

TOWN SURGE BACK INTO —THE RUNNING—

AFTER MAKING a meal of mopping up Rotherham on Good Friday, Luton Town gobbled up Reading as afters to make it Good Saturday at Kenilworth Road. The thousands of Luton fans who decided to give the match a miss will by now be black and blue from kicking themselves.

For this was the Town's finest performance of the season. They brushed aside Reading, once promotion hopefuls, like crumbs off a tablecloth.

Malcolm Macdonald helped himself to as good a hat-trick as you are ever likely to see, and it's a pity that there were only 14,000 people there to witness it.

Perhaps the ones that stayed away were those who have been moaning recently as Mac's efforts have passed the outside of the post instead of inside. On Saturday things began to run for him again, and he put in a superlative performance.

For once the crowd was whole-heartedly behind the team. It made a difference. Roared on beseechingly Luton once again began to look like a team with ambitions. And all of a sudden they are back in the promotion stakes.

Magnificent saves

The afternoon was rounded off by superb performances by newcomers Alan Starling, 19 tomorrow, and Viv Busby, Luton's 20-year-old discovery, both of whom were cheered to the echo both at half-time and at the end.

It was Starling, in goal, who saved Luton in an even first half. He made a handful of magnificent saves, which must have made Sandy Davie, the man he replaced for Easter, fear for his future.

And Busby, after laying the first goal on for Mac in masterly fashion, waited for the Town centre forward to complete his hat-trick before grabbing his maiden League goal.

When Busby struck in Luton's fourth, he was mobbed by his colleagues. He had an outstanding match, and if he looked tired towards the end, it was understandable. As the match drew to a close he hardly had the strength to run. When he reached the dressing room he had to be undressed and dropped into the bath.

His exhaustion must have been worth it. Now he's shown what he can do, he will have to concentrate on showing that he can keep it up. The trouble with setting a high standard early is that nothing less afterwards will do. By next season Busby should have come on a lot — and his stamina should then be up to his intentions.

Day's highlights

Mac and Busby worked the old one-two in the 11th minute for Luton's leading scorer to start off his hat-trick with a well-taken goal.

But the highlight of the day was Mac's second. Robbing Morgan on the touchline, near the half-way mark, he used his

by **ROGER DUCKWORTH**

**LUTON TOWN 5
READING 0** 6/9/70

speed and balance to hare round the outside of the full back. He then calmly pulled the ball back from the by-line, after a 50-yard sprint, pulled goalkeeper Death out of position, and rammed the ball home.

Five minutes later he smashed in a low right wing cross from close in to complete his second hat-trick of the season, and to become the Third Division's leading scorer.

On his day there's no sharper marksman in the division, and Macdonald underlined his value in no uncertain manner on this occasion.

Busby's goal also involved the Luton centre forward. Mike Keen showed years of experience when he refused to be rushed into taking a free kick by an impatient crowd. He waited for Macdonald to take a position near the far post, and then hit a 40-yard ball straight on to his forehead. Mac nodded the ball down to Busby, who seemed to have all the time in the world to score his first goal.

Confident defence

Keen had another fine match, working with industry and skill in every quarter of the field.

In the middle of the defence Terry Branston is still enjoying his new lease of life, and he hardly put a foot wrong all afternoon. And there is still as much bite in his tackling as there has always been.

With Ryan and Bannister still in fine fettle, the defence had a real look of confidence. John Moore had a couple of shaky moments, but always managed to recover in time to save himself. He is obviously enjoying his football at the moment.

Collins and Slough showed good understanding, while Harrison, playing on the left in the absence of the injured French, had a workmanlike afternoon. He sometimes faded from the picture for spells, but made up for all this with a well-taken fifth goal.

Football fortunes, they say, are won and lost at Easter. If Luton can continue this form at Barnsley tonight they must not be written off. They now have to keep winning and wait for one of the others to slip up. Anything is possible in this breath-taking race for Division Two.