

TOWN MUST LEARN TO TAKE CHANCES

A CATALOGUE of missed chances cost Luton another point at home to Barnsley on Saturday, but at least chances were created — which is more than can be said for previous matches at home in which the Town have dropped a point.

And a new-look attack issued a promise of better things to come, entertaining, as well as frustrating, the biggest Saturday crowd of the season at Kenilworth Road.

Luton proved, beyond any reasonable doubt, that the formula for success at home is to have two wingers raiding from the touchline. It worked like a charm up to a point. The trouble was the inability of the strikers to translate chances into something more tangible.

Let us be thankful that the rot set in later — after Malcolm Macdonald had swept home a sixth-minute goal from a Harrison cross — and not sooner. For nothing else was to come Luton's way, despite a basinful of glorious opportunities.

"It's like a disease, this not being able to win at home," said manager Alec Stock afterwards.

Luton's superiority was emphasised by Barnsley manager Johnny Steele, who said: "We have not been put under so much pressure by any side all season. We were darned lucky to draw. Luton are a good side. Along with Orient they are the best in the division."

Draw sequence

But these warming words are little consolation to the Luton fans who want to see their side win. Luton have now drawn their last three home matches. In fact five of the last seven home encounters have ended all square. It's a good job they have been winning away from home.

In spite of their failure to oblige with a win, this was a best performance for a long time from Luton. It's rare to see a side on top for so long without scoring goals.

There were some anxious moments for the Town defence, who were slow to clear on occasions. Terry Branston lacked some of his old authority in the air, and both Ryan and Bannister almost ran into trouble at times. But on the whole the Luton full-backs played well.

Alan Slough had a solid afternoon in the middle of the backs, and again Keith Allen was outstanding, working in both directions from a mid-field position. This fellow never seems to tire, and he can take much of the credit for Luton's successes this season.

LUTON TOWN 1, BARNSLEY 1 By Roger Duckworth



MIKE HARRISON
satisfactory comeback

Alongside him Mike Keen did well in a quieter sort of way, working particularly efficiently with Mike Harrison on the left wing. He fed him with the sort of passes a winger wants when trying to make a first-team comeback.

Harrison, playing in his first senior match of the season just had to do well. After being padlocked to the reserves since the start of the season, the left winger has been dropping hints for weeks that he ought to be in the first team.

He tired visibly towards the end, but this was understandable. The pace of the Third Division is vastly different from that of the Football Combination. Before he faded, Harrison did his job.

And reverting to the right, Graham French again did well.

It was in the middle where things went wrong. Neither Tees nor Macdonald can be faulted for their industry, but the chances that went begging were too numerous to count. Mac was the main culprit, and had things run for him a bit more, he would have had three or four goals. It was like one boxer being far superior to his opponent, but failing to hit him when he was at his mercy.

In Luton's goal Sandy Davie's good form continued, and in the first half he kept Luton ahead with a splendid acrobatic save to a hard shot from Earnshaw.

Barnsley's equaliser came in the second half. It followed a free kick for an offence by Keen, and was smeared with confusion.

Left half Howard took the kick, and hammered it straight past the Luton defensive wall and into the net. Nobody seemed to know whether the free kick was indirect or not. The referee half raised his hand, but he could have been signalling as to which way the kick was to go.

Even the players were confused. Afterwards the Barnsley manager said: "John Bettany told me in the dressing room that he did not know. He asked the referee, and was told it was direct. On this information Bettany told Howard, who took the kick, to have a go at goal. He did, and we scored."

There was a lot of discussion on this point after the match, but it did not alter the result.

On top

Luton are on top again, though only on goal-average — thanks to the defeat of Rochdale by Halifax. This should give them added confidence for their FA Cup, first round tie at Bournemouth on Saturday. This is one they really want to win.

On Saturday Mr Stock said: "We shall be in there trying. Bournemouth are always stubborn because they have a bit of a reputation. But we don't want anyone saying we want to go out of the Cup so that we can concentrate on the League."

MATCH DETAILS

LUTON TOWN: Davie; Ryan, Bannister; Keen, Branston, Slough; French, Macdonald, Tees, Allen, Harrison. Sub: Collins.

BARNSELEY: Arblaster; Murphy, Booth; Bettany, Robson, Howard; Earnshaw, Boardman, Loyden, Evans, Hamstead. Sub: Graham.

GOALS: Macdonald (Luton) 6 mins, Howard (Barnsley) 49 minutes.

REFEREE: Mr J. K. Taylor (Wolverhampton).

ATTENDANCE: 17,422.