

Stock fumes at referee's decisions

By ROGER DUCKWORTH

BRISTOL ROVERS 3
LUTON TOWN 0

LUTON TOWN manager Alec Stock ran on to the pitch at Eastville, Bristol, last night — but before he said anything rude he remembered his manners and doffed his trilby to the referee.

Afterwards he said: "When you are going for promotion nobody is supposed to take it away from you except the team you are playing."

What Mr Stock was complaining about was Bristol's first goal. Everyone but the referee — and that means the Rover's chairman too — thought Ray Graydon's goal was offside.

When the Rovers' winger put the ball in, the Luton manager leapt from the trainer's bench and ran towards a linesman, who promptly called for the referee. But Mr Stock raised his hat and went and sat down.

This was the first of a series of refereeing blunders which made Luton's defeat a joke — if you've got a sick sense of humour.

Goal disallowed

For 20 minutes later Graydon netted again — this time a good looking goal — and Mr A. W. S. Jones, an Ormskirk official, disallowed it.

But Luton were in a poor sort of mood and never looked to have enough guns to overpower lively, hard-running Rovers.

Still angry a couple of hours later, Mr Stock told me over dinner at the team's hotel in Bristol: "I was upset with that first goal. The sides are

supposed to score the goals — the referee and linesmen don't take part.

"It was at least six yards offside. It was ridiculous. In 25 years I have never said anything to a linesman before.

"But nobody is supposed to take it away from you like that, other than the team you are playing."

Apart from that it took a couple of penalties — one good

and one doubtful — to KO Luton.

Not that they were ever going to win. There was no semblance of an attack and most of the Luton eleven were funnelled into a defensive bottleneck by busy Bristol who made the Town look anything but promotion candidates.

Graydon's controversial goal came after 19 minutes. He followed up a misdirected clearance on to the right wing and sped for goal with Luton thinking offside was a mere formality. But Mr Jones did not blow, and Graydon had his first shot blocked by the puzzled defence before he beat Davie from the rebound.

It counted — and Luton had no answer. Matt Tees was cut out of things by Phil Roberts and with French not showing anything like his normal form Macdonald, too, was out of the running. I can't remember a match where Luton had so little to offer up front.

The majority of French's centres went behind. But often he did not get even that far against a determined Tony Ford.

Keith Allen, who had done as well as anyone, was substituted by John Collins after half-time. But this made little difference except to spur late choice John Moore into greater efforts to prove his worth after a shaky first half.

Macdonald miss

Macdonald had Luton's best — and only real — chance after being put through by Slough but he blinded it over the angle. Slough, who went straight to bed after the game

with a heavy cold, did not have one of his best nights.

Recently Rovers have been attacked in the local Press and called "powder puffs". Last night they looked anything but that, and showed toughness and adventure.

Their first penalty came after 53 minutes when Moore and Ryan converged on the speeding Bobby Jones. It was Ryan who made him hit the deck like a shot screen cowboy. Full-back Alex Munro, who can dish it out a bit himself, scored from the penalty.

But in the 78th minute Rovers were presented with the points by referee Jones

after Ryan tackled Bryn Jones who went flying in dramatic fashion to sneak another penalty. This time the other full-back, Ford, scored.

If this was a legitimate penalty I'll hand in my Press card! Even the Rover regulars sitting near me could not contain their laughter.

Munro sent off

And this bizarre night reached the height of nonsense five seconds from the end when the inept Mr Jones sent off Munro for kicking Collins in a drop-ball incident. Has there ever been a bounce up where both players do not kick out at the ball?

Keen worked bravely in midfield, but Luton were outplayed and Moore was driven deeper and deeper into defence.

Ryan and Bannister came

through with some respectability and Nicholl worked with a will. In goal Sandy Davie had no chance with the shots that beat him.

Collins was not able to add much — and I thought Allen was unlucky to be the one to be axed.

All in all this Luton side was outplayed but in my view Mr Stock's outburst was justified.

Now for Barrow on Saturday. I hope Luton go there with more ideas of attack than they had last night — or they will be in more trouble.



John Collins, right, challenges Rovers' Stuart Taylor in a mid-air duel at Eastville last night