

MANAGER'S OPINION WAS CONFIRMED

Defence, Aided By Luck, Kept A Clean Sheet By CHILTERN

LUTON TOWN 1, NEWCASTLE UNITED 0

THERE is always considerable satisfaction when a person sees his opinion confirmed in public and that is what happened to Town manager, Sam Bartram, at Kenilworth-road on Saturday.

In choosing en bloc the defence that conceded six goals at home the previous week, he risked and, indeed caused, criticism, but he had the last laugh because the rearguard vindicated him to the extent of keeping the first clean sheet for three months.

Not that this was achieved without a generous amount of good fortune since Newcastle struck the Town's woodwork three times during the second half which induced the manager to comment, "Every team has a bit of luck at some time or another. We had ours today."

On the way things went, Newcastle were certainly unlucky not to go away with a point, but their expensive attack showed a surprising lack of thrust in front of goal.

Certainly, Tuohy should have given them the lead when he was left no more than three yards from goal, with the defence pulled all over the place, but somehow or another, he lifted the ball on to the bar and it bounced to safety.

A goal at that stage, could have been fatal to the Town's hopes, but they overcame the shock and took the lead after 66 minutes when McKechnie took advantage of a defensive slip to push the ball through to TURNER who drove it into the net as Hollins came out desperately.

WOODWORK HIT TWICE AGAIN

Again the woodwork saved the Town when Thomas glanced the ball against a post and the shocks were not over because in the last minute, Tuohy made a cross shot that struck the far post and, again, Baynham was able to breathe his relief.

If Newcastle did not have the breaks in the second half, the Town certainly did not before the interval when most people, apart from the referee, believed that the Town should have had a penalty when McKechnie was brought down heavily.

Then, there was a great drive by Fleming that looked booked for the net until McKinney, standing on the goal-line, leaped to head away.

Most decisive factor in the Town's success was the improvement in the marking of the

defence and this was most noticeable in the play of Cope and Groves.

Obviously, they had digested the lesson of the previous week because Cope shadowed Thomas with much success and Groves was never far away from Allchurch.

DREW TEETH OF INSIDE TRIO

With Pacey completing a strong half-back line, the teeth of the expensive Newcastle inside-forward trio were drawn to a large extent.

Bramwell was too strong for the inexperienced Suddick and McNally, although occasionally losing contact with Tuohy, played a sound game. Behind them, Baynham was sound and assured and his handling of the ball was good.

No-one could describe the new-style forward line as an unqualified success, but there was more determination and McKechnie shaped very well as its leader.

Though Turner had a somewhat quiet game, he did emphasise his quality as a match-winner once again, while Lownds did a tremendous amount of work until the pace began to tell on him after the interval.

Switching of the wingers did bring about a modest improvement and, certainly Fleming looks better suited to the right than the left.

However, neither he nor Walden produced consistently the crisp, decisive finishing for which the Town are looking.

LUTON TOWN: Baynham; McNally, Bramwell; Groves, Cope, Pacey; Fleming, Turner, McKechnie, Lownds, Walden.

NEWCASTLE UNITED: Hollins; McKinney, McMichael; Neale, Thompson, Bell; Suddick, Kerray, Thomas, Allchurch, Tuohy.

Referee: M. H. Fussey (Retford). Attendance: 9,040.