

Luton crack up under pressure

Luton 2 Barnsley 3 : by GRAHAM BUXTON

THE gates to Division Four opened wider for Luton, who slumped to the foot of the table at the result of a match which they threw away. They spent most of the first half weaving pretty patterns which seemed to be more for their own entertainment than that of their 4,555 shivering supporters.

Patterns do not bring goals and Luton should have discovered this in a game which raised the question of whether the former Northampton inside forwards, Ray Smith and John Reid, can operate in the same attack.

Both are of the scheming type and this put a terrific load on 18-year-old John O'Rourke.

Good judges assess O'Rourke as likely to reach the £20,000 class in two years, but he will need better support than this if he is to realise his potential.

Barnsley played as if they were suffering from a hangover from the mid-week Cup replay.

Occasionally their attack looked dangerous but they seemed more than usually surprised when George Kerr put them ahead three minutes after half-time.

In the space of two minutes Gordon Turner and John O'Rourke put Luton ahead and Luton seemed set for victory.

But there is fight in this Barnsley side and their defence proved stronger than that of Luton when the final pressure was on.

With 18 minutes left, a mistake by Smith in his own penalty area set up a chance for John Byrne, who beat Ron Baynham at the third attempt.

After that the Luton fight disappeared and Barnsley came back into the game.

Byrne snatched a winner three minutes from the end when Gordon Fincham missed his tackle, and Baynham came out too far.

Luton should have won easily against a jaded-looking Barnsley.

Luton 2, Barnsley 3

THIS defeat might well seal relegation-struggling Luton's fate.

But until stand-in centre forward John Byrne scored the first of two goals for Barnsley, it seemed Luton might bag the points.

Luton did all the work in a tame first half. However, their final passes continually went astray and a solid Barnsley defence was rarely troubled.

George Kerr beat two defenders to shoot Barnsley into a shock forty-eighth minute lead. And that woke Luton up.

Evergreen Gordon Turner put them back in the game with a fifty-sixth minute equaliser.

Luton hammered away at a now worried Barnsley defence. They took only two minutes to get their nose in front, when 18-year-old John O'Rourke cracked his first League goal.

Luton slipped up by relaxing their grip. Byrne levelled in seventy-six minutes after a nightmare mistake by out-of-touch inside right Ray Smith.

Luton were sold out. Byrne wandered out to the right wing and hit an angled drive that went over goalkeeper Baynham for the winner.

