

RADIANT LUTON COME TO BOIL

20/71

LUTON TOWN 4 OXFORD UNITED 0

WITH ONE of the most entertaining displays of powerful, high speed football that I have ever seen them give, Luton demolished Oxford last night. And especially in the first half, they pounded them into the turf with as good a performance as you are ever likely to see.

Generous praise? Not a bit of it. Last night the promise that Luton have shown in their previous matches this season was blended into success. It has looked likely to happen in the last two matches, and last night it came with a bang.

What a pity that there was such a small crowd to see this match. The fact that only 16,000 turned up is a reflection on the goalless draw at home to Norwich a couple of weeks ago.

Too late

On the other hand, other sides are not likely to be as charitable as Oxford were. They paid the price of deciding in advance what to do. It is folly to blindly announce that you will attack away from home.

This is what manager Gerry Summers said. And his own worthy intentions hit him between the eyes. "We came out to get them," he said afterwards. "But Luton went two up in no time at all, and it was too late to alter style. Two down, we just had to keep going forward. We set our stall and had to stick to it."

With Oxford not following the usual visitors' policy of funnelling six or seven men back into their penalty area, Luton were given the freedom of the city.

But not many teams would have curbed Luton last night. They provided high-speed excitement. This was the fastest precision play by Luton for many a moon. And how the crowd loved it.

From the start it was obvious the Town had something special in store, but it was not until the 11th minute that it was transferred to the credit column. But the first goal was worth waiting for.

Cool second

Macdonald set off on an electric run on the left and crossed to Givens, who made a superb recovery under pressure to win a corner. This was placed by Court on Tees's head, and he thumped it down past Kearns for the first goal.

Mac himself coolly took the second, surging in on a defensive error and clipping the ball into the net. With Macdonald's speed and strength, Givens's enthusiasm and ball control, and Tees's power in the air, Luton's attack put fear into the hearts of Oxford.

I don't think I have ever seen Tees looking so sharp, and he underlined his form in the 39th minute with another flashing header past poor Kearns, who looked to have no cover at all. Ryan provided the superb cross after a piece of quick thinking by Moore.

Moore, in fact, had another exquisite game in the core of the defence, and was overshadowed only by Chris Nicholl, who proved he has

By ROGER DUCKWORTH

rekindled the form that so sadly deserted him for a time.

This pair gave Luton confidence in the middle of the field that enabled them to go forward with assurance.

And John Ryan and Slough were equally impressive at full back from where both sparked Luton raids.

David Court had a magnificent match, working with fierce ambition, and showing flair on the ball in tight situations as well as a good distributory sense.

And Hoy, who had to pack it in at half time with a slightly pulled thigh muscle, gave another reassuring performance. The good news after the match was that he is likely to be ready for Saturday.

Midfield role

He was replaced by Jimmy Ryan in the second half, and the ex-Manchester United man turned on a display of gritty, skilful, football that makes you wonder why ever he was out of the team at all.

Mike Keen was back at his best, supplying pinpoint passes from every department, and always ready to join in the attack.

It was pleasing to see the way Givens dropped back to replace Hoy. He has only ever played a midfield role once

before — that was for Manchester United against Everton. And he was told: "Go and mark Ball." He found it much easier last night. He looked the part.

In the Luton goal Tony Read was confident, but rarely troubled. This was one of his easier pay nights.

Luton's fourth goal came in the somewhat tamer second half. Jimmy Ryan made workmanlike progress up the middle, found Keen on the left touchline and the Luton skipper supplied Mac with an expert pass. He did the rest, wriggling round a defender and the goalkeeper in a tight circle and blasting the ball into the roof of the empty net.

For Oxford's part they never stopped trying. From the first they were on a hiding to nothing. Skeen and Clayton strived to find the net, but Luton's defence, elasticated several times, always cleared confidently.

United full back Shuker did well, but was booked for tripping Macdonald in the first half. Always full of fight, the Atkinson brothers gave a solid account of themselves, but it was to no avail.

Nobody wants to detract from Luton's great show in any way at all. But it will not be so easy against Middlesbrough on Saturday.

MATCH DETAILS

LUTON TOWN: Read; John Ryan, Slough; Hoy (Jimmy Ryan), Nicholl, Moore; Macdonald, Court, Tees, Keen, Givens.

OXFORD UNITED: Kearns; Lucas, Shuker; Smithson, Clarke, Thompson; Sloan, Atkinson, Skeen, Clayton, Atkinson. Sub: Evanson.

REFEREE: Mr B. Daniels (Rainham).

ATTENDANCE: 16,173.

GOALS: Tees (11min), Macdonald (24), Tees (39), Macdonald (57).