

Town's fine away run halted at Preston WELL, IT HAD TO COME ABOUT!

PRESTON NORTH END 2, LUTON TOWN 0

IT had to happen! No team can expect to go on winning away with the amazing regularity that the Town have been doing, and it was just unfortunate for them that they caught Preston in a make or break mood after their terrible Christmas.

Unfortunate or not, though, no fan can find fault with a record which has kept the Town from defeat on seven away grounds since they went down 4-0 to Sheffield Wednesday on September 23.

On that point alone, this out-of-context result should hardly upset the Town when next they travel.

Preston's manager, Alan Ball, said afterwards: "After the 6-1 defeat at Carlisle, the lads slunk back to Preston, and I told them to slink off home."

"But I told them to report for training the next day, when they would normally have had their Christmas break. I had them in every day last week and worked them twice as hard as usual."

"It worked out. They have beaten the team with the best away record in all four divisions, and they can

By **ERIC NORRIS**

now go out round the streets again and hold their heads up high," he said.

There is no doubt that Ball and Preston were proud at lowering the Town's flag, and equally there is no doubt that they deserved their victory.

In the first half of a not very inspiring game, Preston deservedly took a goal lead, and had their finishing been better they could conceivably have had more goals.

But, on the other side of the coin, when the Town hit their best spell of the game, shortly after the interval, they started to play a bit and showed the Preston fans why they have been so hard to beat on their excursions away. With some luck in their finishing during this purple patch, they might still have saved at least one point.

Flattering score

But time ran out on them and Preston's second goal in time added on for injury was of little significance, except that it made the Lancashire club's win look a little more flattering than they deserved.

Preston forced the pace from the start, and in the



JIMMY RYAN ran well and made some fine crosses.

opening minutes Spark surprised the Luton defence with a snap drive that beat Barber, but John Moore, who had another outstanding game, was positioned on the goal-line to kick clear.

Spark was dangerous a second time when the industrious McIlmoyle combined well with Wilson to open a way for him to get in another shot from the edge of the area, but this time Spark was a little hasty and lofted the ball well over the bar.

Luton were under some heavy pressure, and had an escape in the 11th minute, when Tarbuck put over a good cross from the left, and Wilson just failed to get in his shot as he hit the ball on the turn.

McIlmoyle was wandering to good effect to try to pull the Town defence out of position, and after some good work on the right, he pulled the ball back for McMahon, who tested Barber with a good drive, and minutes later the goalkeeper had to save again at the feet of Tarbuck.

Ryan spark

When the Town did get moving on their own account, it was Jimmy Ryan who sparked off the attack with a run down the right. He beat his man and drib-

LINE-UP

PRESTON NORTH END:
Kelly; McMahon, Connor;
Bird, Hawkins, Lamb; Wilson,
Spark, McIlmoyle, Tarbuck,
Bruce. Substitute: Young.

LUTON TOWN: Barber;
Shanks, Thomson; Anderson,
Garner, Moore; Jimmy Ryan,
John Ryan, Butlin, Halom,
Aston (Slough).

Referee: V. James (York).
Attendance: 9,638.

bled along the dead ball line but his cross was cleared as Butlin raced in to challenge.

Luton's first real shot of the match came from Don Shanks, who was wide of the mark with a long-range effort, but, as the half progressed, Barber continued to be the goalkeeper who was being most troubled and he made a good save when he went out to gather a header by Bruce.

Preston ahead

Luton's chances were few and far between, but Butlin, who was having a very quiet game, mainly because he was not getting the service he requires from wingers Jim Ryan and John Aston, did manage to connect with a John Ryan cross and sent a flying header just over.

This was just before Preston notched the goal they had always threatened when **WILSON** scored with a drive through a crowd of players that caught Barber unsighted, and the goalkeeper did not move for the ball.

The goal came from a free kick taken by McNab that was headed on to Wilson by McIlmoyle. Just on half-time there was a piece of good work by Halom, who sent away Jimmy Ryan for the winger to get in a good



PETER ANDERSON had a big part in Town's second-half improvement.



JOHN ASTON almost saved a point for the Town but his second-half goal was ruled offside.

cross towards the far post. But the alert Kelly made a fine save off the head of Butlin.

So, Luton came out after the interval, knowing that they had to go out on the attack to try to retrieve the situation, and this was where they struck their best form.

Aston made a cross which was turned behind for a corner, and before this was cleared, Jim Ryan brought Kelly to a good save with a well placed shot.

Close call

But Preston were far from finished, and they came back to win a free kick for obstruction on the edge of the box. It was tapped by Spark to Bruce, and his sharp drive hit the foot of the post with Barber again unsighted.

Luton were certainly looking sharper this half, and Peter Anderson started to reap the reward for moving up behind the attack and waiting to pick up any loose balls that came back to him on the edge of the box.

From one such move, he got in a hard shot that was unfortunately straight at Kelly, and the goalkeeper managed to gather the ball. Anderson had another fine drive, which was just wide in the 62nd minute, and he went close a third time without having the best of luck with his finishing.

Hard luck!

Aston did get the ball into the Preston net, but was given offside after he had dribbled round Kelly. In the 79th minute, Aston, who had never really managed to get into the game, was substituted by Slough.

But by then the time was running out for the Town, and any chance of a point-saver was dashed in the 89th minute when **BRUCE** scored a fine goal from a cross by Tarbuck.