

Luton's run is halted by wrong tactics

BLACKBURN ROVERS 1 LUTON TOWN 0

A PIECE of ill-conceived thinking cost Luton a point, and possibly two, at Blackburn on Saturday. And they had the folly of trying to sit on a goalless draw rammed, Lancashire-style, down their throats.

When they were one down in the last 20 minutes they swamped the Rovers — but it was too late.

Their own backward thinking caught them between the shoulder-blades.

Luton's late and fruitless rally illustrated what they could have done had they shown any imagination from the start.

Sloppy

You have to go away and beat bottom clubs and hope for a point against the good ones.

Once Rovers realised what Luton were doing they grew in stature, and gave their so often disappointed followers something to shout about.

Luton's attack didn't. Macdonald beaten in the air by Mulvaney and shadowed by Hunter, was snuffed out, but he had sloppy service from his colleagues.

More important, Luton were outgunned in midfield where Roger Hoy had a nightmare. There was no lack of effort, but everything he tried went wrong.

He had had no sleep for three nights because of his 16-month-old daughter has been ill. Afterwards he told me: "I was out on my feet. They were right to pull me off. I didn't hit a straight ball all afternoon."

The unfortunate Hoy had earlier collected a silly booking for lobbing the ball away when a throw-in went against him. It was petulance answered by pettiness.

Experiment

Next week Luton have a rest day with a friendly against Coventry, and coach Jimmy Andrews is using it as a fortuitous chance to experiment. "I want to give a couple of people a run and have a close look at them. This will be a pointer to the future," he said.

"Today we gave the ball away far too easily. We were pushed off it too easily."

Luckily for Luton, manager

By ROGER DUCKWORTH

Alec Stock was home in bed. He would not have found this one good for his health.

But Blackburn manager Johnny Carey, so long in the doldrums this season, was delighted: "I experimented with a centre-half at centre-forward — and it paid off.

"Eccles did a great job for me — and he stays there. My heart was in my mouth for the last 20 minutes when Luton were pressing. They began to look a good side. Thankfully we held out," he said.

Luton can thank their lucky stars that Leicester and Sheffield United both lost. But Hull go top and Cardiff also won away from home.

Ambitious

Luton's performance suggested there can be little difference between the top and bottom clubs. Indeed Luton often looked second best. It is hard to swallow that Rovers had won only once since October.

Some good saves in the first half by Read kept Luton in it. But had Keen not frittered a first-half chance it may have been a different story.

Blackburn's goal came from a piece of brave and ambitious running on the left by Rogers who was allowed to cross. In the goalmouth, Russell was given time to run on to the pass and blasted the ball into the net.

MATCH DETAILS

Blackburn Rovers: Jones; Goodwin, Wilson; Hunter, Mulvaney, Knighton; Metcalfe, Russell, Eccles, Rogers Hill. Sub: Conlon.

Luton Town: Read; Ryan (John), Bannister; Hoy Nicholl, Slough; Ryan (Jim) Court, Macdonald, Keen Givens. Sub: Busby (for Hoy 70 mins).

Referee: Mr W. B. Johnson (Kendall).

Goal: Russell (Blackburn) 70 mins.

Attendance: 8,385.



One man you can't keep out of the picture, however, is Malcolm Macdonald, Luton's highly priced all-action striker. With him must rest a large part of Luton's chances of going up this season.

Left, he's caught offside with Jones in the Blackburn goal beaten.

