

THIRD CONSECUTIVE WIN FOR THE TOWN

But missed chance to boost goal average

By CHILTERN

LUTON TOWN 3, READING 1

IMPRESSION with which I was left after this match at Kenilworth Road was that the Town had missed a chance of giving a much-needed boost to their goal average.

In the 59th minute, Reading were reduced to nine and a half fit men when Wilkie, leaving his goal ill-advisedly, and neglecting to call, collided with Meldrum, who seemed all set to clear a pass by Reid which was intended for Pleat.

After the collision, both players were knocked out and PLEAT rightly ignored the situation and made sure of putting the ball into the back of the net. Just why the referee found it necessary to talk to a linesman before finally awarding a goal, escaped me.

Apart from being pushed further out of this game, the consequences for Reading were dire, because Wilkie did not return, later became unconscious, and was rushed to hospital from where he was discharged on Sunday afternoon. Allen took over in goal and is obviously no stranger to the job.

Meldrum also went off, but returned to go into the forward line where he mostly operated in the middle.

Pleat's goal added to the lead given the Town by PHILLIPS in the 14th minute with a power drive that seemed to swing in the air and deceive Wilkie, despite the fact that he got both hands to it.

For most of the first 45 minutes, the Town had the better of matters, but their forward line was not operating to its fullest extent, and they lacked fire in front of goal.

There could have been a different story shortly after an interval that dragged on for what must have been a record

13 minutes because Allen was presented with a point-blank range chance by Terry, but Tinsley pulled off a fantastic save.

When Wilkie went off, here was the opportunity for the Town to pile on the goals and it looked as if they were on their way when HARBER headed a third after 73 minutes.

Some escapes for Reading followed, but then they suddenly came back into it with MELDRUM reducing their arrears 12 minutes from the end.

For a short time, the Town's lead seemed to be in jeopardy because Reading found real determination, but the Town came back and were pressing near the end when Phillips was unlucky not to score again.

Without doubt, Phillips was the most dangerous attacker on view and the only other Town forward to be satisfactory was Harber, who was always fighting hard.

RIGHT-WING WAS OUT OF JOINT

Very little that Riddick attempted went right, and although Pleat might have had better service, he tended to make things difficult for himself by neglecting the simple move, and was very moderate. McKechnie was a worker, but did not really accomplish a great deal, and his finishing again lacked decision.

Much of the improvement which has brought the Town three consecutive victories can be traced to the defence, which has new-found stability.

Fincham is having one of his most consistent spells, and ably blotted out Terry, despite some pushing that eluded the notice of the referee, and there were highly competent displays by Gibson and Reid.

There is little doubt that Barton, with his polished precision, has come to stay, and Jardine made sure that Fairchild had no chance of causing any havoc against his former colleagues.

Once again there were some superlative saves by Tinsley, who is playing with an assurance and confidence that is amazing in view of the length of time he has been kept in the background of the reserve team.

LUTON TOWN: Tinsley; Barton, Jardine; Gibson, Fincham, Reid; Pleat Riddick, Phillips, McKechnie, Harber.

READING: Wilkie; Walker, Meldrum; Evans, Spiers, Thornhill; Fairchild, Shreeves, Terry, Norton, Allen.

Referee: M. A. Fussey, Retford. Attendance: 5,479.