

CUP MISERY FOR LUTON

THERE was one very small consolation to emerge from Luton Town's 3-1 defeat at The Den yesterday — it was in the League Cup and not the Second Division.

Manager Harry Haslam was obviously disappointed at being eliminated, but Luton's main priority this season is promotion to the First Division, and he must have been thankful that this defeat doesn't count in Town's league programme.

There could have been no complaint from Luton officials over the result and the team's display. Town, apart from a 25 minute spell, were out played, and it was Millwall who looked more like one of the promotion hopefuls.

The Londoners had no respect for Town's formidable record this season. Millwall started at a cracking pace, maintained it for most of the game, and reaped the reward for their tenacity.

They showed Luton how to distribute the ball with accuracy, and their victory would have been more convincing, but for a brilliant penalty save by Graham Horn — Luton's man of the match — in the second half.

Luton are capable of

playing good football. But for most of yesterday's game, their skill deserted them and at times Thomson, Faulkner, Garner and Shanks were only too pleased to boot the ball anywhere, when Millwall's aggressive forwards threatened to score.

In the first 20 minutes, Luton didn't manage a shot at goal. But it took Millwall only six minutes to establish that Graham Horn was going to be their biggest stumbling block.

Big Barry Kitchener had Millwall's fans ready to acknowledge a goal. He sent a powerful header towards the top corner of the net, but Horn leapt up to touch the ball over with his fingertips.

Earned

The goalkeeper has certainly earned his wages this week, mainly for his display yesterday. He showed good positional sense and made other equally brilliant saves

from Bolland, Clark — the game's best player — and Wood.

But Millwall didn't have things all their own way. Goalkeeper King showed why a couple of the big First Division clubs are showing an interest in his determination to leave the Den, by making a great save from West, when Luton threatened to take the lead in the first half.

That wasn't Town's only chance, and strangely, they played better while striker John Sims, on loan from Derby County, was in the dressing room receiving treatment for an ugly split just above his left eye.

Sims was absent for longer than he should have been. He was taken off after only 25 minutes, but there was no Millwall club doctor available at the ground to treat the injury.

Sims had to wait until a local GP could be summoned to

insert three stitches into the wound, and he missed 15 minutes of the first half action.

Perhaps, Luton's main failing was their lack of pace up front. Sims is obviously finding the gap between Central League football and the Second Division rather tough, although he did show a couple of neat touches.

Downfall

And there were times when Luton failed to get to grips with the game in midfield. Millwall found little difficulty in using the long through ball and searching centres with accuracy. And that proved to be Luton's downfall.

After a shaky start, Luton gradually began to play. But it was Millwall who took the lead after 37 minutes when Alder took advantage of a defensive blunder to score.

A minute after the interval, Kelly nodded in the second from Hill's hard cross. Town pulled one back in the 65th minute when King could only palm out Aston's cross and Jones, in attempting to clear, sliced the ball into his own net.

Timid display in the Lions' Den

Millwall 3 Luton 1

By ERIC HARRIS



Millwall's Barry Kitchener foils Luton's John Sims as he attempts to cross in yesterday's League Cup tie at the Den. Sims played in the second half with three stitches in a gash above his left eye.

More action pictures from the game on Page 23.

That goal gave Millwall a fright for a couple of minutes as Luton fought desperately for the equaliser. But four minutes later, another Hill cross gave Clark, standing unmarked, the chance to sidefoot the third goal.

Horn's penalty save came after 60 minutes. The kick was awarded after Jimmy Ryan pulled down Hill, and Bolland, who had previously missed only one penalty, sent his kick towards the bottom right hand post. Horn anticipated its direction and dived to push the ball out.

Too many Town players had off days, and it will be a match they will all want to quickly forget in preparation for Saturday's tough visit to Preston. Two points at Deepdale would easily make up for yesterday's disappointment.

Millwall: King, Donaldson, Jones, Dorney, Kitchener, Alder, Bolland, Kelly, Wood, Clark, Hill (Brown).

Luton Town: Horn, Shanks, Thomson, Anderson, Faulkner, Garner, Jim Ryan, Fern, Sims, West, Aston. Sub: Sparks.

Referee: J. Taylor (Wolverhampton).

Goals: Alder (Millwall) 37min, Kelly (Millwall) 46min, Jones (og Luton) 65min, Clark (Millwall) 69min.

Attendance: 8,777.