POOR REWARD FOR TOWN'S FIGHT

68/69 (FAC)

MANCHESTER CITY 1, LUTON TOWN 0

ALTHOUGH I would not exactly describe it as a hard-luck story, the fact remains that Town officials left Manchester tonight feeling that they were desperately unlucky not to have the First Division champions Manchester City back at Kenilworth Road on Wednesday for a replay.

Reason for this is not hard to find, because at the finish of a hard-fought game only a goal scored from the penalty spot in the 27th minute separated the teams.

The fateful penalty was conceded when John Moore made a late tackle on Lee, who made no mistake with the kick.

It was an unlucky affair which the Town contend was a harsh decision, but it is on this sort of thing that the result of vital Cup ties turn.

City no doubt deserved their success purely on the way play went, but defeat was a poor reward for the tremendous fight put up by the Town defence.

In the circumstances I can give the Town nothing but praise for their fighting spirit and determination against a fast-moving, talented team, whose main failing was that they could not supply the finishing power.

A deal of the reason for this lay in the way the Town defence covered, and for Sandy Davie this was a match to remember. He made a series of brilliant saves and was rightly accorded a warm ovation as he left the field. Certainly he covered himself with glory.

Never did the Town give up trying to retrieve that unfortunate penalty affair. They crowded on pressure in the last ten minutes when Rioch, on two occasions, might have snatched an equaliser but for the vigilance of Dowd.

Generally, though, Rioch was closely watched, as was Lewis, who was replaced by McDerment after 63 minutes. This thrust the onus as second striker on Allen, who was not more notably successful than Lewis had been.

In fact, in flashes the most danger came from Harrison, who on a couple of occasions went very close to scoring.

The Town might have been given that second chance had French been more accurate with his finishing, but he was inclined to allow far too much to go to waste.

It was in the middle of the field that the City held most control, which was probably the reason for McDerment being drafted in. He did a reasonable job, and so, too, did Slough, in the face of some trying circumstances.

It took Branston some time to settle down to his usual competent form, but between them, he and Moore mainly had the middle bottled up.

In view of that, the more one thinks of that penalty decision, the more unfortunate the Town would appear.

Dougan and Bannister came through fairly well against a couple of lively wingers, but there was no disputing the fact that the Town's hero on this day was Davie.

So, the Cup glamour for this season is ended, and it is back to the bread-and-butter struggle for League points on Wednesday.

Consolation for them today was a share in an attendance of 37,120,