

First Ray Of Light

62/63

MIDDLESBROUGH 0, LUTON TOWN 2

ONLY this morning in the hotel lounge at Saltburn, where the Town stayed overnight, Manager Bill Harvey said to me, "If only we could get a good result. What a difference it would make to the team!"

Prophetic words, maybe, but the result duly came at Middlesbrough this afternoon, when the Town ran out, in my estimation, worthy winners.

This was their first away win of the season and ended a run of nine matches without a victory.

Here today, I feel, we have seen the first real ray of light since the start of the season.

All these last weeks, one of the main criticisms has been that the Town has not been able to take control of the middle of the field and that there has been no link to turn defence into attack.

On this showing, the latest changes the manager has made have gone a long way to remedying this.

Particularly in the first half, I thought McGuffie played his part well, apart from scoring the first goal and laying on the second, because he continually used the ball to advantage. In fact, the Town went back to the style in which they began this season, with four forwards up and McGuffie as the prompter.

It paid off and altogether the Town looked a more formidable team.

Probably Middlesbrough fans will say that their team had more of the play, which is probably true. But the whole point is that they could not create for themselves clear-cut openings in the face of the determination and good covering of the Town defence.

Another thing about which we have been complaining recently is that the tackling of the defence as a whole has not been deadly enough.

There could be no grumble on that score this afternoon. Each member of the rearguard went in full-bloodedly, both full-backs cut out the wingers, and Bramwell had his best match for some weeks.

Groves, too, brought extra strength to the middle line but, perhaps, chief honours go to Pacey for the way in which he held the England centre-forward, Peacock, who he certainly cut down to size.

Always the experience of Morton was valuable and as a last line of defence no-one could have wished for anyone better than Baynham, with his brilliant anticipation and clean handling of the ball.

Forward, I see considerable possibilities in this formation, especially if McGuffie can keep pushing the ball through.

Attendance: 13,523.