

HARD-FOUGHT, BUT NOT 69/70 VERY INSPIRING

ROTHERHAM UTD. 1, LUTON TOWN 1

THAT jack of all trades, Keith Allen was both villain, perhaps unwittingly, and hero for the Town in a hard-fought but not very inspiring match at Rotherham this afternoon.

Three minutes before half-time he conceded what can be best described as a controversial penalty for hands.

There is no doubt that he did handle, but he claimed, probably with some justification, that he was pushed on to the ball by Watson, in which case the handling was unintentional. But the referee had no doubt about it, and Rotherham went one up, which was no more than they deserved at that stage.

However, Allen, the player who never falls below the standard he has set for himself, re-adjusted the balance, shortly after the interval, with a neatly headed goal, and for me he was the man of the match.

This was not a particularly distinguished display by the Town, but what can one say about a team which has now taken 14 points out of 18 away from home?

As Alec Stock said last weekend: "We seem to have got it about right in away matches," and who am I to argue about that after this, another most encouraging result?

Once again it was a display with heavy emphasis on defence, and reliance on MacDonald and Tees as the strikers, with ancillary help from French, who, however, was not in one of his most direct moods, and tended to hang on to the ball.

Tees, to me a good player, is taking a good deal of punishment through lack of support, and again he had a bruising afternoon.

At the same time I can feel sympathy for the comparatively inexperienced MacDonald, who is carrying a heavy load with the minimum of service.

Defensively there were times when things were not working well, especially in the first half, when Slough, perhaps apprehensive of the striking power of Pantham, was gumming up the offside trap by hanging back too far.

However, on the whole the system worked well, and I thought Ryan and Bannister did a good job against a couple of threatening wingers.

Nicholl had something of a handful in Lownes, the player Rotherham could have sold for £20,000 recently, and although I feel he could assert himself more, he still came out on top.

In midfield the Town were not really in command.

When Keen distributed the ball accurately he looked a first-class player, but Collins too often seemed to be in Nomansland, and I still question the wisdom of trying to play with one effective winger, a deficiency which is underlined when French is held, as he was mostly today.

All in all, it was a pretty untidy sort of game, with Rotherham losing all their rhythm after the equaliser, and more or less disintegrating when Mealand went off through injury, and Hague, who had been a force in mid-field, had to drop back.

There was no doubt that the Town earned their point, perhaps the hard way, and they were in no danger at all, once they had gained equality.

Attendance: 8,727.