



With Huddersfield goalkeeper Chris Wood stranded, David Smith (left) clears off the line, but it rebounded off Vic Halom (right) and back into the net giving the Town a second-minute lead.

And the time when they went begging

LUTON TOWN 0, OXFORD UNITED 1

A GOAL completely out of the blue eight minutes from time by NIGEL CASSIDY robbed the Town of the points at Kenilworth Road on Wednesday night after they had dominated the attacking and had enough chances to have piled in a hatful of goals, writes ERIC NORRIS.

That these did not come was entirely due to the forwards' failure to accept chances of the gilt-edged variety. The most glaring miss of all came early in the second half when Viv Busby broke clear on his own with Oxford appealing for an offside decision that never came.

Busby, with only goalkeeper Burton to beat, looked a certain scorer, but



LINE-UP

LUTON TOWN: Barber; John Ryan, Thomson; Anderson, Faulkner, Gainer; Jimmy Ryan, Fern, Busby (Slough), Halom, Aston.

OXFORD UTD: Burton; Lucas, Shuker; Roberts, Colin Clarke, Evanson; Sloan, Atkinson (Fleming), Clarke, Cassidy, Aylott.

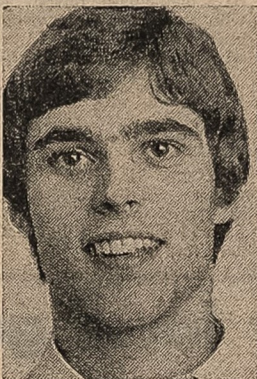
Referee: Tony Oliver (Leigh-on-Sea).

Attendance: 10,891.



pulled his shot wide of the far post from point-blank range.

Not that Busby was the only culprit. Weak finishing



Things were not running right for Viv Busby against Oxford.

by Halom, Fern and Aston also cost the Town goals, and they were further thwarted by a fine display of goalkeeping by Burton.

The Town enjoyed a slight edge over Oxford in the first half and came close to opening their account in the opening minutes when Faulkner came up to meet a free kick perfectly with his head and Burton made a brilliant save, tipping the ball over one-handed.

Oxford were breaking quickly out of defence, and at the other end Barber had to make a good save to prevent a back-pass by Thomson, who was under pressure, from going into the net.

The first half in particular was spoiled by constant stoppages for minor infringements, and there was a bad six minute spell, starting on the half hour, when the names of three players went into the book of referee Tony Oliver of Leigh-on-Sea. They were Sloan and Lucas of Oxford, and Luton captain John Ryan who was booked for a foul on Derek Clarke.

Bad luck

The pattern changed in the second half with Oxford United being forced back on the defensive with a vengeance, and there was a moment of relief for Roberts when he headed into his own net in trying to clear, only to find that the goal was disallowed because Halom was off-side.

Soon after the Town looked like opening their account through Aston who

picked up a cross by Busby just inside the area, and taking his time, measured his shot, only to see it fly just wide.

This was the story of the Town's luck in finishing as they piled on the pressure, and Halom was desperately unfortunate when he met a cross from Aston with his head, only to see it rebound to safety off the chest of Burton who could have known little about the save.

With 14 minutes remaining Manager Harry Haslam worked the switch that was used in the last home game against Preston, and pulled off Busby to bring on Slough.

Slough went into midfield with Halom moving up, but the chances continued to go to the wind. It was a minute after Oxford brought their substitute, Fleming on for Atkinson that the sudden break-out came that finally sunk the Town.

Fleming had a hand in the move which saw Derek Clarke and Cassidy break fast towards the Town goal, and the latter scored with a superb left-foot drive when Derek Clarke headed the ball back to him.

There was little chance of the Town salvaging anything after this, and the feeling that was left, was that if they had steadied their tearaway haste a little bit, and found a little more combination, things would have been entirely different.

But credit must go to the Oxford defence who looked very strong under sustained pressure, and to Derek Clarke and Cassidy for their willingness to break out.