

Town still not at home away!

Walsall 2 Luton Town 0 By ROGER DUCKWORTH

68/69

AFTER A promising first 45 minutes in which Luton looked good for at least a point — but finished a goal down — they produced a jaded second-half performance before losing 2-0 at Walsall last night.

With his away record stretched to a dismal five consecutive defeats, Luton manager Allan Brown must be preparing to face charges that his team are "homers".

Luton have won every one of their eight home matches, and lost five and drawn two on their travels.

Reason for last night's defeat? They were outrun in midfield — after a promising opening spell — and they had little to offer in front of goal.

Although Walsall played badly when the Town party watched them on Saturday, the Hatters obviously did not take enough notice of the Midlanders individual skills. They were lulled into a false sense of security by a dull-looking Walsall who must have been "kidding them on."

In three days Walsall improved beyond recognition. Even so, they were shaken by Luton's polished start.

Taking early command in midfield, Rioch mesmerised Walsall with some dazzling runs and perfect long passing. He combined well with Whittaker who had a good night all round.

Denton does well

With Peter Denton making the most of his first chance of the season in the senior team, Luton won early admiration from the home fans with some attractive moves.

But their strikers were about

as effective as damp matches, and soon Walsall got on top.

A foul by newcomer Jack Bannister on Baker just outside the penalty area ten minutes before the interval gave winger Jimmy Murray the chance to head Walsall ahead after the ball had been headed back across the goal to throw Davie out of position.

Town were not downhearted, and continued to fight. The best shot of the half came from Denton, who had Wesson fumbling as he tried to hold the fierce effort.

But Luton seemed to run out of fight after the interval. Walsall became the more willing runners, and there always seemed more red and white Walsall shirts in any situation.

Slough was outstanding at centre half, timing his tackles well on the lively Baker and Wilson, and Max Dougan did well at right back, looking after speedy winger Morris competently.

Unfortunately he couldn't hold him when Baker split the defence in the 70th minute. Morris hared after the pass, took the ball in his stride and hammered a terrific shot past Davie, who never had an earthly of stopping it.

Disappointment

Luton were a real disappointment in the second half. Before last night they had something of a reputation to uphold in Walsall. But as they struggled to keep in the game they were derided by the crowd who began to chant: "Luton, Luton, ha-ha-ha."

There was more "go" in the Walsall side, who usually had little trouble in intercepting Luton's passes or breaking up their attacks.

Understandably, after months in the reserves, Denton ran

out of steam later in the match, but he is certainly worth another chance — especially in front of a Kenilworth Road crowd.

Whittaker was replaced by George Potter in the 74th minute as a tactical move. It was too late to salvage a point. Whittaker had had a good match, and he was pulled off so that Mr Brown could try out a hunch.

He slotted Potter into a midfield position, and moved Rioch out to the left wing. Potter showed a cool head and considerable skill. Surely he will soon be worth a full 90 minutes.

Rioch ended in the spirited mood in which he had begun, and almost beat Wesson with a long shot after a deal of hard work.

Luton's best effort in the second half came near the end from McDerment who was sent away by Rioch. Wesson saved well.

Allen ran hard all night with mixed fortunes, and Bannister tackled well and showed a flair for distribution.

In goal Davie gave a fearless performance when under severe pressure.

Sheffield and Lewis rarely won duels for centres against the big Jones and lively Trevis.

Outstanding for Walsall were Morris, Baker, Wilson and Murray in attack and Jones and Harris in defence.

It wasn't that Luton weren't trying. It was more that Walsall were trying harder.

Walsall: Wesson; Harrison, Harris; Trevis, Jones, Atthey; Murray, Baker, Wilson, Bennett, Morris. Sub: McMorran.

Luton Town: Davie; Dougan, McDerment; Allen, Slough, Bannister; Denton, Lewis, Sheffield, Rioch, Whittaker. Sub: Potter (for Whittaker).

Referee: Mr R. Darlington (Runcorn).

Attendance: 5,381.