulse, apart from a cross flashed across the box from Facey late on. But by then County had given up the ghost.

Now Luton look to Aldershot on Saturday to try and get that elusive league double.

LUTON: Brill, Davis, Keane (c), Henderson (Nicholls, 90), Hall, Asafa-Adjaye, Martin, Spillane, Bower, Craddock (Howells, 86), Gallen
Subs not used: Button, Pilkington, Parkin
Referee: Christopher Sarginson (Staffordshire)
Attendance: 2,886 (407)