

HOW TO BRING THE FANS BACK

THE fans stood and cheered as Luton and Nottingham Forest rooped off the field on Saturday. For the first time in a long time we had seen a Town team playing with confidence on their own pitch, and serving up enough attacking soccer to provide the basic fare that supporters want.

While the Football League scratches its head and wonders what to do about falling attendances, the Town, with Forest's help, provided an active answer to the game's falling image.

The paying customers want to see their team win. They want to see goals. And they want to see entertaining and flowing football.

On Saturday they got the lot—almost. The only reason the Town failed to run up their biggest score of the season was that Forest had in Jim Barron a goalkeeper who, aided by the luck his bravery deserved, was often fighting a one-man defensive battle.

Brave and brilliant though he was, it would have been a travesty if Forest had held on to the clean sheet they kept for more than an hour of the match.

The Town's soccer flowed smoothly—right through the



THE WINNER: Alan Slough lunges through the tangled mass of the Forest defence to stab home the goal that brought the Town two valuable points which keep them in touch with the promotion race. John Ryan, on the right, had pulled the ball back to create the opening. But that was the only time Forest's flying goalkeeper Barron, pictured below, right, was beaten.

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TOWN CUT FOREST

DOWN TO SIZE

By BRIAN SWAIN



team. They were ahead of Forest in every department, from Shanks and Thomson at the back, to Aston, Hindson, John and Jim Ryan and Barry Butlin up front.

If you compare each team man for man, Keith Barber is the unlucky one; he denied Forest the chances that did come their way, but the Town were so much on top that Barber had less chance to shine than his opposite number.

Barron, a 30-year-old, played with the energy of a teenager, and denied Barry Butlin a hat-trick that would surely have been scored against an average goalkeeper.

All told, I counted eight saves made in circumstances in which no-one would have blamed the keeper if goals had been scored.

The one most people will remember longest was an instinctive reaction leap nine

minutes after the interval.

Hindson put Butlin through, and the big striker, who looks better with every game, unleashed a tremendous drive from just outside the six-yard area.

Barron launched himself into the air, arms and legs spread out, and somehow flicked the shot over the bar.

It must have broken Butlin's heart, and I thought the danger then was that Forest might get away with it after soaking up so much pressure.

John Ryan, however, had other ideas. For once, the home crowd kept off his back, and the fans who had booed him a couple of weeks ago turned him into a hero in the 66th minute for laying on the winner.

It started, as did many of

the Town's best moves, from the back. Shanks, who had a field day backing up Town attacks, put through a pass to John Aston on the edge of the Forest penalty area.

The winger juggled with the ball, and laid it back to John Ryan. He accelerated through a bunch of three Forest defenders, and got to the by-line.

Barron, horribly exposed by the men in front of him, parried the first attempted centre, but Ryan got it over at the second attempt and Alan Slough timed his run perfectly to score from close range.

It brought justice to the score-line, the Town's first home win in the league for four months, and their third successive victory.



MATCH DETAILS

LUTON TOWN 1, NOTTM FOREST 0
Half-time: 0-0

TOWN: Barber, Shanks, Thomson, Slough, Garner, Moore, Jim Ryan, John Ryan, Butlin, Hindson, Aston. Sub: Hales, not used.

FOREST: Barron, Hindley, Winfield, Chapman, Serella (Lyall, 76 mins), Fraser, McIntosh, Robertson, Martin, Galley, O'Neill.

THE GOAL: Alan Slough for Luton, 66 minutes. REFEREE: Derek Nippard, Bournemouth: Strict, and certainly not a homer.

ATTENDANCE: 10,083, and every one got his money's worth.

ENTERTAINMENT: It gets better every week. More of this will bring back the missing fans.

TOWN'S LEAGUE PLACE TODAY: Still sixth, five points behind Burnley, but still in touch with the promotion-chasing bunch.

FOILED AGAIN: John Aston takes the ball too far, and Barron grabs it to deny the Town a goal in the 10th minute.

