

Shaky Luton snatch late equaliser

Luton 1 Gillingham 1: by DAVID HANINGTON

GILLINGHAM, GAME and gritty in the fight for Third Division survival, gave Luton the fright of their lives. Luton's stunning form of recent weeks began to look like a mirage as they rocked and wobbled on the brink of defeat.

It was not until seven minutes from the end that Laurie Sheffield redeemed an out-of-touch display by ramming in an equaliser.

The game was scrappy, with Luton looking hesitant, hardly trusting the fluent, determined football that has crowned the season with such success.

Their forwards—apart from one or two sabre thrusts from Graham French in the first half—were muddled and ineffective.

Meredith gave Luton an early signal that this was to be no push-over on the primrose path to promotion. After 15 minutes, he drew Terry Branston far out of position. And Luton, left short of cover in the middle, were in trouble as Meredith cut sharply inside. But his shot on the run whipped over the bar.

Gillingham began to gain confidence from Luton's jittery, error-ridden game. They might have had a penalty after 32

BLOOMFIELD SAYS 'NO'

JIMMY BLOOMFIELD has turned down the chance of the £5,000 a year Reading job, to stay as player manager of Orient at a much lower salary.

Bloomfield who did not apply for the job, was one of several men Reading wanted to interview. Bloomfield said No after discussing the matter with Orient chairman Arthur Page.

John Mortimore, the former Chelsea centre half, now assistant manager Ted Bates at Southampton, has also been linked with Reading.

minutes when Branston chased after Gordon Riddick and appeared to knee him in the thigh with the ball 50 yards upfield.

The referee warned the Luton skipper, then inexplicably awarded a bounce-up near the halfway line.

A minute before the interval Brian Yeo gave a jolting shock to Luton. Goalkeeper Sandy Davie turned Andy Smillie's shot on to a post, but it was only partly cleared. Terry Simpson sent it back, Luton's defence collapsed in a hopeless tangle, and Yeo was left free to stab the ball just inside a post.

Big Bill Williams was booked for a foul on Bruce Rioch in the second half as the Kent men battled to retain their lead.

Then, in the 83rd minute, Sheffield sent a 15-yard ground shot under Gordon Riddick's tackle and out of reach of John Simpson's dive.