

O'Rourke wakes up Luton

Luton 2 Hartlepoons 1: by PETER GILL

ALTHOUGH they keep collecting points to further their promotion ambitions, Luton may live to rue the heavy weather they make of beating teams from the lower reaches of the table. Luton should have been able to polish their goal average, which is not very healthy, but failed to do so in this scrappy match.

Hartlepoons approached the game with the apparent intention of gaining a point by strictly defensive measures. Often they had seven men helping goalkeeper Green back in the penalty area.

Luton's inability to break through, combined with the almost continuous solo on Referee R. V. Spittle's whistle, meant that there

was not much entertainment value here.

Of 47 free kicks awarded, 27 were against Hartlepoons.

At half-time, the whole thing looked suspiciously like stalemate, but John O'Rourke, 21 on Friday, suddenly produced a couple of flashes of brilliance that brought Hartlepoons to their knees.

First, he made a 35-yard run which he finished by driving the ball past Green. Seven minutes later he headed a neat goal.

That should have opened the floodgates for Luton. Instead, they made a hash of several good chances in front of goal. Ray Whittaker hit a post, John Read missed two chances, and French had two shots saved by Green.

Not that it seemed to matter. Hartlepoons, despite the presence of such an accomplished ball-player as Eire international Ambrose Fogarty, seemed as if they could be disregarded as an attacking force.

It came as a nasty shock to Luton when, 17 minutes from the end, their offside trap failed to work. Peter Thompson slipped through to give his team a fighting chance.

Had they snatched a point, it would have been a grave injustice to Luton, but it might very well have happened.

However, the Hartlepoons attack had been allowed to go rusty by disuse in favour of deep defensive tactics. They found it impossible to swing into a smooth stride.