

JIM'S GOAL LIFTS STRUGGLING LUTON

By ROGER DUCKWORTH

YOUR MATCH FACTS

BLACKPOOL: Wood; Hatton, Bentley, Alcock, James, Suddaby, Burns, Suddick, Rafferty, O'Neil, Ainscow. Sub: Tully.

LUTON: Carrick; Shanks, Thomson, Anderson, Garner, Moore, Jim Ryan, John Ryan, Busby, Hindson, Aston. Sub: Fern.

Referee: Mr H. Williams (Sheffield).

SUDDICK (Blackpool), 21min

JIM RYAN (Luton) 71min

Attendance: 6,947

BLACKPOOL FANS, just as fickle as those in Luton or anywhere else, were chided on Saturday night by Luton manager Harry Haslam for their vicious verbal attack on Lancashire manager Harry Potts.

"You should ignore them," he said. "Half of them don't even know what they are shouting about."

"Harry is new at Blackpool and their only problem is that the side is still a bit mixed up."

The fans, a mere 6,947 of them, had chanted: "Potts must go." They were rather cruel, I thought, because Blackpool showed more attacking inclination than Luton.

As Mr Potts said: "Bill Rafferty didn't mis-hit that chance on purpose. He hit the back of his left leg with his right foot and went over."

Reflection

It was just one costly Blackpool miss, early in the second half, that gave Luton breathing space. For the Town were never really in the running until the last 20 minutes — and then they could have won.

With changes forced upon them through injury, Luton were thrown out of step. "If

Barry Butlin had been playing we would have won," said Mr Haslam. "They changed their play at the front."

This is no reflection on the hard-working Busby but he plays a different game to the forward-running Butlin.

In fact Busby has no cause for complaint on the question of service. Both Jimmy Ryan and Aston put over plenty of crossfire. But Busby was beaten up top by Glyn James.

Peter Anderson, returning for the injured Slough after a two-month lay-off, did a grand job in midfield where his aggression and tigerish enthusiasm stood out plainly.

Luton took time to get going

and when Alan Suddick bent a "Pele" special past the amazed Carrick in the 21st minute, it looked all over.

Shanks, a rugged and whole-hearted player, had been given a midfield job to mark Suddick — wherever he went. But you can't mark a man from a free kick and Suddick curled his shot round the Luton wall — and Carrick.

The young Irish goalkeeper looked suspect from time to time and in the last minute he was to be seen trampolining about in the goalmouth trying to fust clear a concerted aerial raid from Blackpool.

I'll bet nobody was ever so pleased to hear a final whistle.

Dainty

John Ryan had a good game, reverting to right-back in spite of his number eight shirt, to leave Shanks free to go Suddick-chasing.

And Bobby Thomson was his usual accomplished self. Moore saved several dodgy situations for Luton and Garner seemed to relish a running battle with Rafferty in which they shared the honours.

Hindson somehow looked too dainty for his size but he did a lot of foraging and supplied some well-directed passes.

But Luton's goal was the highlight of the match. Jim Ryan made an early run on the right. Thomson spotted it and laid a superb crossfield pass in his path. The Scot took the ball in his stride and thrashed it past Wood from about 20 yards.

Even so, the match was as dull as the Golden Mile in winter. Both sides seem to have missed the promotion boat. And Luton have the sixth round of the FA Cup on their minds.

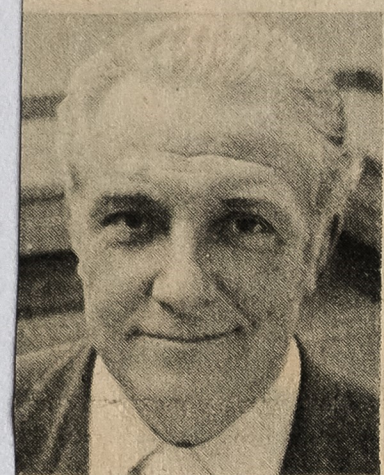
Satisfied

"They are obviously thinking about that," said Mr Haslam. "But we came for two points and had to be satisfied with one. You are only filling the fixtures up if you settle for one point away from home."

"We could almost have done it in the second half."

Anderson limped off with a calf injury 11 minutes from the end. Fern looked sharp in replacing him — and almost scored with a quickly taken shot.

At the same time Tully went on for Suddick. But by this time both lots were happy to settle for the point they started with.



HARRY HASLAM



HARRY POTTS