

SIR ALF SEES A MAC SPECIAL

By ROGER DUCKWORTH

NORWICH CITY 1 LUTON TOWN 1 70/11

WITH A little bit of luck and a deal more application, Luton Town could have been relaxing on top of the Second Division table for Christmas. As it is they are still pushing in second place after conceding a penalty after their two minutes of injury time and falling victim of their own tactics.

The trouble was that Luton sat on a one-goal lead for about 80 minutes — until its shell began to crack. The Canaries hatched a plot for a point by pushing Luton further and further back as the game wore on.

Ninety minutes was well past when substitute Anderson flashed a header at the Luton goal from close in. Read was beaten and all Jack Bannister could do was fist the ball onto the crossbar.

Ken Foggo faced Tony Read from the 12-yard mark, and one felt for these two who faced the worst job of the afternoon.

Foggo won the confrontation by banging the penalty into the middle of the goal. Had he not dived — which he had to — Read would have blocked it.

But that's football. Afterwards Bannister told me: "I had to handle it. It would have gone in for a goal. It was just about on the line."

No complaints

"Their sub, who would have scored, gave me a rocket for spoiling his goal. He gave me a good telling off. But it was all I could do."

But there were no complaints from any of the Luton party. They knew they were getting no more than they deserved after letting things slip in the second half.

What is a bit annoying is that had Luton carried on in the second half like they had in the first, they would have walked it. They were masters in every aspect of the game, and made Norwich look also-rans with a flair they always seem able to turn on away from home.

Sir Alf watches

They were well in control when Macdonald began to show Sir Alf Ramsey, who was watching, a thing or two, and he took delight in making Norwich pay for a silly defensive mistake in the 13th minute, and scoring his 19th goal of the season.

One can only speculate why the enigmatic Sir Alf was there. Mr Stock said: "I had a chat with him, but of course I did not ask him what he was doing there. One can only assume he was having a look at Macdonald and Chris Nicholl, both of whom could interest him."

If that was the England team manager's reason for his trip to Carrow Road, then he was not disappointed.

Nicholl put in another superlative performance, giving Norwich no chance in the air for about 98 per cent of the match.

And Macdonald was at his sharpest. After scoring his goal he brought the crowd to its feet with a short run and terrific shot from the edge of the area which grazed a post and whipped into the side netting.

He received plenty of support from Givens and Jimmy Ryan, who had an excellent first half.

Slough too must have impressed Sir Alf, and before the interval he was always anxious to help the attack. As was right-back John Ryan.

Busy Read

Unfortunately a lot of their work went to the board in the second half as Luton decided to sit tight. Keen and Court continued to do a good job in midfield, but they had to work further and further back. Bannister did a good job on the tricky Foggo, and he was unlucky in having to concede the penalty — for which nobody blamed him at all.

In the Luton goal Read became busier as the game wore out, and again he showed the good form that has given the side confidence in recent weeks.

John Collins, who was brought into the side for the injured Hoy had a splendid match. He fitted in straight away and was involved in much of Luton's early attractive aggression.

But in the end Norwich deserved the point. They had a hard struggle to get back into the game, and even when they began to control play late in the second-half, it looked as if they would never score.