

Sighs Of Relief Greeted The Final Whistle

By Chiltern

LUTON TOWN 3

Soo, Ottewell, Waugh

COVENTRY CITY 2

Mason (G.), Lockhart (pen.)

Not for a very long time has the final whistle been greeted with quite so many sighs of relief from Luton supporters as on Saturday.

After a game which was full of thrills and drama, the Town gained a narrow victory which enabled them to qualify for the last 16 in the F.A. Cup competition.

This was a grim, even struggle which kept the 23,982 spectators on tip-toe until the very end.

What really tipped the scales in the Town's favour was their capacity for taking snap chances, and this opportunism put them in the happy position of holding a two-goals lead within the first half-hour.

Both came within the space of five minutes, and it was during this period that Coventry really lost this match.

First was from a great header by SOO who leaped high to connect with a corner from Waugh and sent the ball streaking into the net at an astonishing pace.

That was after 22 minutes, and five minutes later OTTEWELL took a pass from Waugh in his stride. His goalward run was half-halted by a tackle, but he recovered to force a way through and leave Wood helpless with a low drive.

Coventry, obviously in the belief that it was "now or never," made great efforts after this, and had a very good spell as the interval approached.

However, the Town looked likely to hold on to their advantage until, during a scramble, MASON (G) bundled the ball

into the net from close range.

PROMPT REPLY BY WAUGH

The cheers of the City supporters had scarcely died away when the Town fans were given something to shout about, for WAUGH went ploughing down the middle to crash in a shot which gave Wood no chance.

Part of the Town's grip on the game was relaxed when after nine minutes of the second half, LOCKHART was fouled by Waugh, and reduced the arrears, from the penalty spot.

This success was the signal for hard pressure by the City, and there were two narrow escapes for Luton, both from Murphy. Nearest they came to an equaliser was when the inside-left smacked the ball against the cross-bar. That was too close for most of the Town's supporters.

The Town came back into the game after this, and it was the City's turn for escapes. The hammer and tongs nature of the play continued until the end, and Luton just deserved their success.

Shining light in a solid Luton defence was Hall, who dominated the middle of the field, and blotted out first Dearson and then Barratt, who took over the leadership in the second half.

Soo played magnificently, too, and Gardiner was always a grand worker. Cooke and Hughes did finely against two clever wingers and Streten's anticipation was always in evidence.

The forwards were not at their best. Brennan had an off-day, and Ottewell spoilt much of his work by holding on to the ball too long. Little was seen of O'Brien, too, though he did not receive the best support.

Easily the best of the line were Billington and Waugh. The former was too much of a handful for George Mason, and the latter made a great come-back in the senior side.

LUTON TOWN: Streten; Cooke, Hughes; Soo, Hall, Gardiner; Waugh, Brennan, Billington, Ottewell, O'Brien.

COVENTRY CITY: Wood; Barratt, Mason (R); Snape, Mason (G), Smith; Warner, Davidson, Dearson, Murphy, Lockhart.

Referee: J. H. Parker, Macclesfield.