

Who can stop the Luton boys?

By Maurice Smith

PORTSMOUTH 0, LUTON 0

TAKE a tip from uncle. Have five bob on Luton for the Cup. Even if they don't win it I promise you a run for your money. That is, if there's anything at all to this mysterious something called Soccer Form.

A week ago I saw Luton burst eight goals past top-of-the-table Sunderland. I came to Portsmouth wondering whether there would be any repeat show. The score-line above tells the story. A double shut out. But a grand game all the same. And I'm satisfied of this: Luton, strong, first-time passing, first-time shooting, will take a power of stopping. Only a defence as strong as Portsmouth's will manage it.

Magnificent men

The freedom of this dockyard city today should belong to such ex-Naval types as right-back Tommy McGhee and left-half Jimmy Dickinson. They were magnificent. So were "old" Duggie Reid, left-back Mansell and young Phil Gunter. The fighting five. The rocks on which Luton broke.

Yet Luton, for all Pompey's defensive might, were four times within one kick of a goal. Twice Mansell and once Reid saved their side just as the ball was on the point of flashing across the white line into the net.

And then Luton's centre-forward Morton, after threading through the whole barrage of them, including goalkeeper Uprichard, had only to give the ball a last half tap to steer it home.

Yet there it was, always bouncing a tantalising inch in front of him—and it ended harmlessly just the wrong side of the post.

Luton, on the score of shots that deserved to go in but just didn't, were unlucky. But when a vastly improved Portsmouth came into the game in the second half the Luton defence showed signs of panic. Goalkeeper Baynham always excepted.

That apart, Luton impressed me as workmanlike footballers without frills who carve out their own chances by running quickly into open spaces.

Portsmouth frankly seemed yards slower by comparison.