

LUTON DOOMED?

By
ROGER DUCKWORTH
IT'S NOT much fun to have to report that Luton were as bad as ever on Saturday — or that their gate was about two thirds of what they expected in the Fourth Division. Both are sadly true.

I can now see no way out. Three points adrift at the bottom of the table, Luton look doomed for a quick return to Division Two. We can only peer through fingers of apprehension, and hope the club's demise is not as swift as it was the last time they left the First Division.

There comes a point when mere words are not enough. It's all been said before.

We hope manager Harry Haslam will buy. We trust he will continue to change the team until something good sprouts from the cleft of despair in which the side seems to have stuck.

Approval

There seems just one bright hope — the kids. Ronnie Futch, who has just crawled past his 18th birthday, was given a go on Saturday. He went on as second half sub for a subdued and ineffective Rod Fern.

There was a great roar of approval and the Oak Road choir chanted his name. But they didn't like Fern being pulled off. The lad's first kick in the Football League was a miskick, the ball going out of play in an attempted pass to the wing. His second almost scored a goal.

In that second kick we can see hope. You've got to clutch at straws these days.

Futch still lacks a bit of pace, but I am glad to be able to report that he didn't seem overcome by it all. The

There looks no way out

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opposite, in fact. By blooding the youngsters Luton can show that they are at least trying to do something about their sorry plight.

The established stars of the side did not do a great deal on Saturday, and if they continue to fanny about they will soon find that there are young players at the club only too ready to take their places.

Return

Brian Chambers was Luton's best operator in midfield, but most of the Town's problems seem to be in attack. Anderson is not a centre-forward. He is a striker, but one who must feed off a target man. On Saturday Luton had no such player, and I hope we see Adrian Alston back in the side before the lid is nailed on the coffin.

Jimmy Husband, who has been ill, will also be back in the side soon. He may not score goals, but he shows more gumption than any of the front runners did on Saturday.

John Faulkner was Luton's

man of the match. He looked head and shoulders ahead of anyone else on his return to the side after injury.

Unfortunately he collected his fourth booking of the season. Luckily he has already won one appeal, and even if he gets a four-point penalty for his tackle on Field, he will still be one under the dirty dozen, which would lead him to another automatic suspension.

Tony Currie, who has so much latent skill that it's not true, shook off his lethargy in the 58th minute to score the only goal. Luton appealed that he had handled the ball as he controlled it.

Afraid

Their pleas did not ruffle referee Sinclair.

In the first half Luton had many chances to score, but they don't know how to. They tap about in front of goal, and even Hindson, who owns a fearsome shot, seems afraid to use it in case he misses.

Shanks had a good match

for Luton at right-back, and Barber made a couple of good saves, one at the feet of Field and one to a Currie header.

There is still no news about the players Mr Haslam hopes to sign. One can only assume that he's been given complete freedom by the board to do as he thinks best.

I'll tell you one thing, something's got to be done soon. If the "stars" can't do it, then the kids must be given a go. With only nine points to boast from 17 matches, they have got nothing to lose.

Mr Haslam's job is the very last I'd like at the moment.

MATCH DETAILS

LUTON TOWN: Barber, Shanks, Thomson, Chambers, Faulkner, Garner, Hindson, Fern, Anderson, West, Aston. Sub: Ron Futch.

SHEFFIELD UNITED: Brown, Badger, Hemsley, Garbett, Colquhoun, Eddy, Woodward, Speight, Dearden, Currie, Field. Sub: Bradford.

REFEREE: Mr M. Sinclair (Guildford).

CURRIE (Sheffield) in 58 minutes.

ATTENDANCE: 12,670