

LUTON CRASH TO DIV. III

Stoke 2, Luton 0

62/63

By TOM JACK

LUTON are relegated and Stoke go up as Champions—and with the final glorious flourish of a goal from Stanley Matthews himself, the ageing genius of baffling ball control, but who has never ranked marksmanship among his glittering array of talents. It was his first of the season, a fairy-tale climax in an incomparable career.

What a comfort it is to those who are feeling the cold draught of the years. Renowned players whom famous clubs for imagined reasons of age or failing powers have released for their own good or cast off without ceremony into the comparative darkness of Division Two, have led Stoke back into the lime-light.

As for Stoke's red-scarved youth, they went mad with delirium racing in their hundreds onto the pitch at the end to engulf Matthews in a fever of congratulations. Stoke players had to be handed over the heads of the beaming, screaming mob to the tunnel.

"We want Stan," they and the thousands who joined the fervent crush on the field roared like the broadside from a battleship.

And it seemed that the whole Fleet had opened up when he made a brief, shy appearance in front of the stand to accept their homage.

McIlroy's long pass

It was Fathers' Day at Victoria Park and Matthews, the daddy of them all, was a delight throughout—a thought slower and perhaps not quite all the magician he was, but wiser and with still enough illusion in his bandy legs and turned-in feet—and in that tortuous alert brain—to defeat the best of backs in the flame of their youth.

His goal, Stoke's second, in the first minute of the second half set the crowd of over 33,000 aflame.

McIlroy floated a long ball clear of the defence and Matthews was on to it in a twinkling, veered to the left with a defender pounding desperately at his heels and calmly flashed in a low shot as the goalkeeper came out.

In the Press box, that home of phlegmatic professional neutrals, reporters so far forgot themselves as to howl with delight. Even the ranks of Tuscany were moved. The world suddenly seemed a place of light and wonder.

It was Matthews' day, but a happy hour for Jimmy McIlroy too the banished darling of Turf Moor who has lived to be able, if so minded, to cock a snook at the Lord of Burnley and all his works.

Masterly pass

He was at his elegant best. Where Matthews seeks to make the ball a prisoner he gives it enough rope to hang the opposition and it was his masterly pass that gave Matthews his great chance.

Viollet, too, as solemn of face as an undertaker, played a great role in burying Luton's hopes, deft, swift and devastating in his combination with McIlroy and the menacing winger Ratcliffe.

Stoke were anxious at the start, when their left-back Allen hit his own crossbar and at the other end goalkeeper Baynham stood like an obstinate St. Peter guarding the pearly gates to Division One. But Luton were rarely in the game

after Mudie scored in the 35th minute.

So Stoke have reaped a rich profit by harvesting other clubs' windfalls.

But will their ripper men wither in the top flight like the beauty who won free from Shangri-la?

It is scarcely to be thought of; at all events they have brought back the crowds and the cash which would let City seek new blood—even youthful stuff. Matthews should care.

Stoke: O'Neill; Asprey, Allen; Clamp, Stuart, Skeels; Matthews, Viollet, Mudie, McIlroy, Ratcliffe.

Luton: Baynham; McNally, Bramwell; Morton, Kelly, Grove; McKechnie, Turner, Davies, McGuffey, Jardine.