

REF EARNNS THE PRAISE

Burnley 2, Luton Town 1

71/72

WELSH referee Bill Gow put the sense back in soccer at Burnley on Saturday and afterwards there was nothing but praise for the man who took out his book only once — to caution Alan Slough for a foul that would have been similarly treated even back in the days of normality.

By ROGER DUCKWORTH

On the train going north Luton manager Alec Stock, angry at the authorities for not keeping the managers and players in touch with the referees' new directives, showed me a belated copy of the referee's charter sent by the Football League.

To my mind it boded absolutely nothing but trouble for the game. Referees were told they had to caution players for everything except the half-time cup of tea. Even obstruction warranted a booking, to say nothing of touching the other player before the ball in a tackle.

"This has come a bit late," said Mr Stock. "Anyway, you can't change players overnight. They have been playing this way all their lives — since they were children."

But afterwards it was a different story

Full marks

Both managers, Alec Stock and Jimmy Adamson, and Luton skipper Mike Keen were full of praise for the way Mr Gow handled the situation.

Before the match he went into the dressing rooms and told the players he would use commonsense. He certainly did. He let them play football the man's way and everyone benefited. You could see the players were a bit over-anxious to be friendly to each other after a heavy tackle — but there's not a lot wrong with that.

Said Mr Stock: "We shall give the referee full marks because he has a great sense of fairness. He always gives me that impression. The players understood him, and he understood the players."

"He realises that it's his job to stop blokes getting into trouble."

Mr Adamson commented: "I am glad to see this get tough policy. I like good players to be protected. The ref told the

players he would use commonsense, and he did.

"Good ball players will have a psychological advantage now. You used to have a time when good players were limping off after 10 minutes. Now they are trying to get uniformity into the game. Skilled players will now have the chance of showing off their arts and crafts."

Busby's tonic

And Mike Keen commented: "The ref was tremendous. His interpretation of the game was just right. Still, I don't think he need have booked Alan Slough."

So what of the game? It was fast and entertaining with Luton eventually going out to a better side. There is still something lacking in the attack, but this will not be solved by rash spending. Luton have the players who can do the job themselves once they start clicking.

Viv Busby scored the goal he has been looking for so hard, and we can only hope that this is the tonic he has been needing.

I felt on Saturday that he had a lot of bad luck against a good defence. Things were not quite running for him, but he was nearer than in recent matches.

And had Don Givens accepted the gift of the match in the second half Luton would have had at least a point. Keen laid it on, but with oceans of net to shoot at from close in, Givens shot hurriedly wide with his left foot.

Town fall back

Jimmy Ryan had to fall back plenty, but he got through a lot of work without ever being quite positive enough. And Anderson, who started as if he meant business, faded somewhat as the game wore on.

Keen was among Luton's best players, doing a tireless

job in midfield. He had a lot of help from Court, but Luton's main problem was that they were driven back so often by the exciting Burnley attack, that they didn't have time to think about attacking themselves for long periods.

Burnley still have a First Division veneer, and the way they grabbed two goals in three minutes early in the second half really polished it up.

Firstly Casper lost Nicholl to hit a low shot past Read, and then Kindon, a former rugger threequarter, glided past Moore, drew Read out to the corner of the box, passed him, and netted from a nasty angle.

There was some doubt as to whether Read should have committed himself quite so much. But this is a split-second decision, and once he has decided there's no turning back. His decision did not detract from his performance as Luton's man of the match.

John Ryan, who was still in pain from his training collision with Nicholl, was understandably slow to turn, but Slough gave an enthusiastic performance against a fast moving line of ambition that used the touchlines to stretch Luton's defences.

Luton still have some way to go before they get it right, and the problems are more in attack than defence. Once this begins to click Luton will start picking up the points.

There was a definite improvement on their performance of the previous week against Norwich. But there again Burnley were a footballing side. Norwich weren't.

MATCH DETAILS

Luton Town: Read; John Ryan, Slough; Keen, Nicholl, Moore; Jimmy Ryan, Busby, Givens, Court, Anderson. Sub: Garner.

Burnley: Walters; Angus, Wilson; Bellamy, Waldron, Dobson; Thomas, West, Fletcher, Casper, Kindon. Sub: James.

REFEREE: Mr W. Gow (Swansea)

ATTENDANCE: 13,333

GOALS: Casper (Burnley) 55 mins

Kindon (Burnley) 58 mins.

Busby (Luton) 65 mins.