

Date: 25 October 1986
 Opposition: Luton Town
 Competition: League

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| Sunday Times | | |
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THE SUNDAY TIMES

Luton nightmare for Grobbelaar

Luton 4 Liverpool 1

NOT SINCE Coventry City thrashed them 4-0 nearly three years ago have Liverpool been so thoroughly humiliated. And again it was by a supposedly unfashionable team.

True, a couple of Luton's goals were attributable to dreadful mistakes by the eternally erratic Grobbelaar. But the Zimbabwean goalkeeper could not be blamed for Liverpool's absolute inability to subdue Luton's bright, crisp, brisk attack, in which Newell, tall, lean and hungry, got three goals, and was so well abetted by the brothers Stein. Liverpool's midfield was completely stifled and their attempt to play a sweeper defence, with the heavy Molby in a key role, was plainly suicidal.

Liverpool's attitude to plastic surfaces is rather that of a vampire to a wreath of garlic. On the pale green artificial field at Luton, where the lucky holders of identity cards were still queueing to get in only minutes before the start, Liverpool began with a bad quarter of an hour and never recovered.

At the end of it, they were one goal down, and Grobbelaar had saved twice. Only a minute after Newell had scored, there should have been another goal for Luton, when the exceedingly lively Mark Stein, playing beside his better known brother, sent in a low cross from the right which completely beat Liverpool's struggling defence, only for the older Stein and Newell to miss it by a whisker.

In the very first minute, Grobbelaar had to deal with a shot by Preece. Another eight minutes, and Mark Stein perfectly turned Lawrenson, streaking away for a drive which bounced off Grobbelaar's large body.

It could scarcely last; nor did it. Just on the quarter hour, a splendidly judged long ball from the right by the full back, Johnson, set Newell free. He was much too fast for Molby, who went with him, too quick for Hansen as well, and his low shot went inexorably into the right-hand corner.

After Mark Stein had another shot saved by Grobbelaar, Newell gallantly fought for and won a ball on the left, delivering a cross which Brian Stein put just wide of the right-hand post.

A single shot by the ex-Luton striker Walsh was all Liverpool could offer by the time they fell two behind eight minutes from half-time. Newell struck it in again, this time off Grobbelaar, from a cross by Donaghy, splendidly released on the left by Brian Stein. Three minutes from the interval, Grobbelaar had a rush of blood to the head, ran out of his goal, and enabled Preece to find Hill, who in turn found the empty net.

Poor Grobbelaar. It was definitely one of those days. The fourth Luton goal, seven minutes after the break, was his fault as well. A cross from Johnson, now on the left, a clear goalkeeper's ball, which Grobbelaar somehow allowed Hill to reach before he did. Hill headed against the bar. Newell did the final execution.

Belatedly, Liverpool brought the unhappy Molby out of defence, where he was struggling on the plastic, and into the midfield. Nine minutes from the end, it brought them at least a goal when the Dane exchanged passes with Rush, to be tripped by Foster, Molby himself converted the penalty.

Goals: Newell (15min) 1-0; Newell (37min) 2-0; Hill (42min) 3-0; Newell (52min) 4-0; Molby (81min, pen) 4-1.

Weather: mild. Ground: plastic.

Luton (4-3-3): Sealey; Johnson, Foster, Donaghy, Grimes (sub: Wilson 50min); Nicholas, Hill, Preece; M Stein, B Stein, Newell.

Liverpool (5-3-2): Grobbelaar; Venison (sub: Johnston 54min), Lawrenson, Hansen, Beglin, Molby; Nicol, McMahon, Whelan; Walsh, Rush.

Referee: D Wickers (Ilford).