

Luton look badly in need of a long holiday

By ROGER DUCKWORTH

OXFORD UTD 2 LUTON TOWN 1

LUTON look ready for the summer and the few weeks off that come with it. Last night they were outgunned by hard-working Oxford whose powerful running gave the Town's wonky defence another dose of that all-at-sea disease they have contracted since Easter.

MATCH DETAILS

LUTON TOWN: Barber; John Ryan, Slough; Hoy, Nicholl, Moore; Busby, Court, (Jim Ryan, HT), Macdonald, Keen, Givens.

OXFORD UNITED: Kearns; Lucas, Shuker; Roberts, C. Clarke, Evanson; D. Clark, G. Atkinson, Skeen, Cassidy, R. Atkinson. Sub: Sloan.

REFEREE: W. S. Castle (Dudley).

ATTENDANCE: 9,531.

For half an hour Luton's defence was in a real mess, with goalkeeper Barber having a nightmare of a match and the back four wallowing around in a haze in front of him.

And any hope Luton has of popping in a few goals to help their quest for a place in the Watney Cup was killed in the early stages when they were pushed further and further back, and had to defend desperately.

Afterwards a disappointed Alec Stock said he might give his third goalkeeper, Alan Starling, a game against Swindon on Saturday. But he did not add whether or not that his decision was made before or after last night's match.

Court out

David Court is also likely to be out. He pulled a muscle after a promising first-half, and had to stay in the dressing room after half-time. But the Luton manager said he had no ideas for any other drastic changes.

Luton's forwards had little to offer, and Viv Busby, who scored their goal, was the best on show. Macdonald, who had scored only six goals in the last 23 League matches, wasted a chance in each half.

Givens worked hard, and took part in Luton's best moves, but Mike Keen was their outstanding player, doing a tireless job in midfield. Hoy and Oxford veteran Ron Atkinson had a tough confrontation, but the Luton man's use of the ball, when he won it, was not good.

Jimmy Ryan was Court's substitute, but was given little time to settle by a robust and fast-tackling defence. All in all this was a miserable show by Luton.

Shaky

They were pushed back right from the start, and it was no real surprise when Derek Clarke beat Nicholl, Slough and Moore to a through ball from Ron Atkinson to shoot under Barber into the net.

Spotting the Luton goalkeeper was a bit shaky, Ron Atkinson and Cassidy tried to rough him up, but all credit to the new Luton keeper, he managed to keep his head. Unfortunately he was a bit slow off his line following a good Oxford move, and Cassidy lobbed over his body into the net.

Luton gradually managed to ease the pressure on Barber and Busby pulled a goal back when he turned in a Court cross after a good move involving Slough, John Ryan and Givens.

A brave Busby header went close, but all he got for his trouble was a kick on the head. It was that sort of night.