

Luton have Forest chasing shadows

Nottingham Forest 0, Luton Town 1

LUTON TOWN owed Forest a bad turn. On Saturday they took a short step towards avenging themselves for that 1959 Cup Final defeat and the 4-3 League Cup beating they took from the Nottingham side at Luton a couple of seasons ago.

But revenge was not the important thing to Luton on Saturday. The match was billed as their toughest of the current season.

Forest were unbeaten with eight points from five matches, and Luton were faced with the mammoth task of proving to themselves and everyone else that they could continue what they had started.

They gave such a self-assured performance that Forest were left chasing shadows to the accompaniment of whistles of derision from their own fans and chants of "Gillies must go" which were directed at their unfortunate manager.

Late in the second half a crackpot in the crowd produced a whistle and tried to help out referee Mr Ray Johnson.

Capable

Mr Johnson, a most capable official, was doing very nicely by himself, and so he stopped the match and spoke to Forest officials. An announcement was made to the effect that Mr Johnson would stop the match if the phantom whistler did not cut it out.

Immediately a thousand whistles shrieked out to underline just what their fans thought of the Nottingham chances of winning a point.

Of course, that was not the instruction given by Mr Johnson. Town secretary Bob Readhead told me later: "I

By ROGER DUCKWORTH

went to see the referee and he did not say he would stop the match. No ref would do that, for obvious reasons. He just told them to cut it out."

At a loss

Throughout the match Luton were confident and composed. Exciting in attack and solid in defence. Remember, it's only a little more than three months since Forest were in the First Division.

It took the Reds a long time to weigh up Luton's style. The Town ran at them from the start and, though I know we are saying it every week at the moment, they could have had a lot more goals to bring home.

Big Tommy Gemmell, the former Celtic hero, was at a loss as to how to deal with the wiles of Jimmy Ryan. Twice in the opening minutes Ryan went close, and it was he who laid on the goal for John Aston in the 27th minute.

He glided through a two-man challenge and banged over a cross which ran to Aston. The former Manchester United winger thought about it, and then stroked the ball to the right of Barron for a fine goal.

Aston, Halom and Busby all went close many more times. So did Ryan, whose workrate was outstanding.

Halom, still the most improved man in the side, again gave one of his characteristic shows of strength and imagination.

Fern and Anderson again gave ambitious performances, and in Sportspost on Saturday night I made Anderson man of the match. It was a close thing, but after a weekend's thought I stick to my guns.

Matches are won or lost in midfield, and Anderson continually robbed the opposition or instigated Town attacks as his opponents seemed bewildered as to how to contain him.

Halom, Fern, Ryan and Aston were all challenging for the honour, while in defence Bobby Thomson gave a superb show of precision tackling and distribution.

Sure-footed

He was made captain for the day in the absence of John Ryan, who was taken ill on Friday afternoon. Don Shanks came in for Ryan and did a great job. It took him a while to adjust to the pace of the Second Division again, but

once he had put that right he became sure-footed in the tackle.

In the middle of the back row Faulkner and Garner again gave convincing performances. As did Barber in the Luton goal.

But it was teamwork rather than individual skill that won this match for Luton. Everyone is working for everyone else. This sort of attitude is going to win a lot of matches for Luton this season.

Forest could only show in patches. Barber flicked a Robertson shot on to a post and made a couple of brave saves among the feet.

But they did not have the strength in defence that we had heard about, and as a result Luton were able to control the middle of the field.

That's where they won this match.



■ Forest keeper Barron wins this duel with Vic Halom (10) and Rodney Fern (8). Busby looks on