A goal that Nat would have been proud of

Luton forward Don Givens takes off in a spectacular dive and the ball is on its way into the Bolton net for the Town's second goal. Picture by TONY MARDELL. Below Chris Nicholl's header which gave Luton the lead. Picture by JOHN JONES.

TOWN TOIL AS FANS RETURN

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17-10-70

LUTON TOWN 2 BOLTON WANDERERS 0

IT'S ALWAYS the same isn't it? Put out the best china and the guests don't turn up; have a few cracked pots on view and the doorbell never stops ringing. That's just what happened to Luton on Saturday when the Town welcomed their biggest home League crowd of the season and then failed to put their best on show.

By ROGER DUCKWORTH

The fact that Luton won two points and move to second in the table vies with the fact that every-one is fit for the visit of Blackburn tomorrow for the most important emerging fact.

But if you can have an off-day and come out with two gleaming points, it can't be bad. Bolton were allowed more scope in the penalty area than all of the other sides Luton have played this season put together.

Frustration

After-wards, Nat Lofthouse, the Bolton manager, bemoaned his side's inability to cash in. "It's no good at all if you can't stick 'em in," he told me. "And this tends to be one of our troubles. Today we played some good football but failed. You don't deserve to win if you can't take your chances."

Mr Lofthouse's frustration is understandable. In his day he was one of England's most exciting centre-forwards. He enthused about Don Givens's superb first-half goal against his own team.

"What a magnificent goal it was," he said. "It's lovely to see those going in." He omitted to say: "Even against us," but he meant it.

He had to. Givens's 22nd minute effort was the highlight of the day.

I can still picture it from its beginning. Jimmy Ryan held off a strong tackle under the main stand and waited for just the right moment to slip the ball away to the overlapping John Ryan.

He crossed crispily from near the by-line, and Givens, racing into the goalmouth, was parallel to the ground when he headed it past Boswell for as good a goal as you could wish to see.

This was Luton's second. Earlier Chris Nicholl had done a "Jack Charlton" by heading in a Court corner after stationing himself on the goal-line in front of the unhappy Boswell.

So the scene was set for another Luton goal-riot. Unfortunately it never came. From that point Luton's game deteriorated and with the defence surprisingly lax on many occasions, Bolton were given countless opportunities to do something about salvaging a match that at one stage had looked to be racing away from them.

Back-pedalling

The Lancashire side played some creditable football, but Byrom and Manning, usually snapper-up of half chances, dallied too often, giving the suspect-looking Luton defence ample time to hack clear on many occasions.

In the middle, Hoy had a fine match, putting a mere attacking flavour into his game than usual. And Court caught the eye with ceaseless running, delicate ball control and astute passing.

Alongside them, Mike Keen had a mixed game. Several times he chose the wrong moment to give a bad pass, but he also did a lot right, and worked particularly well on the right where he sent Jimmy Ryan away several times with beautiful passes.

The Luton right-winger had another good match, and it was good to see him dropping back to help out and harry the Bolton attack when Luton were back-pedalling.

Givens had a fine game, and Macdonald, always enthusiastic, tried his hardest, but suffered a bit from the sort of misfortune that seemed to run through the whole side.

Shaky

To my mind Macdonald would have done better had his colleagues noticed he was getting nowhere in the air against the big Charlie Hurley and stopped pumping high balls up the middle.

Macdonald has a good burst of speed, and had his mates shoved a few low balls past Hurley, who is not over-quick, Mac might have had more success.

While Nicholl and Moore seemed more prone to mistakes than they ever are, full-backs John Ryan and Alan Slough came through with a fair measure of credit. But we cannot escape the fact that the Luton defence was not its normal self. That must be put right by tomorrow.

In the Luton goal Tony Read looked shaky at times, but luck was with him when he turned a Byrom shot from close range against a post. He was certainly busier than on any previous occasion this season.

MATCH DETAILS

LUTON TOWN: Read; John Ryan, Slough; Hoy, Nicholl, Moore; Jimmy Ryan, Court, Macdonald, Keen, Givens. Sub: Busby.

BOLTON WANDERERS: Boswell; Ritson, Farrimond; Williams, Hurley, Hulme; Fletcher, Byrom, Manning, Phillips, Taylor. Sub: Rimmer.

Referee: Mr W. Gow (Swansea).

Attendance: 19,035.

Goals: Nicholl (9), Givens (22).