

MAD HATTER

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Luton 0, Middlesbro' 1

By GRAHAM BAKER

LUTON manager Harry Haslam's dreams of a classic clash between the Second Division's top teams were shattered. He said: "I don't want this to sound like sour grapes, but I was very disappointed with Middlesbrough."

"I had said that it would be the Cup Final of the Second Division, but I was surprised that they didn't come and play open football."

"I was sure they would make a match the Division could be proud of, but I've never seen so many balls booted over the stand."

"Middlesbrough certainly played some robust stuff. Everybody wants to win, but I still think people want to see good football. But I don't begrudge Jack Charlton any of his success. He richly deserves the title."

Luton's second home defeat of the season, means that the promotion race now looks closer than ever.

But Luton had enough of the play to suggest they will be there at the finish. Their freer and more individual approach provided an

interesting contrast to the controlled organisation of Middlesbrough.

But Luton's sustained pressure did not produce many shocks, although Middlesbrough goalkeeper Platt always looked uncertain.

Boro' won the match thirteen minutes from time with a goal that England Under-23 star Mills admitted he mis-hit.

Murdoch started the move down the right that Foggon turned inside for Mills to score in off the post.

Covered

Middlesbrough's machine-like defence covered up for the apparent uncertainty of Platt and Luton's pressure did not produce many goal chances.

Platt was caught ten yards off his line by a sudden high pass back from Boam, but he managed to claw the ball out of the air to deny Luton a reprieve.

The game always threatened to boil over, with Murdoch and Cochrane, of Middlesbrough, being booked for fouls, and Luton's Anderson for arguing.