

Luton force draw in last minutes

Luton 3 Portsmouth 3 : by GRAHAM BUXTON

TWO blunders by Portsmouth goalkeeper Peter Shearing in the last 14 minutes enabled Luton to reap the reward of their persistent fight to snatch a badly needed point in a rousing finish.

Portsmouth appeared to have the game well in hand when they led by 2—0 at half-time.

In skill they were way ahead, but Luton's never-say-die spirit throughout the second half, even after their own goalkeeper Jim Standen had erred to let Pompey into a 3—1 lead, earned a draw.

Pompey's attack moved smoothly in contrast to the laboured efforts of Luton's front line and they took the lead in the 11th minute. Tony Barton cut in and slipped the ball back to Johnny Gordon who shot through a crowd of players.

Yards wide

Tommy McKechnie, Luton's most dangerous forward, missed the chance of the match nine minutes later when a lucky rebound put the ball at his feet with only Shearing to beat. He drove yards wide.

Next Danny Clapton centred to Jack Lornie to head in from close range. It seemed a certain goal and would have been but for a remarkable reflex-action save by Shearing who palmed the ball over the bar.

Luton's luck seemed right out when a bouncing ball hit Brendan McNally's hand and a penalty was awarded. Allan Brown scored against his old club from the spot (35 minutes).

Pompey's mistake when the second half opened was to fall back on defence and try to "sit" on their lead.

They surrendered the initiative

and Luton scored in the 70th minute through Harry Walden from a penalty for what was adjudged to be a foul on Lornie. Just what happened was obscure from the stands.

But when Standen let a shot from Saunders slip through his hands for Pompey's third goal the destination of the points seemed assured.

Then came Shearing's nightmare finish. He dropped the ball from a Walden lob and Lornie was on the spot to walk the ball in (76min.). In the final minute Pompey's keeper failed to cut out Jim Fleming's corner kick. McKechnie, almost on the line, scored easily.

Jimmy Dickinson and Allan Brown brought all their experience to bear when Pompey were hard-pressed in the second half, but the forwards were at fault in not dropping back to pick up clearances.

Too often they were caught standing when they should have been moving to the ball.

Fighting effort will not always carry Luton through and they have problems to solve if they are to avoid relegation.