

LUTON NOTCH

UP FIFTH

HOME DRAW

LUTON TOWN 1, BARNSELEY 1

RAPIDLY, the Town are qualifying for the title of treble chance experts, and the draw they made with fellow promotion contenders Barnsley this afternoon was their fifth in nine matches at Kenilworth Road.

That they should not have allowed a point to get away is probably the understatement of the year, because they had the chance to make certain of both by a decisive margin.

After the best of starts with a goal from Malcolm MacDonald after eight minutes they always looked smarter in attack but their finishing never reached the same standard as much of their approach work.

If it had, they could have been three up at half-time and safely decided the destination of these two absolutely vital points.

Championships are won by the acceptance of the half or threequarter chance, and these are not being snapped up by the Town at the moment.

At the same time, some simple ones are being allowed to slip by, too, and this was definitely not their day in front of goal. Had it been, Malcolm MacDonald would have earned considerable fame, because he should have had a hat-trick at least if he had been more steady or more accurate with his shooting.

On at least two occasions he shot over from what can best be described perfect positions when he had time to control the ball and make certain.

Not that he was the only offender, because Tees was not on the mark either, and others missed opportunities.

At the same time, one could make out a bad luck case for the Town in that so many of their efforts missed by inches, and others were cleared when the gallant Arblaster was beaten.

But bad luck certainly could not be pinpointed on all the opportunities that were wasted.

Altogether it was an afternoon of sheer frustration for the Town, who for the most part were so far superior in their build-up and the territorial advantage they gained.

For me the return to orthodoxy of playing two raiding wingers paid off.

Harrison had an excellent first-half in which he was a constant threat, and there was sufficient service in spasms from French on the other flank to provide the openings that certainly should have been accepted.

Barnsley made a very tentative start in which their defence, obviously missing Winstanley, was indecisive, and it was in the early period of settling down that the Town could have struck the deciding blow.

The defence was not often in trouble, with Branston, not so commanding in the air as he used to be, showing much of his old flair and Bannister and Slough stood out.

Upshot was that Davie had a quiet afternoon, with one memorable save in the first-half. Barnsley had not sufficient thrust up front to cause him undue worry, and it became obvious shortly after their unexpected equaliser that they would be glad to settle for a point.

For the crowd of 17,422, the biggest on a Saturday this season, it was pretty good entertainment, fast and hard-fought.