

LUTON PRODUCE PROMOTION FORM

68/69

LUTON TOWN gave one of their best performances of the season at Reading last night and brought a point home from Elm Park, something many clubs would be pleased to achieve. Both teams gave high value on the most miserable night of the year.

The players had to contend with fog, rain, sleet and mud. And they made light of it to provide a fast-moving and exciting tussle which deserved better conditions and a bigger audience.

This season, Bourne-mouth apart, Luton have not been noted for their away form. Last night they ignored the past and showed courage, perseverance and determination — and all this with an under-strength side.

Both goals came within a minute in the second half, both followed errors of judgment by otherwise competent goalkeepers.

Reading got the first, somewhat against the run of the play. A John Moore clearance failed to find touch, John Docherty chased, pushed it back to Bacuzzi, and his high cross caused consternation in the Luton goalmouth.

Outstanding

Sainty jumped with the Luton defence and glanced the ball down to the foot of a post where it skidded on the mud underneath Sandy Davie, who looked to have it well covered.

That was in the 63rd minute. A minute later Keith Allen, who was Luton's outstanding forward, showed persistence before firing in a fierce shot which Brown could not hold.

Laurie Sheffield, following up intelligently, chased the rebound and slammed it into an empty net for a spendidly taken goal.

Strangely, it was not these

**Reading 1
Luton 1**

**By ROGER
DUCKWORTH**

two goals that pleased the crowd last night. What they could see through the fog and rain was sheer effort by every player. It was as if the players had decided that if they had to play at all on such a night, they might as well go the whole hog.

And as well as taking a point, Luton came off at the end with the honours. They had harassed and pressed Reading for 60 per cent of the match.

Responsibility

The Oak Road Choir, who had travelled from Luton, entrenched themselves at the Tilehurst Road end, and gave Luton solid vocal support. You could not see them across the field from the stand, but the fog was not enough to strangle their singing.

In the absence of Terry Branston, Max Dougan captained the side. Inspired by responsibility, Dougan was the outstanding player on the field. His covering and clearing were impeccable, and nippy winger George Harris did not pass him all night.

Alan Slough had a fine evening, deputising for Branston at centre-half. He showed experience beyond his years in taking on a difficult task, and is Luton's most rapidly improving player. He gave Silvester and Collins no change all evening.

Billy McDermont came in at right half, and played better

than I have ever seen him during his stay at Luton. He was supreme in every department of his game, and came through with flying colours on a night that Luton could well have been struggling.

On the right wing Graham French showed a great willingness to run. He too did well on a night that made ball control most difficult. It was mostly from his flank that Luton's attacks came — and there were plenty of them.

Uncompromising

For two 10-minute periods, one immediately before the interval, and one before the end, Luton's defence was at full stretch. But they held out.

For the rest, Luton took control in midfield, where Allen worked like a Trojan. Had Reading's Bacuzzi and Meldrum not been in uncompromising moods, Luton would have had more success. Sheffield took a lot of weight off his colleagues in the middle and, often working with his back to goal, did well in the air against the tall, efficient Spiers, and distributed well with both head and feet.

French was always the most ready to shoot, and several times he tested Brown with good efforts — one, early in the second half, after a brilliant run in which he beat four grim tackles.



MAX DOUGAN

... captain for the night

Brian Lewis also took plenty of punishment as he worked hard to create openings. He worked well with Fred Jardine who showed some determined tackling when he fell back into a midfield position.

It was a night where there seemed a strange reversal of ideas. Reading, the home side, seemed content, almost relieved, to hold out for the draw. Luton, the away side, wanted to win.

Grandstand finish

Moore and Jack Bannister were in good form, and in goal, Davie pulled off two brilliant saves to Sainty and Thornhill, the latter having a fine match in Reading's defence.

Sainty always looked sharp in the home attack, and that he was not allowed more room in which to work his wiles, is mirrored in the tight marking by Luton.

In a grandstand finish Reading forced three corners, and Luton were left defending desperately as the final whistle went. It would have been real injustice had Reading notched a winner.

If Town manager, Alec Stock, can harness this mood, Rotherham can watch out on Saturday. Teams:

Reading: Brown; Bacuzzi, Meldrum; Yard, Spiers, Thornhill; Docherty, Sainty, Silvester, Collins, Harris. Sub — Chapman.

Luton: Davie; Dougan, Bannister; McDermont, Slough, Moore; French, Allen, Sheffield, Lewis, Hardine. Sub — Ryan.

Referee — Mr H. G. New (Portsmouth).

Attendance — 5,973.