

PUNCHLESS LUTON PIPPED

by GRAHAM BUXTON

Luton 0 Southend 1

SOUTHEND, at Luton, avenged their Cup defeat a fortnight ago and deserved to do so, though had they given full rein to their attacking ability they could have won far more easily.

Ron Baynham, Luton hero of the Cup tie, was at fault when Andy Smillie, after 18 minutes scored with a 20-yard drive, because he went up too soon and the ball dropped over his head.

Luton displayed scarcely a spark of constructive ability though 17-year-old Bruce Rioch, in his first big match, used the ball far better than his forward colleagues.

With three teenagers and one 20-year-old in their attack, Luton relied heavily on the experience and scheming ability of inside-left John Reid who, however, found nothing—not even his passes—going right.

The result was a punchless attack, which scarcely showed the semblance of an idea. So, until Luton get down to basic football skills which include a better build-up from wing half—where Lowndes and Bramwell are fighters, but lack the attacking graces—they will continue to struggle.

The threat

Danger man throughout was John McKinven, who gave McBain a considerable run - around. Luton expected the danger from the other wing, but there Malcolm Slater, who got fit just in time, was mostly snuffed out by Freddie Jardine, as determined a defender as Luton possessed.

Southend badly need a goal-scoring centre forward because Ray Smith made little impact on the rugged Grahame Caleb, who played on pluckily after having to be off for a spell with a head injury.

Yet they were much better organised than Luton, whose display was ragged.

Forewarned by his experience in the previous match, Peter Watson kept a tighter grip on Gordon Riddick, who made Luton's best scoring efforts in the first half.

Afterwards, however, Riddick, starved of support, completely lacked a plan of campaign.

New trainer Charlie Watkins saw Luton for the first time and his comment afterwards was: "We certainly have problems." He can say that again.