

DIVISION TWO—HERE WE COME

69/70

LUTON TOWN 1

SOUTHPORT 0

LUTON TOWN made promotion more than a possibility when they whipped Southport by an odd goal at Kenilworth Road last night. All they need now is one point to make sure of a place in Division Two. They also go up if Bristol Rovers fail to win at Tranmere on Friday night.

Luton won by a goal of greatness by young Viv Busby which squeezed the tension out of the evening like the juice out of a sour lemon.

By **ROGER DUCKWORTH**

After Luton's last home match of the season there were scenes of near delirium from a section of the crowd that stayed behind for a victory sing-song after the match. They refused to go home until manager Mr Alec Stock went out on to the pitch to give them a wave. When he did they went mad.

Unbelievable

Afterwards Mr Stock told me: "We are all having a drink to it but we are not there yet. Please emphasise that we are not there until we have passed the winning post."

And Busby, scorer of that great goal, climbed out of a muddy bath and said: "Blimey, I couldn't believe it when it went in. I saw the gap between these two defenders and knew I had just to go for it. When I hit the ball I thought it was going over the top. Then it dipped in — and I could hardly believe it."

In spite of all this, Luton missed chances, and found relegation-fighting Southport hard to beat. The second biggest cheer of the night went up when it was learned that lowly Gillingham had beaten Luton's main rivals Bristol Rovers. That was an unbelievable result.

Luton's relief at the goal was understandable. Southport had held them for the first half with a defensive display of incredible blatancy.

Southport signalled their intentions early. In the first five minutes there were five back passes to the goalkeeper and Luton were so much on top that Southport's two break-aways could have brought them goals — the Luton defence was so far up.

But three minutes after the interval Busby carved his name with pride on the match — and made it a fairy tale rise to fame for a lad who was playing in the Isthmian League three months ago.

It stemmed from a long clearance by goalkeeper Tony Read, returning to the side to play on his second game in three months.

The kick bounced to Busby deep in the Southport half. With the cool head of a veteran, Busby twice flicked the ball over the heads of defenders, rounded them in full control, and as a muscular sandwich of two defenders closed in on him, he drove the ball hard into the roof of the net. It was a truly magnificent goal that brought back memories of Bruce Rioch, and Viv was feted by the fans and his colleagues alike.

You must give credit to a game Southport side who, immediately Luton had scored, scrapped their defensive ideas and tried their utmost to pull one back.

French incident

Keen had a splendid header well saved on the line by Wraith, and after another fantastic piece of football by Busby saw him embark on a shoulders-down run, round the defence, and hit the underside of the crossbar from an impossible-looking angle.

After a shirt-pulling incident between French and Pearson, Pearson threw a punch at the Luton winger and I can't understand how he escaped punishment.

Of the Luton side Busby, Keen and Ryan were outstanding and Max Dougan did all that was asked of him after returning for his first senior match since September.

In goal Read did what little he had to do well and Branston and Moore were in solid moods.

Slough worked hard but was off target with his shooting — so was Collins, who missed a couple of chances.

On the wing French did not have an altogether happy night, while Macdonald showed speed and flair up front.

Southport's best player was goalkeeper Wraith, who received good support from player-manager Peat and left-half Malcolm Russell.

There was good support from a disappointingly small crowd and it was good to hear the Oak Road choir in full voice again. "Watford, Watford, here we come," was the cry they returned to last night. It certainly looks more than a possibility now — if not quite a formality.