

FIVE GOAL FERN BIDS FOR PLACE

**John is
getting
'bad lad'
label**

A FEW CARELESS words by Luton's big-hearted centre-half to Kent referee Ron Challis at Highbury on Saturday could cost him a £50 fine and the club his services for two more vital matches.

John Faulkner, one of the nicest guys you could wish to meet off the field, is earning himself a bit of a reputation as one of soccer's bad lads.

He started the season with a two-match suspension having totted up 12 points on the Football League scale last season.

On Saturday he collected his third booking this term when he disagreed with Mr. Challis's decision to award Arsenal a free-kick in a dangerous position for a foul on Storey by Adrian Alston.

I agree entirely with his sentiments. I didn't think it was a foul either. But when you are on two bookings you don't argue with the whistler.

Offence

At the start of the season manager Harry Haslam "gave" all his first team squad £200. Each time they are booked for dissent they lose £50 of it.

I asked the Luton manager if he would be fining his centre-half for Saturday's offence. "I was bloody annoyed about it, and it'll cost John £50 if the word dissent appears on the referee's letter."

"But it's not difficult to understand the lad's actions."

"Football is the only job in the world where you don't have freedom of speech. If you are fed up at work you can have a go at somebody. You can't in football."

"John came into the dressing room after the game and was most upset about the booking. He said: 'I'm sorry boss. I just couldn't help it.'"

"We'll just have to wait and see."

Mr Haslam also denied a Sunday paper story that Peter Anderson his midfield aggressor, is about to move to Newcastle for £150,000.

—ROGER DUCKWORTH

IT'S IRONIC that on the very day Luton score two goals in a match, a priceless occurrence, Rodney Fern should come out of his shell and put the ball in the net a fantastic seven times for the reserves at Kenilworth Road.

The fact that two of Rodney's attempts were not allowed doesn't matter a damn. The fact is that Luton are beginning to score goals, and a bloke who scores five in one match at Combination level must be in with a chance of first team recognition.

Fern, in fact, is no longer interested in going to Portsmouth, and he said after Saturday's feat: "I just want to win my place back at Luton."

With Jimmy Husband on the injured list he may be just the chap Luton are looking for. They go to Coventry tomorrow to meet the only club below them in the First Division. If Luton win, and then sort out Carlisle on Saturday, they will have a bit of breathing space.

If they play like they did in the second half at Arsenal Luton should have few fears against injury-lumbered Coventry. With Shanks shining in defence, West motivating the midfield, and Alston putting the fear of God into the Gunners' defence, Luton shook off their first half lethargy, and could easily have won with their late burst.

Alston, I thought, was Luton's best player. He showed great enthusiasm and

ability. In the first half he nearly altered the course of the match with a rare shot that hit a post and spun along the goal line, with Rimmer watching helplessly.

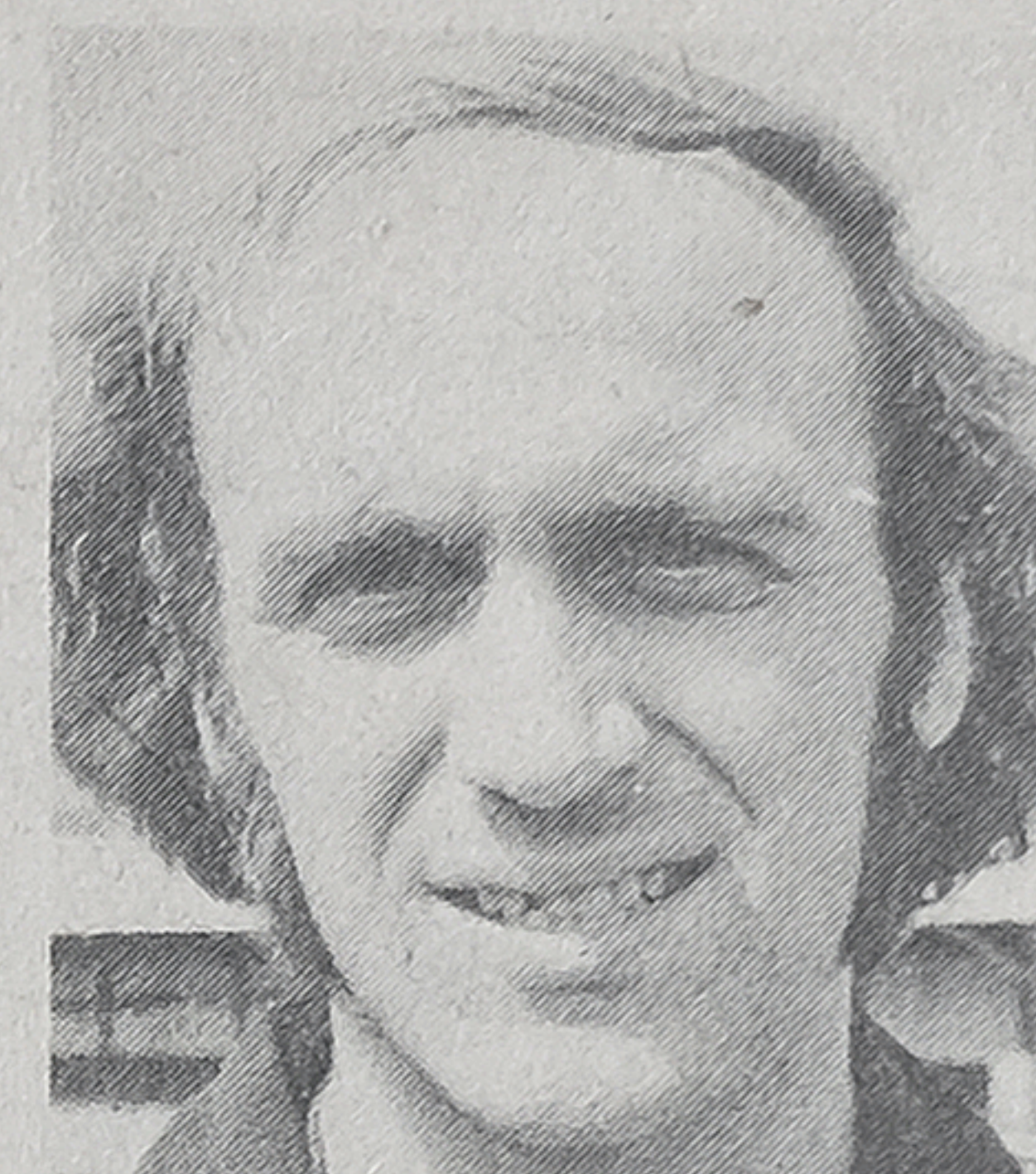
And early in the second half he scored with a good shot from an Anderson pass after the midfield man had wormed around the back of the Arsenal defence.

With Butlin missing with a shot and a header and West banging a couple over the top, there was no lack of effort from Luton.

Anderson gave a much-improved and gutsy performance, and Hindson ran himself into the ground, especially when Luton were being pushed back. But he has a hard shot on him, and I wish he'd use it more.

Jimmy Ryan, in the side for his first game of the season, did a lot of hard work in a deep position behind Alston and Butlin, and it was left to Shanks to act as the only winger with his overlaps.

After a dull and rain-swept first half, Luton were most



ROD FERN



JIMMY RYAN

unfortunate to go in a goal down. Kidd chased a pass into the penalty box and John Ryan hauled him off the ball just as he was about to cross the line.

Referee Ron Challis gave a free kick and Kidd banged it through the defensive wall, via a gap created by the intruding Blockley.

The game perked up with the second half sunshine, and after Alston had scored his third goal of the season, Luton began to buzz.

But they were just getting

into their stride when a free kick by Georgie Armstrong was half cleared to Simpson, who cracked in a hard shot. Barber looked to have made a great save, but the ball squirted out of his grip and Kidd, on his knees, nudged the ball over the line.

Volleyed

Luton must take credit for the way they never gave up. The defence pushed forward, and with Thomson and Shanks added to the raiding force, Luton tried all they knew.

A move thought out by West and Anderson, and including Jimmy Ryan, saw the ball out to Shanks on the right. He crossed it and an Alston header was cleared. The ball went back to Shanks who volleyed it home with his left foot.

It was the highspot of a somewhat mediocre match.

The low spot was the booking of John Faulkner, his third of the season. This could mean another suspension, which would be a real blow to Luton's hopes of survival. He collected the caution for a barmy bit of arguing with the referee when he disagreed with a decision regarding a foul on Storey by Alston.

Apart from one lapse of concentration Faulkner had a good match, and his partner John Ryan fought hard against Kidd. Barber had a good afternoon in the Luton goal, particularly in the rain, when his handling was impeccable. His kicking has improved too.

Arsenal do not look a good side. With Alan Ball, Charlie George and Pat Rice missing, they look under strength. But I was impressed with young John Matthews in defence and George Armstrong, who while not always being able to beat Shanks, still has the ability to get the ball across from the most difficult of situations.

Arsenal 2 Luton 2 By **ROGER DUCKWORTH**