

Go-ahead Luton on top again

by PETER GILL

Luton 3 Hartlepool 0

LUTON, with a workmanlike performance in waterlogged conditions, surged back to the top of the Third Division table.

True, Hartlepool were an ordinary lot, sadly lacking in sustained power in attack, but their defence lacked nothing in ruggedness and their spoiling tactics broke up many a promising Luton raid.

Luton, however, tended to make hard work of it in the first half when they were limited to a headed goal after 27 minutes by Laurie Sheffield.

The man who bothered Hartlepool's most was left-winger Ray Whittaker who has had to be content with reserve team football this season. He came back to show that he is by no means out of the first team reckoning.

Deflected

Near half time, Tommy Cummings, who received little chance—despite the fact that Terry Branston was playing under the handicap of two stitches in a gash in the leg—nearly levelled matters with a shot deflected by Keith Allan.

Any idea Hartlepool might have had of improving their woeful away record were dispelled three minutes after the interval when Bruce Rioch scored a magnificent goal.

But Hartlepool, though short of skill, still had the courage to fight back and they forced the Luton defence into some errors. Their bad luck came when Tommy Bell, having headed what seemed to be a clear-cut goal, had it disallowed for a foul on goalkeeper Bill Taylor.

Then Brian Lewis, who had been closely shadowed, suddenly struck. He collected a pass from Keith Allen, dummed the defence and crashed an unstoppable shot past Smith.