

Town's hopes plummet

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THIS IS
DEFENCE IN
DEPTH!

THE GAP WIDENS AS WATFORD AND SWINDON BOTH WIN

WELL, THAT just about looks like that. Luton Town's promotion hopes were last night as bruised and battered as their players, who could only manage a home draw against Southport while rivals Watford and Swindon were collecting good wins to help them towards Division Two.

Luton, in third place, are two points behind second placed Swindon who have a game in hand. And they don't look to have a ghost of a chance of catching Watford, who lead them by six points — and also have a match more to play.

Worst moment of a frustrating evening came 10 minutes from time when courageous goalkeeper Sandy Davie was stretched off, apparently badly injured after making a "suicidal" save at the feet of Southport centre-forward George Andrews. This kept Luton's unbeaten home record intact, and saved them from the ignominy of defeat against moderately placed Southport.

Davie was rushed to hospital by ambulance, and spent a "fairly comfortable" night there. This morning a hospital spokesman told the club: "He is suffering from bruised ribs and a bruised lung."

It was the end of a painful Easter for the Luton goalkeeper. It was third time unlucky.

On Friday at Torquay Sandy suffered concussion after being kicked on the head. On Monday he collected an uncomfortable kick in the back at Mansfield.

Read's chance

Whether or not he will play again this season will depend on his powers of recovery. Tony Read is sure to get a chance to come back this weekend.

All last night's match lacked was goals. There was plenty of drama as Luton hurled themselves forward at the massed defences of Southport.

The Lancashire side are well-known for their ability to pack their goalmouth at short notice. And they do it effectively. The Luton fans moaned at these tactics last night, but it's exactly what Luton did at Bristol Rovers last week.

Every time Luton threatened an attack nine Southport men raced back to give goalkeeper Brian Reeves blanket cover. This confounded all Luton's scoring attempts — and they were numerous.

On top of this, Southport were expert at inter-passing their way out of trouble in the close confines of the penalty area.

With Rioch working ener-

By ROGER DUCKWORTH

Luton Town 0

Southport 0

getically at centre-forward Keen, Slough and Jardine all went close in the first half hour. And Reeves saved well at the feet of Harrison.

Brilliant

Alan Slough, back in his role as an attacking wing half, was Luton's best player. His running off the ball was brilliant, and he and Terry Branston went close on several occasions with determined efforts.

What I liked about this defence-conscious Southport team was its ability to break quickly into attack, and had it not been for some good work by Davie, they might well have snatched a goal in one of their tearaway raids.

And Brian Lewis had a night he'll never forget. He started at inside forward, but had to drop back into defence in the second half when Jardine failed to reappear after a first half ankle injury.

Once he settled down there, he was doing alright, and his clearances were full of power and imagination. Then came the crunch. Davie received his injury and Lewis pulled on the goalkeeper's jersey, at least two sizes too big for him, and took the stage for his third role of the night.

Looking somewhat incongruous with the jersey flapping about near the bottom of his shorts, and looking far too small between the posts, Lewis revelled in the situation.

He had been at his new post only a couple of minutes when he pulled off a superb diving save at the foot of a post to Field. And he caught the resultant corner with all the confidence of a veteran goalkeeper. As the minutes ticked away, and the tension swelled, Lewis even found time to clown as he faked saves at shots that were going wide.

At right back Max Dougan had one of those nights when

nothing really ran right for him, although there was no questioning his ambition to succeed. And Mike Keen lacked a bit of conviction with his short passing, but worked hard both in attack and defence.

Graham French ran into some good tackling by Curwen and Aindon, an amateur with real future, but might have expected better service. He showed a real turn of speed and can be said to have come through with credit.

Mike Harrison had his first full match since his lengthy lay off, and is not yet at his best. He, too, tried out the solid Southport defence with some powerful crosses, but some times ran into trouble on his strong-looking runs.

Andrews and Field looked promising for Southport, but most trouble to Luton was full back Colin Alty who looked effective as a forward on his numerous breaks for the Luton goal.

Buxton on

Ian Buxton made one of his rare appearances, coming on for Jardine in the second half. He still looks a class player and his laying off of the ball in the air was appreciated by Rioch, who at last found someone willing to stick the ball into the open spaces for him to chase.

Jardine has injured the ligaments of an ankle and is doubtful for the weekend.

John Moore had a mixed night. In the first half his aimless, high clearances were getting nowhere at all against the big Southport defence, who ruled the air, but in the second half his distribution was more thoughtful.

The Davie incident came ten minutes from time. Branston was robbed near the halfway line by Andrews, who bore down on the goal like a train, with Branston following him like a guardsman. Davie, with tremendous bravery, did the only thing he could, racing out to the edge of his territory and hurling himself at the centre forward's feet.

Inevitable

The collision was inevitable. Andrews got up. Davie didn't. What a cheer he got as he was carried off. One thing Luton cannot complain about is their support. Throughout, the fans did their best to spur them on to a goal.

Afterwards manager Alec Stock said: "It's difficult when teams play like this. And it's going to get more difficult. I have no complaints. Southport are a fair old side, and they played their game well."

"At least I got effort tonight."

LUTON TOWN: Davie; Dougan, Jardine (Buxton); Slough, Branston, Moore; French, Lewis, Rioch, Keen, Harrison.

SOUTHPORT: Reeves; Alty, Curwen; Peat, Aindon, Clarke; Russell, M. Field, Andrews, Russell A. Redrobe. Sub Groves.

Referee: Mr P. Walters (Bridge-water).

Attendance: 15,693.



A picture that shows perfectly the 'defence in depth' tactics used so successfully by Southport last night. Southport's resolute 'thin yellow line' coped perfectly with everything the Town had to offer. More pictures on page 15.

—TOP THREE IN THIRD DIVISION—

HOME

AWAY

P W D L F A W D L F A Pts

WATFORD ...40 14 5 2 33 7 10 5 4 33 18 58

SWINDON ...40 15 3 1 32 5 8 5 8 30 27 54

LUTON41 17 3 0 48 12 4 7 10 14 23 52