

Brilliant Earle shatters Luton

73/74
(CAC)

by PHILIP OSBORN

Luton 0 Leicester 4

STEVE EARLE, at £80,000 the cheapest of Leicester's London imports, steered City towards the last eight.

His goals, in the 18th and 49th minutes, were founded on perception and inspiration.

Luton could never match the subtlety which highlighted Leicester's first goal.

Alan Birchenall switched the pattern of play with a glorious diagonal pass to the overlapping Dennis Rofe.

He crossed and Earle deftly flicked it in.

But Luton were unlucky to be behind. Twice defenders had to come to the aid of England goalkeeper Peter Shilton.

In the 10th minute he dropped a Jim Ryan corner and was thankful that Frank Worthington was around to clear.

Seven minutes later Shilton was beaten by a Peter Anderson header. This time Steve Whitworth cleared off the line.

But Luton's final approaches were too obvious. And after John Sammels had missed an open goal, Earle made it 2-0. Again it was a superbly skilled effort.

EXHIBITION

Len Glover crossed for Earle to rise and head in the ball off the far post. After this Leicester turned it into an exhibition, sometimes with six men in attack.

The third goal in the 60th minute was too easy. Luton's bemused defenders hardly moved as Keith Weller centred for Worthington to head in.

Brilliant Weller capped a devastating performance by whisking round four men to shoot the fourth in the 86th minute.

Luton's disconsolate manager Harry Haslam said afterwards: "We messed about too much in the first-half when we were on top and just fell away after their second goal."

Consolation for Luton: The crowd of 25,712 was the highest of the season and they paid record receipts of £15,000.