

Luton's fairy-tale ends with a jolt

12/13 (FAC)

Luton Town 0

Millwall 3

Henry 12, Hulse 26, N'Guessan 86 Att: 9,768

By Jonathan Liew
at Kenilworth Road

Luton's adventure ends here. No more reputations to sully, no more noses to bloody. If decibels could be converted to goals, Luton would have been ushered into the FA Cup quarter-finals without complaint. Instead, Millwall's two first-half goals and late flourish ensured they succeeded where Wolves and Norwich had failed. The win was fully deserved and could have been even more emphatic.

The Conference side were poor – sloppy in defence, indecisive in attack – and will need to regroup to mount a late charge for promotion to the Football League. Millwall, meanwhile, were excellent, showing the benefits of having had four days' more rest than their opponents. Goalkeeper David Forde was in particularly good form. They progressed to the last eight for the first time since reaching the final in 2004.

Luton's day had begun with such hope. The sell-out crowd, the rows of armoured police lining



Keeping the peace: police help maintain order on a day of high security for the visit of Millwall

the streets around Kenilworth Road and the television cameras had given the fixture a sense of occasion that has been sorely missed from this corner of Bedfordshire since Luton's

relegation from the top flight in 1992. The club were founder members of the Premier League, but never profited from its largesse. Instead, it has taken this unlikely Cup run to give them a

taste of the big time, and its financial reward.

"The Cup run has been fantastic," Luton manager Paul Buckle said. "I'm very, very proud of the team. But the biggest

disappointment today is that we never gave ourselves a chance."

Perhaps the occasion overcame them. That would certainly explain their hesitancy, especially in defence. A missed chance from Rob Hulse in the third minute provided a warning that went unheeded. In the 12th minute, centre-back Janos Kovacs tried to shepherd the ball back to goalkeeper Mark Tyler. The home crowd roared to warn Kovacs that James Henry was stealing in behind, but not until it was too late. Henry rounded Tyler and scored into an empty net.

"That ball's got to go," Buckle said. "As defenders, you're paid to clear your lines. We've just got to start sticking the ball in Row Z."

That was the pivotal moment of the game, and typical of Millwall's sharpness.

The front two of Hulse and Andy Keogh combined well, their movement causing problems for Luton's jittery centre-halves. Hulse's scissor-kick, looping just over the bar after Henry's cross, was a precursor to what followed.

Millwall's second goal came from a situation that looked innocuous; Henry's cross from the right had been headed on by Hulse, who set off in pursuit. With his back to goal, he knocked the ball back over his head from a tight angle, arcing it over the startled Tyler and into the net. That more or less wrapped up the tie by half-time.

Luton flickered briefly: Andre Gray shot straight at Forde when

well set, while Kovacs headed a corner just over the bar.

But Millwall finished stronger, with substitutes Dany N'Guessan and John Marquis combining for a third goal late on. Tyler only half-stopped Marquis' left-footed shot, allowing N'Guessan to bundle the ball home.

Luton ended with their pride dented, but just about intact. The Cup run has earned them an estimated £500,000, which will go some way to curbing the club's £2million annual deficit.

"We hope we can get one of the big boys back at the Den," Millwall manager Kenny Jackett said. "We're one game from Wembley. Like everybody, we'll be dreaming."

Luton, meanwhile, can look forward to a trip to Macclesfield on Tuesday night. No more giants to slay, no more giant paydays. Fun while it lasted, though.

Luton (4-4-1-1): Tyler; Taylor, Henry, Kovacs, Howells; Lawless, Mendy (Shaw 69), Smith, O'Donnell (Fleetwood 64); Rendell; Gray. **Subs** Brill, Woolley, Longden, Lacey, Robinson. **Booked** Rendell. **Millwall** (4-4-2): Forde; Dunne, Osborne, Beevers, Lowry; Feeney (N'Guessan 62), Trotter, Abdou, Henry (Smith 89); Keogh, Hulse (Marquis 70). **Subs** Taylor, Malone, Wright, Goodman. **Booked** Keogh, Beevers. **Referee** L. Probert (Wiltshire).

MATCH DATA

LUTON TOWN	MILLWALL
6	5
SHOTS ON TARGET	
4	9
SHOTS OFF TARGET	
8	2
CORNERS	
14	15
FOULS COMMITTED	
18	14
TACKLES	
52	48
POSSESSION %	

Millwall fans mar cup clash with Taliban chants

By Jonathan Liew

A significant – some might say overbearing – police presence at Kenilworth Road yesterday ensured there was no repeat of the ugly brawl that marred the 1985 FA Cup tie between Luton Town and Millwall. The vast majority of the 9,768 fans behaved impeccably, creating a fervid yet rarely hostile atmosphere. Inevitably, however, there were a few miscreants on both sides.

Less than a week after a Sky Sports News documentary uncovered racist chanting among Millwall fans, unsavoury songs emanated from the away end during the second half yesterday.

In a reference to Luton's high British Asian population, some Millwall fans were heard singing songs about the Taliban during their side's 3-0 victory. Kenny Jackett, the Millwall manager, claimed not to have heard anything.

Police said last night that they made seven arrests at the game, three of which followed a stand-off between the authorities and supporters in the town centre. One arrest came after a fan threw a bottle at a police horse. One supporter was ejected from the ground.