

Luton earn draw in tough match

By BOB HARRIS

BARROW 0

LUTON TOWN 0

LUTON'S DEFENCE remained unbeaten for the third successive match when the Hatters earned a 0-0 draw at Barrow this afternoon. Luton created many openings but could not add the final touch in a tough — and sometimes rough — match.

Luton were without both wingers Mike Harrison and John Ryan, who were kept out by injury after the 3-0 win over Watford in the League Cup on Wednesday.

Matters were evened up however, as Barrow were without player-manager, Colin Appleton, Dave Storf and Mick Hartland.

For Luton, Micky Brown and Ray Whittaker filled the vacant wing positions while Bebbington, Ellison and McCarthy were Barrow's replacements.

This was Barrow's first home match of the season, having recorded a 3-2 win at Barnsley last Saturday and earning a 2-2 draw at Southport on Wednesday in the League Cup.

In direct contrast to the foul weather Luton have been forced to train through in recent weeks the sun was shining brilliantly at Barrow, with the Holker Street pitch hard and bumpy.

Fast

Luton lost the toss and were soon in trouble when a bad pass from Allen was intercepted by Mulholland, and Branston was forced to break up a promising move by conceding a corner.

Barrow were soon back and this time Slough was happy to give away a corner on the left after Ellison had neatly slipped Branston.

Luton's reply was fast. Slough started a good move which ended with Dougan crossing too closely to former Preston goalkeeper Fred Else.

Then Brian Lewis raced through on his own to fire a tremendous drive inches wide of the post — and the on-rushing Sheffield's head.

The match opened at a tremendous pace, and Luton were fortunate not to fall behind when Edwards split their defence with a through ball to Bebbington.

Robbed

The winger was robbed of a scoring chance by Dougan, and Slough completed the clearance after the ball had bobbed nastily around the six-yard box.

Luton's composure was now more settled, and their defence was beginning to handle the fast-raiding home forwards.

Rioch came into the match for the first time when he placed an effort just past the base of the upright, although Else was well positioned.

A succession of free kicks in Luton's favour began to put them in a more commanding position, although at this stage they were finding difficulty breaking through the tight rearguard.

Alan Slough was a continual source of trouble to Barrow's forwards. He broke up raid after raid and his distribution kept Luton on the move.

After his disappointing match on Wednesday, Bruce Rioch was a far more prominent figure this afternoon.

CALLED UP



Micky Brown, left, and Ray Whittaker, right, were Luton's latest wingers against Barrow this afternoon. Brown came in for Ryan, who was injured while deputising for French!

Whittaker, a regular last season, was called up today because Mike Harrison has a strain, aggravated against Watford on Wednesday.

Helping his defence one minute and trying to prompt his forwards the next, he was always looking for the opportunity to burst through. But on the compact Holker Street pitch he found this difficult.

After their scintillating start Barrow were finding the Luton defence in much better command, with Terry Branston playing his usual solid game after a shaky start.

After the early skills of the match the referee constantly blew up for petty infringements, as well as offside which both defences worked well.

A superb ball from Ray Whittaker turned defence into attack. Bruce Rioch raced between two defenders to pick up the pass but was forced to run it too wide, and when he finally managed to get the ball across Micky Brown's effort was blocked by Edwards.

Edwards was in action at the other end moments later when he brought a fine save from Tony Read, at the expense of a corner.

Jeers

Barrow laid siege to the visitors' goal with two more corners in quick succession, and they were not out of the wood until Mulholland fired wide from what looked to be an offside position, although allowed to play on by referee Mr Williams.

Laurie Sheffield, well known to the Barrow crowd, came in for constant barracking whenever near the ball, but he silenced the jeers when he slipped home a Whittaker cross — only to be blown offside.

Max Dougan saved another nasty situation for Luton when he cleverly robbed centre-forward George McLean, who had been put through by Mulholland's glancing header.

HT: Barrow 0 Luton 0
The first-half had produced

very little of note and the referee did not help matters when he sternly lectured Edwards after Sheffield had been brought down by Harrison.

Laurie Sheffield was taking a tremendous buffeting up front, but this almost proved to be Barrow's undoing when Else only just managed to hold onto a typical Rioch drive after the inside-left had been set up by Allen off one of the resultant free kicks.

The second half began very much as the first period ended — in fits and starts, with the referee's whistle still prominent.

Clear-cut chances were a rarity, and when Barrow did produce one Mulholland sliced the ball well wide.

Luton were now appearing to be taking a firmer grip on the match, and although still basically concentrating on not giving away a goal, the tenacity of Lewis and Sheffield was beginning to cause some hesitancy in the home defence.

Luton's main source of danger, and their main hope of snatching two points, was coming from the effective, if not pretty, long ball down the middle into the sun, and twice Harrison was lucky to see the ball glance off his head to safety after being unsighted.

Tony Read came to Luton's rescue with a gallant save when he threw himself at McLean's feet after the centre forward had been put through.

At the other end Rioch wasted Luton's best chance of the match when he brilliantly created an opening for himself but fired well wide from the edge of the box with only Else in front.

The match flared up, as it had threatened to with so many petty fouls, after 23 minutes of the second half, when Barrow centre forward McLean vic-

TEAMS

BARROW: Else; Mallon, Edwards; Harrison, Arrow-smith, Bebbington; Riley, Ellison, McLean, Mulholland, McCarthy. Sub: Mulvaney.

LUTON TOWN: Read; Dougan, Jardine; Allen, Branston, Slough; Brown, Lewis, Sheffield, Rioch, Whittaker. Sub: McDerment.

Referee: Mr Harold Williams (Sheffield).

iously and needlessly chopped down Terry Branston and had his name taken.

Shaky

Luton appealed in vain for a free kick on the edge of the box after Else had appeared to overstep his mark in stopping a high cross from Brown with Sheffield challenging.

The Barrow defence was now looking as shaky as Luton's had in the first 10 minutes, and twice they gave away unnecessary corners and from the second taken by Whittaker, Else was lucky to be allowed a second attempt after dropping the ball while under heavy pressure from Branston.

Tony Read looked a far safer proposition in the Luton goal, and when the home side broke away he climbed high to palm away a dangerous cross by Mulholland.

Immediately afterwards Else stopped Luton going in front.

Rioch warded off two vicious tackles before slipping through the ball to the unmarked Lewis. Lewis picked his spot but held his head in despair when Else threw himself full length to push the ball away, and Edwards completed the clearance.

Branston looked in some trouble after another clash with McLean, and with the ball far away up field a scuffle developed and McLean fell to the floor, needing attention for a bleeding nose.

The incident escaped both referee's and linesmen's notice.

Agony

Seconds later it was Branston's turn to lie writhing in agony after yet another unseen clash between him and centre forward McLean.

Referee Mr Williams consulted both linesmen but did not take any action as all three officials were apparently unsighted.

With what proved to be almost the last kick of the match Luton frittered away what should have undoubtedly been the winner.

With every one in the Luton half Alan Slough, the man of the match, found the unmarked Rioch with a superb ball. Rioch raced forward and pushed the ball past the advancing Else only to see it curl the wrong side of the post.

Attendance: 6,628