

TOWN NEED A COOL HEAD

69/70

HAD the Town been able to substitute poise and coolness for speed and near desperation, they might not have disappointed their biggest League crowd of the season — 18,065 — by failing to score for the first time, and forfeiting a point to a highly capable Bournemouth side.

The impression I gained was one of hustle and bustle and a great need for someone to hold the ball in midfield and slow things down a bit.

Chances there were, mostly of the snap variety because of the quick Bournemouth tackling, but, indisputably, some should have been accepted.

MacDonald, on whom the strain of taking such a buffeting as a front-runner in so many matches, seems to be telling, missed a couple in the first half. At that time, the Town's best hope of breaking through seemed to be French, but he was not brought into the game often enough. Often when he was, the pass was delayed just long enough for a defender to come in with a tough tackle.

On the other hand, at least three times, the ball was scrambled off the Bournemouth line, with Tees the main sufferer.

Yet Bournemouth's was not wholly a defensive

battle. They were willing to break out quickly into attack, with MacDougall and Hold their main strikers, and it was as well for the Town that Davie's anticipation was in such good working order.

Possibly, the major blow to the Town's hopes came three minutes from half-

Report by ERIC PUGH

time, when Slough was led off with an ankle injury. Sheffield came on for the second half, and caused a reconstruction that took MacDonald out of the striking line.

No-one ever tries harder than Sheffield, but even his combined enthusiasm with Tees could not find a way through.

Perhaps the most acceptable chances fell to Collins and Allen, but numerous other shots were blocked or saved by the agile Jones.

Even so, Bournemouth had the strength to come back so well in the last 10 minutes that they could have smashed the Town's unbeaten record.

They came within inches of it when Jardine, playing on doggedly despite a facial injury, headed MacDougall's effort on to a post.

In this final phase, Davie

also did a major share, to complete his best game of the season. He amply demonstrated that he has fully recovered his confidence in leaving his goal.

One of the Town's major faults was their inaccurate passing which tended to bog them down in midfield. Again, too, I query their wisdom of playing with only one effective winger in home matches.

Collins was deployed mostly in midfield, and was inclined to be too stereotyped, as was Keen.

Nicholl did not have one of his better games, but there can be no faulting a defence that keeps a clean sheet.

Bannister emerged with as much credit as anyone, and there was a good deal of hard work and drive from Allen.

No-one could accuse the Town of lacking effort, determination and enthusiasm. They had all that in abundance, but much of it came to nothing mainly because of over-anxiety, stemming possibly from fear of losing their unbeaten record.

LUTON TOWN: Davie; Jardine, Bannister; Keen, Nicholl, Slough (Sheffield); Collins, MacDonald, Tees, Allen, French.

BOURNEMOUTH: Jones; White, Miller; Naylor, Stocks, Foote; Hartley, Rowles, MacDougall, Hold, Meredith. Substitute: Simmonds. Referee: J. Hunting, Wigston Fields, Leicester.