

Goal-less draw earns promotion point



THE tension explodes with the champagne corks in the Luton dressing room. All the delight of promotion is captured in Tony Mardell's picture. From left to right: Chairman, Mr Tony Hunt, Mr Len Hawkins (director), Reg Game (trainer), John Collins, Keith Allen, Terry Branston, Mike Keen, Viv Busby, Sandy Davie. And at the back (left to right) are: Tony Read, Alan Slough, Malcolm Macdonald, John Ryan and Jackie Bannister.

A CHAMPAGNE NIGHT

QUOTES

ALEC STOCK (manager)

"It's great, mate. We must give a big 'well played' to our coach Jimmy Andrews. He's taken all the training and all the tactics. Let's give him a fair crack of the credit."

MIKE KEEN (skipper)

"It's hard to take in. It must have been awful to watch, but we've won promotion. We went through a bad patch earlier in the season, but we pulled out of it in time. The lads have done a great job."

TONY HUNT (chairman)

"We have done what we set out to achieve. And we have done it under a bit of stress. Tomorrow we hope to announce big plans for the future concerning alterations and new stands at Luton."

ERIC MORECAMBE (director)

"It's the Morecambe magic — it's made Ernie what he is today. It's wonderful. Just great."

JIMMY ANDREWS (coach)

"I think that as much as anything else, it was fitness that had a big say in it. Our blokes are fitter than the others."

By ROGER DUCKWORTH

MANSFIELD 0, LUTON TOWN 0

THAT VOLUBLE TRIO Tony Hunt, Alec Stock and Eric Morecambe led Luton Town's triumphant footballers in song and champagne last night after the Hatters had secured their return to Division Two. The chairman, the manager and the new director set the corks popping seconds after the final whistle at Mansfield, and continued the celebrations as the team's coach sped home down the Motorway.

It was a memorable night for the players, the officials and the hundreds of Luton fans who travelled to the Midlands to cheer Luton to promotion.

The only thing worth forgetting of the whole night was the football. It was abominable. Horrible.

But not a football follower in the country this morning will blame Luton for their tactics. They made no pretence of anything but clinging on to the point they started with — the point they needed for promotion.

Luton forgot all about attack or ignored it purposely. They packed their defence unashamedly, oblivious to the chants of 'shame' and 'shocking' from the Mansfield fans.

Unsavoury

For once I defend these tactics. There would have been no future at all in waking up this morning and saying: "Well, we played some nice football — what a pity we lost." This was an unsavoury job that had to be done as professionally as possible. It was.

There were some brief thrills set up by Luton early on while the light lasted. But Luton's scoring ambitions faded with the twilight.

The highlight of their attack was a magnificent shot by French. It came after 17 minutes when the Luton winger squeezed between two defenders, pulled another out of position, and belted a beautiful drive against the far post.

Earlier still, Macdonald had used his speed to chase a long goalkick from Read that hung awkwardly in the wind. He pulled the ball on to his thumping boot, the left, but goalkeeper Brown made a good diving catch.

That was about the extent of Luton's scoring aspirations.

Fast and flighty

They fell back and relied on the big boot. At times the Luton defence looked as jittery as the occasion, and Mansfield piled forward in an effort to beat the system. But it held out.

The match was fast and flighty, but Luton's forwards were forced further and further back. Luton began with kick and rush — and ended with kick and hope.

Luton cannot be blamed. They were playing to orders, but the hearts of those with Luton sympathies must have been fluttering on more than one occasion.

The back wall of Ryan, Slough, Branston, Moore and Bannister held out magnificently, and never has a football been kicked so far, so high and so often. There was little class for visiting managers, who included Arthur

MATCH DETAILS

LUTON TOWN: Read; Ryan, Bannister; Keen, Branston, Moore; Slough, Busby, Macdonald, Allen, French. Sub: Collins.

MANSFIELD: Brown; Pate, Walker; Quigley, Boam, Waller; McKenzie, Stenson, Jones, Roberts, Goodfellow. Sub: Sharkey.

Attendance 10,301.

Referee Mr A. P. Oliver (Leigh-on-Sea).

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Orient	44	24	12	8	65	34	60
LUTON	45	22	14	9	75	42	58
Bristol R	46	20	16	10	80	59	56
Fulham	45	20	15	10	81	54	55
Brighton	46	23	9	14	57	43	55
Barnsley	46	19	15	12	68	59	53

Rowley, Brian Clough and Matt Gillies, to mull over on the way home.

Love and hate

But what the heck Luton have won promotion — even if it meant finding touch like seasoned rugby players.

The Luton fans loved it. The Mansfield fans hated it — and toilet rolls blew across the pitch like the debris of a ticker-tape reception.

On the field there was a certain nervy dissension among the Town players. It wasteful.

Goalkeeper Tony Read fumbled a couple of times, and Keen and Allen spent most of the night with their backs to the wall. Up front Busby and Macdonald ran willingly when the opportunity arose, and French found the going hard

again an angry Mansfield defence.

What a relief when referee A. P. Oliver blew the final blast. Luton fans joyfully treaded the pitch, chanting: "Fe ar addin, we're going up."

What football there was came from Mansfield, but they found Luton's tactics impossible to fathom. Roberts went close with a first half flick from a corner, but for most of the time Luton kept them at bay. The ball spent most of the night above stand level. And you can't play football when it's up there.

It's only a pity that with no home matches remaining, Luton will not be able to do a lap of honour for their fans. But I would not be surprised to see one at Rochdale on Saturday, when the Town expect to have a 1,500 following.



MANAGER Alex Stock (right), coach Jimmy Andrews (centre) and trainer Reg Game mirror the tension of last night's occasion on their faces as they wait for the final whistle.