

CAN TRACEY PULL LUTON TOGETHER?

59/60

Luton 1, Burnley 1: by GRAHAM BUXTON

LUTON acquisition Mike Tracey, amateur international turned professional from Crook Town, watched this match and must have thought he could do at least as well as any of Luton's inside forward trio. Will Tracey be in the side at Birmingham next Saturday?

I put this question to Syd Owen immediately after the match. His reply was: "On this showing he stands every chance."

Luton's inside - forward play pointed all too plainly to the difficulty of converting half backs into all-out attackers.

Bob Morton and Dave Pacey were out of their depth. Gordon Turner played as if he had lost every shred of confidence in his own ability.

Young John Warner made an unsuccessful debut purely through lack of support.

If the Luton fans expected to see some sparkling wing play from Burnley internationals John Connelly and Brian Pilkington they were disappointed. Neither showed much resource.

But Burnley's attack was badly handicapped by the fact that Jimmy McIlroy pulled a thigh muscle early on. That deprived it of its schemer. At least, though, Burnley had a planner for a short time, whereas Luton were painfully short of one.

Inspired by the brilliance of Allan Brown, who has regained his old confidence at right-half, Luton started as if they were going to win in a big way.

Brown put them ahead after eight minutes, and carved out sufficient openings for the lead to become a substantial one, but the finishing, even that of Billy Birmingham, was poor in the extreme, despite the encouragement of some uncertain goalkeeping by Adam Blacklaw.

Diving late, deputy Luton goalkeeper Alan Collier enabled Pointer to equalise from 20 yards after 25 minutes. A goal to either side looked only a remote possibility after that.

Luton's hopes took a steep dive when Brown received a head injury. He played the last half-hour in a daze at outside-right. A pity, because he was the most constructive player in a match which developed into a tawdry, uninteresting affair.

Burnley played no better than struggling Luton, whose determination was not matched by craft and drive in the attacks.

Syd Owen has a real headache. It looks as if the only remedy is an immediate and expensive entry into the transfer market.

Burnley earned their point through the ruggedness of a defence in which Brian Miller and Alex Elder were outstanding.