



JIMMY RYAN

SAVES THE TOWN

VERDICT

This is what cup ties are all about. Underdogs Port Vale grabbed a second half goal and hung on to it as their biggest crowd of the season roared them on.

Luton were a bit unfortunate. They had a first half gale-driven deluge in their faces which the Midlands used to the best of their ability.

In the first half the ball was rarely out of Luton's half and they were all too glad to go in all square at half time.

In fact the weather was so bad that referee Ken Burns admitted during the interval that he had almost abandoned the match.

But it went on and as Luton began to look a bit brighter, Port Vale won a series of corners and big centre-half Harris headed them ahead. In the 83rd minute Jimmy Ryan equalised for the Town to silence the home team chants.

It was one of Luton's best midfield moves, with the ball being pushed through and Ryan beating Boswell with a sharply angled shot.

What a relief it was for the Town who had brought on Tom Finney as second half substitute for Aston.

Luton were also without Don Shanks, who missed yesterday's team talk because of a dental visit and was dropped by Harry Haslam for disciplinary reasons.

JIMMY RYAN kept Luton's Cup hopes alive this afternoon with an equaliser just seven minutes from the final whistle. Fourth Division Port Vale went ahead early in the second half — and the Hatters waited until the 83rd minute for Ryan to save the day.

Centre-half David Harris put Port Vale ahead in the 59th minute with a fine header. Then, as Luton's hopes faded, John Ryan pushed through a clever ball to Jimmy, who made no mistake.

Luton battled through torrential rain early in the game and fought on bravely in the second half to get a well-deserved equaliser.

Luton manager Harry Haslam has been unavailable to the press for the last couple of days. When today's team was announced it became clear just why he had not been answering his phone.

He brought John Ryan back to his old right-back position in favour of Shanks — whom I can only assume was injured. And No 8 and No 10 West and Husband, changed places.

Finney was named as substitute in place of John Ryan who has had to settle for the No 12 shirt in recent weeks.

When the Hatters ran out on to the huge Port Vale pitch everybody but Husband was wearing a track suit top. Perhaps the striker wanted to show off his new number.

Then a long clearance by Port Vale sent centre-forward Williams racing through. The ball bounced awkwardly for him and Faulkner did a good job in diving across in front of him to enable Horn to get to the ball.

A free kick which followed a foul by Anderson was headed low at goal by Summerscales. Horn looked a bit fumbly, but he collected the ball at the second attempt.

John Aston's first left wing run came in the ninth minute. He got in the cross but a defender headed away for a corner. Jim Ryan took it, but it was headed clear.

Then Aston's legs were taken from under him by Brodie. Thomson hit the free kick which was headed on by Butlin and Anderson got in with a header. It went straight at the goal-keeper who gathered easily.

Then a high ball had the Hatters in a rare old mess. Horn got under it, but his attempted fist out was unsuccessful and there was a lot of hacking about before the ball was cleared.

Brodie went down with a leg injury, but he continued after treatment although he was limping badly.

Williams made another good dash but was tripped by

Thomson, who was lucky to escape a booking. McLaren hit the free-kick and Williams beat the Luton defence to head just wide.

Horn was forced to fist away again after Anderson conceded a corner. The kick was swung over by Horton and the Luton defence again looked far from self-assured.

After 20 minutes the rain returned and was driven into the faces of the Luton strikers.

Luton certainly did not look two divisions better than Port Vale.

As the driving rain worsened the game deteriorated.

Another foul by Thomson brought another free-kick. It was bashed over by Brodie, who seemed none the worse for his earlier injury. After a moment's anxiety Horn collected the ball and kicked it clear.

Woodward had a chance when he chased a Mountford header through the Luton defence, but he shot wide.

McLaren and Williams forced Luton to give away a corner. But when it came over Horn was fouled and he cleared with the free-kick.

Luton were really under pressure and a move between Brodie Griffiths and Woodward ended with Horn making a diving save.

Then a good cross from Woodward was just missed by the diving Williams and the ball went out of play. The wind and the torrential rain had a big effect on Luton's performance.

This was underlined in the 35th minute when a short goal-kick by Horn was kicked out of play for a corner by John Ryan. The flag kick was headed behind — much to Ryan's relief.

Luton's attack became non-

existent, but at the other end, Mountford, with the wind behind him, headed a right-wing cross wide.

Luton won welcome relief through a corner. But Jimmy Ryan's good kick into the goalmouth was headed clear and the ball was pushed back to keeper Boswell.

When Luton did manage to get in an attack, Butlin was fouled by Summerscales and goalkeeper Boswell caught John Ryan's free kick unchallenged.

A minute before half time referee Burns had an unusual job to perform when he was called upon to repair the netting in the Luton goal.

HT: Port Vale 0 Luton Town 0

At half-time manager Harry Haslam explained the mystery of the missing Shanks. When I asked him why the regular full-back was not playing, he said: "He had to go off to the dentist yesterday morning and missed the team talk. We can't have players doing that and I had no option but to leave him out."

Referee Ken Burns admitted that he almost abandoned the match in the first half deluge.

MATCH DETAILS

Port Vale: Boswell, Brodie, Griffiths, Summerscales, Harris, Horton, McLaren, Woodward, Williams, Lacey, Mountford. Sub: Tartt.

Luton Town: Horn, John Ryan, Thomson, Anderson, Faulkner, Garner, Jimmy Ryan, West, Butlin, Husband, Aston. Sub: Finney.

Referee: Mr K. Burns (Stourbridge)

Harris 59mins

Goals: Jim Ryan, Luton Town, in the 83rd minute

Attendance 8,127



JOHN RYAN ... surprise choice



JIMMY RYAN

"When it began to hail I was thinking about it. You just couldn't see across the pitch. It was dreadful," he said.

Luton sent out Tom Finney as second half substitute for John Aston. This was the second successive week the Luton winger had been pulled off.

After Horn ran out of the penalty area to hack through ball into the stand, Luton went on the attack. And it was Finney who almost put them ahead.

He ran on to a through ball from Anderson and hammered it into the side netting. It was Luton's first real shot of the match.

A back-pass to his goal-keeper by Faulkner gave Port Vale a half-chance. But the ball skidded a couple of feet in front of Mountford and Horn was able to pounce upon it.

The heavy rain eased off in the second half and the skies lightened.

Port Vale still had plenty of attacking ideas and after a rather slow build up Lacey thumped a left-footer wide.

Finney was full of enthusiasm and the referee had to have a word with him after he had tripped Williams. From the free-kick a misplaced shot by Horn went out to the right and Horn again had to leave his charge to kick into touch.

From a right wing corner Horn made the save of the match in the 58th minute. The ball was headed on to Mountford who dived at it to head at goal. Somehow Horn got his left hand to the ball to push it past the post.

But Luton's luck did not last. A minute later Port Vale

won another corner from the right and big centre half Harris charged in to head low past Horn. John Ryan tried to clear the ball, but he could only help the ball over the line.

A good tackle by John Ryan prevented Woodward centering after a left wing run. From the throw the same Luton defender was only too glad to thump the ball over the stand to relieve the pressure.

Luton came closest to scoring in the 70th minute. A tremendous dribble by Anderson, with the help of Husband, ended with Anderson breaking through and shooting — only to see Boswell pull off a cracking save and turning the ball round for a corner.

Following the corner, Luton really put on the pressure with three headers and a shot being saved by the plucky Port Vale keeper.

After Faulkner had missed his tackle on the tearaway Woodward, the Port Vale man somehow managed to trip himself as he entered the box. But he got the free kick which was hit high and wide of the target.

With Brodie off the field for further treatment, Luton nearly equalised.

Jimmy Ryan's corner was cleared and West chased back to try a surprise shot from the far corner of the box. He hit the crossbar.

Then Brodie called it a day and was substituted in the 76th minute by Tartt.

It looked all over for Luton until Jimmy Ryan equalised. In fact there were just seven minutes left when John Ryan pushed the ball through for his namesake who glided it cleverly past Boswell.

Port Vale can consider themselves a bit unlucky because their enthusiasm drove them forward for the biggest part of the match.