

HARRY BLOWING WIND OF CHANGE

LUTON manager Harry Haslam must make changes for Saturday's trip to Manchester City. Last night the attack pussyfooted about against a rugged defence and the midfield men lost out to determination and skill from Jack Charlton's Northerners.

After the match Mr Haslam admitted that he would have to make some move to put things right and intimated that he would initiate at least one of the "kids" at Maine Road.

But he declined to outline his plans in spite of

Luton Town 0 Middlesbrough 1
By ROGER DUCKWORTH

pressure from myself and colleagues. "I am not going to say anything until I have told the people concerned," he said.

"It might sound a daft thing to say after losing at home, but I feel more confident now than I did this morning. After Saturday I was down in the dumps but tonight I at least saw some effort.

Failed

"Middlesbrough are a good side and they won the first half and had a goal to show for it.

"We were on top for most of the second half and I thought we were desperately unlucky. I couldn't have asked for more in the way of effort."

Right. But where are the goals going to come from? Jimmy Husband again looked sharp and willing but again he failed to score. Adrian Alston was a willing horse but well bridled, and Peter Anderson seems to have lost the equation that converts effort into goals.

Reading between the lines I would bet Malcolm Macdonald to Joe Soap that Luton bring in Ron Fletcher, the "cheap" portion of the £120,000 deal that brought the Chester twins, Ron and Paul, to Luton during the summer.

While Paul, rated at £100,000, has been training at Lillleshall with the England youth party, Ron has been cracking in endless goals for the reserves and earning himself a reputation as a tough, do-or-die striker.

Luton just also realise that they can't win without the ball. When they get it they give it away far too easily. And they lost too many 50-50 challenges too feebly.

Luton's man of the match was goalkeeper Keith Barber, who made fine saves to Hickton, Mills and Armstrong and created several attacks with his long and accurate throwing.

And the defence, so bad on Saturday, didn't play too badly. Litt slugged it out with gusto against Hickton, backs Shanks and John Ryan tackled strongly and fought hard, and Garner, returning after a long lay-off, covered well and cleared strongly.

The defence's problem was lack of direction when they released the ball.

Boro went ahead after 16 minutes when Foggon controlled a long pass and beat Barber with a fiercely dipping shot from the edge of the box. Luton's retaliation saw Hus-

band shoot over. Hindson have a shot blocked and John Ryan almost hit a corner flag with a first-time effort that screwed wide.

But Luton continued to give the ball away, even from free kicks. If an opening momentarily appeared there always seemed a Boro boot to block or baulk.

West is to be applauded for his second-half effort — and Hindson for his fight and enthusiasm throughout.

Chambers again showed bright moments and had the courage to lift his head and get stuck in again after seeing a brilliantly controlled volley hit a post in the 80th minute.

Three minutes earlier a Husband break had sent Anderson through but he ran too wide before shooting and Alston couldn't get to the deflection.

The clinging mud made things difficult for both sides and Boro had Souness and Craggs booked

Crisis, what crisis?

CRISIS? There isn't one. Panic? There isn't any. Despite losing to Middlesbrough last night everyone at Luton believes we can get away from the First Division relegation zone.

To the ordinary fan, last night's result may suggest we are in a hell of a mess. But there are still many games left to play this season.

I can honestly say we have not even thought about Division Two — although many people already seem to have written us off in the First Division.

But we are far from despondent. Every game is a challenge and our only priority now is thinking about Manchester City on Saturday. We take each game as it comes and work our pre-match tactics accordingly.

Results

If we were to dwell on bad results it would do the team no good at all. But today we certainly plan to talk about last night's match and try and put our game right.

Like our promotion season, we take each game as it comes and, although Middlesbrough won last night, it was the first time I have seen them looking useful against us.

Since I've been at Luton, I've played against them four times and only last night did they look like a First Division team.

To a certain extent I feel sorry for our faithful supporters. I can understand last night's low attendance of just over 10,000 because spectators want to be entertained

and can't be expected to watch games if their team isn't winning.

Direct

The only time I can complain about supporters is when they direct their derogatory remarks towards an individual player.

But last night I think we showed our fighting spirit in the second half and we almost snatched an equaliser when Brian Chambers hit the post.

Injuries haven't helped our battle to rise in the First Division. I think it's self-explanatory to point out Middlesbrough have used only 13 players this season — and it showed in their game last night.

We have continuously been forced to switch several positions and almost everyone has changed. Middlesbrough played exactly like a team who have been playing together all season.

But I am not thinking in terms of a crisis. It's going to be hard but I'm confident we can get out of trouble. It's so hard, in fact, that we cannot any longer play for a draw in any game.

But we haven't got our heads buried in the sand. Everyone knows there's a job to be done and we are all aware of what's going on.

Just be patient — two or three good victories will boost our confidence.

■ Jim Ryan was talking to Eric Harris

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