

IT'S GOING TO BE NO WALK-OVER

LUTON TOWN 1, HALIFAX TOWN 1

69/70.

HAPPENINGS in the Town's last two matches have plainly pointed to the fact that the Third Division this season is unlikely to be a walk-over for anyone and, for the second consecutive time at home, the Town found themselves struggling.

Not so much, perhaps, as they did against the Orient, but less successfully, and they had to yield a point to a highly competent Halifax defence.

Yet, they had the best of starts, with a goal in five minutes from MacDONALD, who firmly headed a corner from Collins well wide of Smith.

That looked as if it might be the beginning of a goal rush, and subsequent play lent substance to that belief, with Collins bringing Smith to his knees, and French having a free kick tipped on to the top of the bar by Smith.

Equaliser

In the main, the Halifax approach was defensive, with McCarthy deployed as an auxiliary defender, but they broke out to equalise unexpectedly in the 27th minute.

A long throw-in by McCarthy, from near the corner flag, was only half cleared by Ryan, and the ball went to HILL on the edge of the penalty area.

No-one moved decisively enough to challenge, and the former England player coolly placed the ball into the roof of the net.

A similar move could have put Halifax into a shock lead, because Nicholl came streaming through to head wide with Read rooted to his line.

That early sparkle of the Town had evaporated, and the nearest they came to

regaining their lead was near half-time when French broke through spectacularly and Smith saved at full-length.

From early in the second half, it was obvious that Halifax had settled for a point, because they packed their penalty area with much skill, and no amount of pressure could crack them.

Just once, MacDonald found a clear avenue

Report by ERIC PUGH

through which to shoot, and the ball hit the back of the net, only for the goal to be disallowed because Allen was offside.

Too late

Near misses there were, but the Town became more and more frustrated. With eleven minutes left, Sheffield was brought on for Lewis, as a last desperate throw, but it was too late.

Yet, in almost the last minute, French nearly saved the Town's faces with a glancing header that went inches wide.

French, who spent the second half on the right wing, was always the forward most likely to break down the Halifax barrier, and his display was a pointer to the fact that the best way to combat such tactics was around the defence and not through it.

Far too often, the Town tried the down-the-middle

route and, with Collins, coming inside in search of the ball, there was too much bunching in midfield.

Lewis had an unproductive time, and MacDonald was always the more dangerous spearhead. As always, Allen was a tremendous worker, and Slough did a competent job as stand in centre-half.

Moore seems to be out of touch, while Keen's distribution was too often awry, which did not help the general pattern.

Of the full-backs I thought Bannister the better because Ryan was inclined to be a little erratic and did not make full use of the fact that McCarthy was so often back helping his defence.

On the run of the play—the Town had 15 corners to three — this was a match they should have won comfortably.

However, they must expect other teams to come here and lay down a defen-



KEITH ALLEN — Another hard-working display for Town.

sive blanket with the same proficiency as did Halifax, and they must tailor their tactics to meet such a contingency.

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

HALIFAX TOWN: Smith; Wallace, Burgin; Pickering, Nicholl, Robertson; Ryden (Shawcross), Leonard, Lawther, Hill, McCarthy.

Referee: R. V. Spittle, Great Yarmouth. Attendance: 13,759.