

The
verdict...

ALSTON GOAL CAN'T SAVE LUTON

THIS was not the best game of football we have seen this season. Not by a long way.

With Luton fighting for their First Division lives, and with Rangers having little to fight for at all, the result was a mediocre game from two very ordinary looking teams.

For most of the time Luton looked to lack strength in attack, while at the back they looked fairly composed and self-assured.

Rangers had most of the game, but even so they were stretched on occasions when Luton decided to pull them wide from the wings.

Even so Luton looked to have a point sewn up and were a bit unlucky to go behind to a splendid goal from Don Rogers with only seven minutes left.

Rogers cut inside and beat Horn, who was well off his line, with a beautiful shot that dipped over the Luton keeper's head and under the crossbar.

Don Givens had shuffled in a goal in the first half to put QPR ahead against his old club, but a minute later Adrian Alston signalled his comeback to the first team by knocking in a good pass from Aston.

And that looked to be it, but you can't hang about when you are struggling and West looked to have pulled back a goal the very next minute after the Rogers goal. Parkes made a fine stop as Luton shook off their complacency and really began to buzz.

But it was too late and once again things looked black at Kenilworth Road.

ADRIAN ALSTON came in from the cold this afternoon when he scored for Luton . . . but it didn't do his side much good.

One minute earlier Givens put Rangers ahead, and seven minutes from the end of the match Rogers clinched it.

The Town must be desperately unhappy with their performance as they needed to win this one to keep them in with a shout of staying in Division One.

The big shock for Luton fans when they arrived at Shepherds Bush this afternoon was that striker Jimmy Husband had been dropped and that big Adrian Alston returned to the side for the first time this year.

Alston has been missing moments of brilliance with some difficult patches, and manager Harry Haslam decided this was the do or die weekend if Luton are to escape relegation.

Otherwise Luton were unchanged from the side that lost at Everton during the week with Andy King continuing as substitute.

Rangers were without captain Gerry Francis, injured and replaced by Martyn Busby, brother of Fulham's Viv.

But Dave Webb, who last week announced his "retire-

ment" and then changed his mind was again in the Rangers side, as was Stan Bowles, one of the game's most controversial characters.

Right from the kick-off Paul Fletcher was in action and a long pass back found goalkeeper Horn who was able to set Buckley sprinting up the left.

His good through ball gave Ron Fletcher a run and he proved too fast for McLintock, but Aston was not able to get his pass back into the goalmouth.

First shot of the game came in the second minute when

Clement fired a low one across the Luton goalmouth, but it went out of play to the left of the goal, leaving Horn untroubled.

More good footwork by Ron Fletcher won him a throw off Webb and from this Alston surprised the Rangers defence with a sharp cross that had nobody on the right end of it. Even so, Alston fell back to get in a low shot which Parkes had to dive to save.

After a Thomas corner Faulkner finally saw the ball clear and sent West on a long chase which bore no fruit as he was caught by Clement and robbed.

Some clever football by Anderson in midfield got the ball out to Aston, and Luton put together a good move across the edge of the box before losing the ball.

But Rangers showed the ability to break quickly and Faulkner was forced to clear quickly from under the nose of Busby.

Then John Ryan fouled his old Luton team mate Don Givens just outside the box and Bowles chipped the ball over Horn's bar with the sunshine obviously troubling the Luton keeper.

After West had dribbled the ball clear from defence, he made ground cleverly to leave Beck offside in front of goal.

And then with the Luton goalkeeper advancing from his line, John Ryan showed clever control by volleying the ball into Horn's arms when many another player might have submitted an own goal.

The 13th minute proved unlucky for Givens. He missed an open goal after Clement had gone round the back of the Town defence and put the ball into his path right in front of goal. He went to shoot,

miskicked, and with Horn already committed to his dive, John Ryan nipped in to clear the danger.

A couple of minutes later Luton had another fantastic let-off. And again it was John Ryan who saved them. Givens rose high to a right wing corner from Thomas and flicked the ball with his head towards the net.

It looked a goal all the way until Ryan flung himself in its path, headed the ball against the crossbar and it bounced fast down into the arms of the stranded Horn.

Luton's best build up came in the 22nd minute. Instigated by Aston on the left, the ball went via Alston to Ron Fletcher, but the blond twin was wide with his shot from the edge of the box.

After good defensive play by Webb, McLintock was a bit slow to read the situation and Aston powered into the box, but was robbed before he could shoot.

Aston, Alston, West and Jimmy Ryan put together an ambitious move before John Ryan shot wide from just outside the penalty area.

Luton's best chance was made when Jimmy Ryan dribbled into the box following a pass from Aston. His shot looked on its way to the net when Webb hurled himself in its path to block it — rather painfully.

Play went straight to the other end where Luton conceded a corner and Horn was bundled off the ball as he tried to catch it. Although Bowles did not score with his low shot, the whistle had already gone for a foul on the Luton goalkeeper.

The thrills continued as Gillard went into a shooting position and then little more than rolled the ball at Horn. As Luton broke away, Anderson looked to be going through well when he was obstructed, and from the free kick taken by Jimmy Ryan, Buckley got in a left-footer which Parkes stopped quite easily.

The London side's superiority paid off in 38 minutes, when after Anderson had conceded a free-kick, Givens scored after Webb had beaten Horn with a header.

But Luton were behind for only a minute. The ball shunted its way over to Aston on the left and with Ron Fletcher calling for a cross to the far post, the Luton winger cleverly rolled the ball into the busy goalmouth where Alston flicked it over the line for a most timely goal on his return to the first team.

Two minutes before half-time Masson chased a marvellous ball through the Luton defence, but Horn pulled off a brilliant save to keep the Town in with a chance.

HT: 1-1

With the wind in their favour Luton began quite strongly, but after energetic efforts by Alston and Ron Fletcher had come to nothing, Rangers got back into their stride and Thomas cut in from the right to smash in a terrific shot which cannoned off Horn's knees for a corner.

Thomas took the corner and almost cracked the ball in on the near post because of some laxity by the Luton defence.

More good play by Aston saw him swing the ball into the goalmouth from the right and Ron Fletcher had a rare old battle with Webb before having a free kick awarded against him to take the pressure off the Rangers defence.

A high bouncing ball into the Luton goalmouth in turn caused the Town some problems, but Faulkner showed cool, and with the help of Paul Fletcher saw the ball clear before Busby put a shot over the top.

In the 63rd minute Rogers went on as QPR substitute as Thomas was helped round the track to the dressing room.

In the 73rd minute West was about to take a shot when the loudspeakers announced the half-time score in the League Cup final at Wembley. The Luton skipper shot wide.

A good clearance by Faulkner sent Alston charing through again, but his shot lacked pace and Parkes saved it.

Don Rogers celebrated his call-up as substitute with the goal of the match seven minutes from the end. He beat Horn from more than 20 yards with a splendid left-footer that dipped over the Luton keeper's head into the net.



Luton's Ron Fletcher in a heading duel with Frank McLintock

MATCH DETAILS

QPR: Parkes, Clement, Gillard, Masson, McLintock, Webb, Thomas, Busby, Beck, Bowles, Givens. Sub: Rogers.

LUTON TOWN: Horn, John Ryan, Buckley, Anderson, Faulkner, Paul Fletcher, Jimmy Ryan, Alston, Ron Fletcher, West, Aston. Sub: King.

REFEREE: Mr A. Jones (Ormskirk)

GIVENS (QPR) in 38 minutes.
ALSTON (Luton) in 39 minutes.
ROGERS (QPR) in 83 minutes
ATTENDANCE: 19,583