

A dream come true for Hillingdon—a nightmare for Luton

69/70

THE BETTER TEAM lost, but the non-league winners deserved their victory. That may sound Irish, but it sums up the eviction of Third Division leaders Luton Town from the FA Cup by Southern League pace-setters Hillingdon Borough at West Drayton on Saturday.

Let me explain. Luton took an early lead and should have made sure of going into today's draw by rubbing in their superior skills.

But they didn't, and Hillingdon, who had a bit of luck, succeeded through their determination and dogged enthusiasm.

And I am not at all surprised at the result. Every year one of

Allen had previously provided most of the prompting from midfield, helped, early on, by John Collins.

What is most difficult to understand is why Luton did not cash in on their seventh minute lead, splendidly headed in by Matt Tees from a Graham French centre. French was Luton's best player.

With only three effective Luton forwards, Hillingdon's defence was allowed to cope. It was late in the game before Mike Harrison was introduced — at the expense of Malcolm Macdonald who had not impressed.

This home defence, I am sure, would have bent under a real pounding. But it was let off the hook. In the second-half, the Boro began to realise that there was more than a glint of hope.

Diligent

Town captain Mike Keen had a continuation of poor form, and I would have liked to see Alan Slough, a natural attacking wing half, change places with his skipper. Slough worked diligently in the middle of the back four with Nicholl, but may well have been more effective given the chance to use his speed and natural flair in going forward from midfield.

Hillingdon equalised three minutes before the interval when Eddie Reeve, a former Brentford player who now subsidises his Southern League wages by cleaning windows lashed a low shot through Town's milling defence.

Eight minutes after half-time substitute Gary Townend, a local taxi-driver, steered a scrambled effort through Sandy Davie's legs. But they

WHAT THEY SAID

JIM LANGLEY (Hillingdon manager):

"I don't mind who we get in the next round. I can't say we'd like Manchester United because if we get a little club we may get into the fourth round.

"For the first 20 minutes we were nervous and Luton were well on top. But once we equalised Luton lost their rhythm.

"It was the greatest moment in my football career.

"I felt sorry for Alec Stock. He's so genuine and has done so much

for the game.

"Now we don't fear anyone at home. We have gone 54 games in 22 months at home without losing."

MR TONY HUNT (Luton chairman): "I got back from Australia just in time to see the match. I think I should stay there. Luton seem to play better when I am away, from all accounts."

MR GEOFF BROWN (Hillingdon director): "I am still numb. I can't believe it's happened yet. I knew we would do it — I wrote so in our programme.

"Next round? I'd like Manchester United away."



ALEC STOCK (Luton manager): "There's no such thing as hard luck in this game. We were going well, but I thought we lost a bit before half time.

"Of course we are disappointed. We haven't been kicked in the teeth like this very often this season, have we? Everyone has upsets and disappointments — that's life."

all count — especially in Cup ties.

After that it would have taken hell and high water to have knocked them off their pedestal.

They even began to get cocky, winning the "hospital" balls and running with a renewed vigour. Spurred by great performances from

manager Jim Langley and skipper Dicky Moore in defence, and Pat Terry up front, Hillingdon proceeded to make a little bit of soccer history.

It was only towards the end that they began to flag again and by then Luton had run out of luck — as was emphasised when Tees hit a post from close in in injury time.

That came from an opening carved by Harrison who did well in a fast run.

When the whistle went you could not really feel sorry for Luton. They should have sewn things up much earlier. They should have shown more aggression in attack.

Someone said to me afterwards: "For goodness sake don't start writing that now Luton can concentrate on the League — not after that."

Vigour

But there's not a lot else they can do, is there?

In Luton's goal Davie had an up-and-downer. At times he showed courage; at times uncertainty. Full backs John Ryan and Jack Bannister did rather better.

Boro player-manager Jim Langley was supremely happy afterwards. As he tossed back a glass of champagne, posed for cameramen and arranged a TV interview, he told me: "On the 90 minutes I think we won on merit, I am absolutely delighted."

Luton, understandably, were not so happy. The coach drive home was like a funeral party.

When your ship springs a leak you have to be careful not to go down. Luton were holed on Saturday — I hope there's a good caulking job done before Bradford City come down on Saturday.

MATCH DETAILS

HILLINGDON: Lowe; Batt, Langley; Reeve, Newcombe, Moore, Fairchild, Cozens, Terry, Carter (Townend), Vafiadis.

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

GOALS — Tees (Luton, 7 mins), Reeve (Hillingdon 42 mins), Townend (Hillingdon 53 mins).

REFEREE — P. K. Byford (Witham).

ATTENDANCE — 9,300.

Hillingdon Boro 2
Luton Town 1

By
ROGER DUCKWORTH

the non-League sides scuppers form, and Hillingdon had everything made for them. They were at home, everyone — except Luton and their followers — wanted them to win, and they were fighting for fame.

Add to this the small ground, the partisan crowd and the fact that it was their first taste of the big time, and you see that Hillingdon were onto a good thing.

Luton's disinterest in front of goal did not help either, and I would have liked to have seen another Luton forward long before Keith Allen lend his weight three-quarters of the way through the match.