

THE JINX STRIKES AGAIN

LUTON TOWN 0, SWINDON TOWN 1

72/73

THIS defeat by Swindon Town, Luton's fifth consecutive home match without a victory, defies all explanation, because Luton were so much on top that they should have had a hatful of goals.

Instead, they battered away unceasingly against the stubborn Swindon defence until they became desperate and frustrated, and the inevitable happened—the seemingly no-hopers suddenly hit back to pop the ball into the net and pinch the points.

One has to go back to September 16 for the Town's last success before their own fans. Since they beat Brighton 2-1, they have lost two and drawn three at Kenilworth Road, scoring seven goals to the nine by opponents.

On the score of attack last Saturday, there was only one team in it and that was the Town, but the poise and sureness that has carried them to five wins out of seven on opponents' grounds was missing. Yet, the

effect on the Town's whirlwind forwards, and we may have seen them start to play the controlled and telling football of which they are capable.

The pattern

As it was, Downsborough's save served only to set the pattern for a half of near-misses and fruitless effort by the Town.

Jimmy Ryan was in sparkling form, and gave John Trollope a rare chasing on the right wing. But even Ryan was out of luck with his finishing, and saw

LINE-UP

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

SWINDON TOWN: Downsborough; Thomas, Trollope; Smart, Burrows, Potter; Peplow, Howells, Treacy, Noble, Butler. Sub: Hubbard.

Referee: B. J. Homewood, Sunbury-on-Thames.

Attendance: 10,596.

another good effort go narrowly over the top after Gordon Hindson had worked an opening in the tight Swindon covering.

Slough was working hard to break the deadlock, and from another good movement, he paved the way for Aston to try a shot, but Halom, trying to make



● Jimmy Ryan, star of the Town's attack.

SPORT

1

certain, turned the ball over the bar from close range.

Virtually Swindon's first real threat to the Town goal came from a free-kick awarded against Thomson for a foul on Noble. Howells let fly with a scorcher from 30 yards that Barber was quick to spot, and he managed to hold at the second attempt.

Luton had no trouble in soaking up this slight flurry of Swindon pressure, and came back again through Jimmy Ryan, who crossed for Aston who ran in to send a header just over the bar.

Jimmy Ryan was having a hand in most of the Town attacks, and he provided another good opening for Slough, whose shot was well saved by Downsborough at the expense of a corner.

Swindon must have been bucked by the way they had survived all that Luton could hurl at them in the first half, because they came out after the interval, and for the first time started to quest for goals themselves, shaking off the impression that they were dedicated to hang on to a point from a goal-less draw.

It was noticeable at the same time that some of the fire had died down in the Luton attack, and not so much was being seen of the wingers, from whom so much danger had come in the first half.

Barber was the first goalkeeper to be seriously tested after the interval, and he pulled off a good save from Treacy, Swindon's former Charlton centre-forward, whose mobility was providing Faulkner something of a problem.

Chasers

Swindon were pumping long balls down the middle for Treacy to chase on to, and a few of these were catching the Luton defence fully stretched as they fought to keep up their own forward surge.

Then, the Town mounted another desperate flurry of attacks and Anderson beat Downsborough only to see his shot go over the bar. Before Swindon were able to break out again, Aston came close to opening the Town's account when he, too, beat the goalkeeper, but Thomas

was there to block his drive on the line.

Luton were once again pumping in shots from every angle, and a great drive by Slough flew just wide. Then, when it seemed that they had got into their stride again, disaster struck in the 56th minute when Swindon scored the only goal.

Alan Garner was unfortunate in slipping as he went in to make a tackle on Peplow, whom he had played so well earlier, and the winger was able to get over a good centre to the far post, where the ever alert **TREACY** was ready to head past the helpless Barber.

The Town were visibly shaken, and real desperation crept into their furious attacks. Thus, the best chances in the closing stages fell to Swindon, with Peplow, who was finding more room for himself, and Treacy going close to adding to their lead.

Happiest man at Kenilworth Road after the match was Swindon's acting manager, their former coach, Des Anderson, whose first

experience in charge of the team co-incided with their first away victory of the season.

He said, "It was marvellous. I thought all the lads played very well and deserved to win."

He said the game was not planned the way it turned out. Swindon had not deliberately set out to soak up all the Luton pressure in the first half and then come out of their shell later.

"I didn't like us being under so much pressure, but I thought the boys coped very well. They got everything in the air, picked up all the scraps, and there was no panic or back passing to the goalkeeper. In the second half, we played a lot better," he said.

By **ERIC NORRIS**

players tried their hearts out to conquer the great Kenilworth Road jinx.

True to his plan, manager Harry Haslam tried the psychological approach to this game, having the players report at 11 am for lunch together, and a tactical talk.

The idea was to try and reproduce at home the form shown in away matches, but even this play failed.

In the first half, wingers Jimmy Ryan and John Aston showed that they had the beating of the Swindon defence, and provided a stream of well worked openings for the men in the middle.

Halom miscast

Unfortunately, Vic Halom seems far from content now that he is forced to take over the spearhead role from Viv Busby, who is in hospital for a knee operation.

I rated Vic as the most improved player on the Town's books this season in his attacking midfield position, but on Saturday he allowed himself to be put off his game by the niggling battle that ensued between himself and Swindon pivot Frank Burrows, which led to the latter having his name taken in the second half for a foul.

It is true that Swindon had their share of luck, particularly in the first half. Indeed, no team would have lived under such sustained pressure without a slice of it.

They were particularly fortunate in only the third minute, when Alan Slough pushed a square ball inside to Jimmy Ryan and the winger unleashed a terrific drive that was bang on target. Downsborough made a brilliant, reflex action save to turn the ball over the bar, but he could hardly have seen it coming.

Had this one gone in it would have had a settling