Full marks to Town for a good start

69/70

Luton Town 3 Barrow 0

WELL, THAT WASN'T bad for a start! You couldn't have asked for a better display of good intent from Luton, who on Saturday gave everyone, from manager Alec Stock to the most doubting fan, confidence for the coming season.

Luton looked good from the start, and at times raised their game to standards far beyond those in which they are operating.

And I take off my hat to centre forward Laurie Sheffield. Throughout the season's preliminaries, Sheffield has had to take abuse from the terraces, and read in the papers that he was not likely to be selected.

He soaked it all up, played, and won back the respect of a big portion of the Kenilworth Road crowd with a wholehearted display of aggression and determination.

Typical

But man of the match was John Collins, who joined the club only last week from Reading. Why they let him go for £10,000, these days regarded as a small fee, I just don't know.

I am assured that this was not just a trying-to-impress display from the fair-haired Collins. This was, says Mr Stock, his natural game. He is tricky, yet direct, fast and intelligent. Most pleasing of all is that he is a worker in the Keith Allen sense of the word.

By ROGER DUCKWORTH

How good it is to see a winger who simply sticks the ball past his man, runs round him, and takes the ball on. It may sound old fashioned, but it's effective.

So is Collins' interpretation of the old one-two — the quick return pass which is still the simplest way of getting past people.

French in form

It is easy to see why Mr Stock has been chasing him all summer. He played for the Luton manager at QPR, and it is obvious that he has been a team-mate of Mike Keen before. They have lost none of their understanding.

Keen, too, played a fine game, handing out a lesson in distribution, and change-of-direction. He was in most of the match's more impressive moves.

Keen and Allen, playing in the number 10, but operating from midfield, were complete masters of the situation.

And Graham French stamped his seal on the match when he joined in 25 minutes from the end. He replaced Brian Lewis, who was looking tarnished after collecting a first-half kick that had scored stud-marks across an ankle.

French was unstoppable, and has won himself a 90-minute stint at Peterborough on Wednesday night when Luton take on "The Posh" in the first round of the League Cup. Collins is not eligible for the Cup competion under the 14-day "quarantine" rule.
rule.

The pair who joined Luton, from Fulham during the summer, Malcolm MacDonald and John Ryan, both gave workmanlike shows. MacDonald, who cost £17,500, started on the left wing, where he showed distinct possibilities. He does a good line in centres from acute angles, and likes to work inside.

He worked hard throughout, and was still trying in injury time when he laid on the third goal for Keen.

Ryan is a rugged player who tackles hard and covers well. He also likes to back up the attack when they are pressing, and possesses a powerful shot.

Flair

Luton are in the enviable position of having two first-rate goalkeepers. Read got the job on Saturday and grasped his chance with both hands. Last year's first choice, Sandy Davie, who watched from the trainer's box, saw his rival execute some first-class saves, and fulfil his task in a completely competent manner.

The defence did not settle as quickly as the attack, though Bannister, looking slimmer than he did last season, gave little away. At centre-half Branston took time to settle down, and in the second half he almost gave a goal away when he "set up" Mulvaney, who was not sharp enough to cash in on the easiest of chances. Even so it was left to Read to save the situation.

John Moore's confidence grew as the match progressed, and by the second half he was playing with aggressive flair, covering well at the back and tackling hard.

Though there are still some creases to iron out, Luton moved sweetly at times, with Collins, Keen, Allen and Sheffield finding a good understanding. MacDonald was not afraid to move out of position, and showed a bent for joining in these swift-flowing moves. The Town are strengthened as from today for Alan Slough is now available again after serving a week's suspension.

Smartness

Barrow's defence were no mugs. Left back Davis, right half Street, and centre half Arrowsmith were all impressive — as was goalkeeper George Heyes, who made some splendid saves.

Deservedly, Allen scored the Town's first goal, in the 27th minute, after working with Collins. He beat Heyes, with the help of a slight deflection off a defender, with a low shot.

Ten minutes later Collins showed his smartness to score number two after Heyes had saved a penalty by Lewis. The goalkeeper could not hold the ball, and it bounced free. Before he could recover, Collins dashed in and netted.

LUTON TOWN: Read; Ryan, Bannister; Keen, Branston, Moore; Collins, Lewis (French), Sheffield, Allen, MacDonald.

BARROW: Heyes; Cooper, Davis; Street, Arrowsmith, Hollis; Garbett, Morris, McArthur, Mulvaney (Ellison), Storf.

Referee — Mr R. C. Challis (Tonbridge).

Attendance — 12,080.