

TOWN GET FOOD FOR THOUGHT

69/70

LUTON TOWN met their match on Saturday. They suffered their first League defeat of the season, to the most professional-looking Division III side they have met so far. And they have just a week in which to put their house in order before another difficult away task — at Brighton.

The writing had been on the wall for a week or so. Luton struggled to take a home point from Bournemouth, and they had heard all about the skills and ambitions of Doncaster for a couple of weeks.

So defeat came as no real surprise.

There's still very little wrong with their record this season — especially away from home, where they have lost one and won five of seven matches. What is important is that Luton provided fair opposition in a sporting, fast and entertaining match in front of the biggest crowd of the season at Belle Vue.

No complaints

In fact, until Alan Slough headed into his own goal in the 33rd minute, Town were giving as good as they got.

That goal gave Doncaster just the impetus they wanted, and they turned on an admirable performance of powerful football. Team-work was abundant, with every home player backing each other up, and winning balls that should, by rights, have gone to Luton.

At the same time, Luton can

do better than this. Even though they had left back Jack Bannister injured from the opening minutes, and missing in the second half, there was a lot of bad passing, and some of the tackling was not as hard as it might have been.

The football was pleasing enough to watch, but Luton never managed to collar the proceedings by the scruff of the neck. At times their defence was easily opened, and it was a good job Sandy Davie had one of his best days.

**DONCASTER 2
LUTON TOWN 0**

By
ROGER DUCKWORTH

The Town can't complain about losing their unbeaten record — and their win bonus. They were not sharp enough to catch Doncaster. And there was little bite from a Luton attack that was slow to build.

French was below his best, Macdonald and Tees missed the few chances that were created, and Collins spent the afternoon operating behind the front runners, to little avail.

Keen, who lacked direction with his passing again, could not rally enough fire in the belly of the Town, and to me, at least, they never looked like winning.

Bannister off

Things looked grim when Jack Bannister, limping heavily, was called off. Macdonald took over at left back, a position in which he has played for Fulham, and Laurie Sheffield led the attack.

Again Sheffield showed enthusiasm, but could not tilt the scales in Luton's favour. He and Tees were given little chance against the fast-covering Doncaster defence.

The best chance of the match fell to Sheffield. He neatly collected a long through ball, nipped past Robertson, and then, with only Ogston to beat, hammered the ball wide.

By this time, however, Luton were two down. Three minutes after the interval lively centre-forward Briggs collected a swift return pass and netted from close in.

At right back Jardine did an adequate job, but he had the best man on the field against him — left winger Usher. Slough did well, considering he passed a fitness test at 8.15am on Saturday, and Nicholl was stretched to his limit, to plug some suspicious-looking holes in the defence.

Keith Allen had a good match, working as well as ever, but individual effort is of little use against a side like Doncaster. You have to work together, and this is where Luton slipped up. To work together you have to be able to pass straight, and be willing to chase every "50-50" ball with the intention of winning it.

Bannister, who jarred a knee, hopes to be fit for Saturday's trip to Brighton.

Mac at back

Tomorrow Town play Aston Villa in that promised friendly at Kenilworth Road, but they will not be doing too much in the way of experimenting. Bannister will be given a rest, and Macdonald has been named at left back.

This gives Laurie Sheffield chance to show what he has promised recently when called on as substitute. He will lead the attack, with Matt Tees taking the number eight shirt, and acting as his co-striker.

Sandy Davie will play for the first half, and Tony Read for the second.

Manager Alec Stock, who might have used the opportunity to try out one or two ideas, said today: "We don't

want this to be too friendly a friendly! And I mean that in the best possible way. We want it to be an attractive match.

"You can over-experiment in games like this. To me it's a game we want to win — and we are putting out our strongest team."

Macdonald, who has looked a bit tired in the last couple of matches, could perhaps have done with a rest. But let's not forget that this defeat at Doncaster was only the second League match Luton have lost in the last 33.

To finish on a bright note, let me congratulate the Luton Town supporters for their impeccable behaviour on the special train home. Their team had lost — but there was not a single hint of dissent. Almost 350 Luton fans travelled on the train, along with the players and the official party.

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

DONCASTER: Ogston; Wilcockson, Gray; Flowers, Robertson, Haselden; Watson, Regan, Briggs, Johnson, Usher. Sub: Rabiohn.