

Luton gamble on Read pays off

Luton 2 Stockport 0 : by PETER GILL

LUTON FOR promotion? Manager George Martin is counting no chickens. "I am taking each match on its merits and as it comes," he says. He must have been well enough pleased with his display.

One of his periodic gambles paid a rich dividend. Until last Thursday he had never seen Tony Read, hitherto his regular inside-right, playing in goal in a serious match.

On the strength of what he saw

on Thursday he gave Read the jersey, and Read made a couple of saves that were out of this world at a critical stage, when the lead was a single goal.

That was scored after six minutes by the young star Bruce Rioch, during a tearaway start that had Stockport rocking.

As Luton swept to the attack they could have been three goals up. What upset their rhythm, which was never recovered in the first half, was a severe ankle injury received by Freddie Jardine after a quarter-hour.

Jardine was carried off and replaced by 18-year-old Alan Slough. Now it was Stockport's turn. Allchurch and Price both struck posts, and then came Read's great saves from Young and Allchurch.

Rugged battle

Stockport fought strongly until the 61st minute, when Clarke brought down John O'Rourke, with whom he had a rugged battle, and Ray Whittaker scored from the penalty spot.

After that Luton might have gone on to a more convincing victory. O'Rourke and Moore had "goals" disallowed for offside.

However, Luton were never quite consistent enough on the wings to open up the grim Stockport defence.

Collins had a grip on the usually dangerous Whittaker.

But the man who finally stood between Luton and more goals was the former Manchester City goalkeeper Steve Fleet, who gave a courageous display and saved all manner of difficult shots during Luton's occasional spells of genius.

It was a workmanlike Luton show, with the defence, ably marshalled by Matt Woods, laying a solid foundation.