

Burns blow-up can't ruin

Luton's brave bid

74/75

M O R E smiles for Luton manager Harry Haslam as his brave outfit grabbed another lifeline to First Division survival.

But not from his chief coach Roy McCrohan who had a dust-up with Birmingham players Gary Pendrey and Kenny Burns in a stormy finale.

And not from Luton's Jimmy Ryan, sent off in the last minute after a clash which left Burns writhing on the ground.

The McCrohan episode prompted a policeman to have a word with the coach to cool tempers.

It all added to the drama of Birmingham's heaviest home defeat of the season.

Astonishingly, Birmingham were favourites to reach the FA Cup Final only two weeks ago.

But Haslam's battlers reduced them to mediocrity making it a painful 21st birthday for Blues'

By ALAN BOYES

w o n d e r boy Trevor Francis.

And Birmingham boss Freddie Goodwin had to block his ears to the slow handclap and shouts of "Goodwin out" by a bitter St Andrew's crowd.

Luton, playing like true escape artists, looked the side more worthy of a First Division label on this showing.

They were always more positive in their work, tighter at the back and careful not to follow the howlers committed by Birmingham.

Aussie Adrian Alston roared back to form at the right time with two goals in three minutes, John Ryan and Jimmy Husband completing the Luton score-

Birmingham 1 Luton 4

sheet. And it didn't flatter them at all.

Even Goodwin's desperation move of substituting Ian Smith for Jimmy Calderwood in the 65th minute brought no Blues' improvement.

Hesitancy

The rout began after 14 minutes when John Ryan, strong man in the Luton defence, blasted a 25-yard free-kick past Dave Latchford.

Alston took advantage of hesitancy in the Birmingham defence to score the second goal just on the break then whipped in the third in the 48th minute.

Francis, the one Birmingham player to show anything like normal form,

pulled one back on the hour and Burns hit the woodwork a minute later.

But Birmingham were on their way out.

Alston missed his hat-trick when he prodded the ball wide from only two yards, but the inevitable fourth Luton goal came after 74 minutes when Malcolm Page got in a tangle and let in Husband.

Then came the last-minute flare-up with Jimmy Ryan, who had persistently worried Birmingham, being sent off and McCrohan having his say.

BIRMINGHAM. — Latchford 6, Page 5, Bryant 6, Kendall 6, Gallagher 5, Pendrey 6, Calderwood 6, FRANCIS 7, Burns 6, Hatton 5, Taylor 5. Sub: Ian Smith 6.

LUTON. — Barber 6, Ryan (John) 7, Buckley 6, Anderson 7, Faulkner 7, Litt 7, Ryan (Jimmy) 7, Husband 6, Alston 7, West 6, ASTON 8. Sub: Spiring.