

Mac's misses hit limp Luton

Halifax 0 Luton 0: by ANDREW EVANS

69/70

THE LIFELESS Shay Ground with its near-empty terraces became a graveyard for the scoring aspirations of the Third Division's top marksman, Luton centre forward Malcolm McDonald. And with him out of touch despite a goal tally of 25 this season, Luton's hopes of Second Division football may also have been buried.

Luton have mixed memories of Halifax. Four years ago they were beaten there in a match which cost them promotion. Two years ago their win at Halifax clinched promotion for them to the Third Division.

Yesterday's encounter had all the hallmarks of a goalless draw as both teams failed miserably to raise their game.

Luton Town manager Alec Stock had given his men orders to go out and grab both points against injury-hit Halifax.

Luton gained so much possession in midfield that at times they seemed almost embarrassed by the ease with which they were allowed to set up their attacks.

But McDonald had one of those days when nothing went right for him.

CLEAR RUN

Shortly before the break McDonald shot straight at Smith from only 10 yards and midway through the second half Pickering somehow completely missed a ball to give the centre forward a clear run to goal.

But, with all the time in the world to pick his spot, he again sent his shot straight at Smith.

More than a hint of desperation showed itself in Luton's play in the last 20 minutes—a period when for the first time Halifax began to play creative football.

With full-backs Andy Burgin and Jeff Lee moving smartly up on the overlap, Halifax threatened to snatch the vital goal.

For only the second time in the match Halifax inside left Bill Atkins managed to slip centre half Terry Branston and slammed in a great shot from 20 yards which goalkeeper Alan Starling did well to save diving to his left.

It was only the second time that Starling had been called upon to do any more than patrol his goal area.

The first came after just six minutes when Halifax left-winger Phil McCarthy got his head to a free-kick and Starling just managed to stop the ball on the line.