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County Ground

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Tuesday, 26th February, 1974

Second Division

SWINDON
TOWN

V

LUTON
TOWN

Kick-off 3.00 p.m.

SWINDON TOWN

- 1 SPRATELY
- 2 McLAUGHLIN
- 3 TROLLOPE
- 4 BUTLER
- 5 BURROWS
- 6 MUNKS
- 7 MOSS
- 8 DIXON
- 9 COMPTON
- 10 CLARKE
- 11 JENKINS
- 12 LEGG

LUTON TOWN

- 1 HORN
- 2 RYAN, J
- 3 THOMSON
- 4 ANDERSON
- 5 LITT
- 6 GARNER
- 7 RYAN, J
- 8 HUSBAND
- 9 BUTLIN
- 10 WEST
- 11 ASTON
- 12 FERN

Referee: D.R.G. NIPPARD (Bournemouth)

RED FLAG: L.A. Fricker (Whitchurch) YELLOW FLAG: G.C. James (Newport)

Match Ball Donor: J. Arkell & Sons Ltd., Kingsdown Brewery, Stratton St. Margaret

NEXT MATCH

Saturday, 2nd March, DIVISION II

SWINDON TOWN V CARDIFF CITY

Luton on the way back? by Tony Pullein

A great deal has happened to Luton since they last played in the First Division but now they have an excellent chance of returning after 14 years. The years between have been filled with incident, mainly of the unhappy kind. Indeed, Luton Town will create history if they do succeed in their promotion bid — they would become the only club relegated from the First to the Fourth Division ever to regain their place at the top. In the early 'sixties they dropped through all four sections in five years.

Manager Harry Haslam has done a tremendous job since taking control almost two years ago. Because of financial problems, Luton had sold such outstanding players as Malcolm Macdonald, Don Givens and Chris Nicholl in the year before Mr. Haslam took over.

But he has rebuilt the team swiftly, signing players of the calibre of Bobby Thomson, a former England defender, and winger John Aston last season. He also risked a then club record fee of £50,000 in a reasonably unknown player, Barry Butlin, who has proved a big success.

Mr. Haslam raised the record payout to £80,000 when he secured the transfer of Burnley's midfield player Alan West, then expended a further £70,000 in return for the experience of striker Jimmy Husband.

Thomson won eight England caps, and made 15 appearances for the under-23s in his Wolves' days. It was in 1961/62 that he made his way into the Molineux club's senior eleven. He joined Birmingham City in 1969 and towards the end of 1971/72 he spent a few weeks on loan to Walsall. Luton signed him at the end of that season.

Luton paid £30,000 for left-winger Aston who had starred in so many games for Manchester United — none more so than in the 1968 European Cup final. After breaking his leg, John never really re-established himself in the United side but he has certainly enjoyed his new lease of life at Kenilworth Road where he was top scorer with 12 goals last season.

Butlin was unfortunate to have been struck down by injury soon after his arrival but is one of the Hatters' top scorers. Barry began his career with Derby but also spent several months with Notts County on loan.

Luton might never have had the chance to expend that record fee on West this season. Alan developed in Burnley's juniors and, when he lost his first-team place this season, he had apparently signed for Sunderland. Then the Roker club called off the deal on medical grounds.

Husband, a recent arrival from Everton, made his League bow for Everton in 1965 and later won five England under-23 caps. Earlier he had played in school and youth internationals.

For some weeks Butlin, Aston and Husband formed Luton's strike force but, when Husband dropped out, it enabled Irishman Tom Finney to make a return to the team.

Finney, who was an amateur player with Crusaders until last summer, made a sensational start to his Luton career, hitting five goals in his first five games. Mr. Haslam had no wish to rush his progress, however, and wisely gave him a run in the reserves away from all the pressures of big-time football.

Peter Anderson, Alan West, John Ryan and Jimmy Ryan — the latter pair are not related — are the possible choice of midfield players.

Anderson made a quick conversion from non-League circles. Signed from Hendon in 1971, he went immediately into Luton's first-team in 1971/72 and was their top scorer.

Jimmy Ryan, now the club's penalty taker, was for several years a Manchester United player but it was after his transfer to Luton in 1970 that he began to play regular League football.

John Ryan, a Fulham regular in their First Division days, joined Luton in 1969 and was ever-present for two years until missing a few games last term.

Don Shanks, John Faulkner, Alan Garner and Bobby Thomson are usually the back four players though, for some recent games, Shanks switched positions with John Ryan.

Shanks had hoped to make the grade with Fulham, who signed him as a schoolboy. He later became an apprentice at Craven Cottage but he was released in January 1970 when they didn't feel he would make the grade. Luton took a chance on him, soon he was in the England Youth team and two seasons ago he got his chance in their League team.

Faulkner first sprang to national fame as the centre-half of amateurs Sutton United who met Leeds United in the F.A. Cup four seasons ago. He played so well that Leeds signed him shortly afterwards. When he dropped out of the reckoning for a first-team place he linked with Luton two seasons ago.

Garner made his League debut for Millwall against Blackburn in October 1970 but he got only one further chance in the Lions' team. Luton signed him in 1971 and last season he became a regular member of the defence.

The goalkeeper is likely to be Graham Horn who appeared to have won his fight for possession with Keith Barber. Luton paid Arsenal £25,000 for Graham and, though he had not played in the Gunners' first-team, he played several League games for Portsmouth while on loan to them last season.

They celebrated their return to Division Two, after a seven year absence, by making a magnificent challenge for further promotion. With Malcolm Macdonald hitting the net regularly and Don Givens — a Republic of Ireland cap released by Manchester United — working well in a supporting role, Luton were in with a chance until April.

A late slump — they won only two of their last eight games — killed their hopes and all the heat seemed to go out of the club.

This season all the old fire has returned and they still have everything to fight for.