

Luton fail to keep going

Exeter 2 Luton 1

FORMER CHARLTON youngster Exeter centre half Ray Harford answered his critics as, with the strength and coolness of a veteran, he helped check a Luton attack that, certainly in the first 45 minutes, looked likely to get their first away win in months.

Some Exeter fans, earlier in the season, claimed that Harford tended to make mistakes under pressure, and for a time he lost his place to the experienced Keith Harvey. But with Harvey injured back came Harford and in yesterday's game he had to play under plenty of pressure.

He and wing halves Ernie Wilkinson and Ken Thompson met the challenge expertly, refusing to panic as Luton time and again moved smoothly into the attack.

Exeter's defence cracked only once, and once was not enough for Luton. Exeter equalised within a minute and then in the second half took a grip on the game, and a penalty in the 70th minute gave them the winner.

Harford and the rest of the Exeter defence were able to cope with the experience of forwards

like Luton's ex-international Derek Kevan and the scoring power of Gordon Reddick and Bruce Rioch

But whether Exeter can be content with this performance is another matter. Luton, in the first half especially, looked head and shoulders the better side and Exeter's forwards rarely got in a shot.

In the first five minutes Luton forwards twice hit the upright, and John Smout in the Exeter goal saved two cracking drives from Reddick and right half Alan Slough.

Then in the 37th minute left winger Brian Johnson put over a right-on-the-target centre and although Rioch's shot was blocked, Reddick was following up to take an easy chance and put Luton ahead.

But straight from the kick-off Exeter equalised. A cross from the left caught Luton's defence completely on the wrong foot, and Ray Elliott hammered in the equaliser.

Exeter had much more of the play in the second half, and in the 70th minute Exeter were awarded a penalty for a foul on Elliot. Substitute Ray Keeley, who had come on for injured Jack Kennedy made no mistake