

THE DUCKWORTH VERDICT

FOR 20 minutes or so in the second half, it looked as if Luton might do something against promotion-chasing Bristol City.

But much of their effort lacked conviction, especially in front of goal and they were not able to make anything of their efforts.



There were mistakes throughout the Luton side. Much of their passing left a lot to be desired and Bristol's tall strikers Ritchie and Cheesley gave the home defence the jitters.

Luckily Paul Futchler was in fine form and in spite of a leg injury half-way through the second half, I made him Luton's Man of the Match.



In attack Aston supplied what spark there was but he did not get enough of the sort of ball he was seeking. There was also plenty of effort from midfield where Chambers, King and West tried hard.

But as a whole, this Luton team did not know enough to beat a side that could defend strongly, tackle crisply and attack on the break.



With eight minutes left, Husband went on as substitute for Jim Ryan and he very nearly scored three minutes later.

In fact as the game went in to its closing minutes, Luton's efforts in attack belied much of their earlier play.

But it was too late. They will have to start playing like this in the first half as well as they are to reproduce the sort of form we all know they are capable of.

HATTERS HANG ON FOR A POINT

LUTON lacked fire power again today and could count themselves lucky to escape with a 0-0 draw against Bristol City.

They had a lot to thank keeper Keith Barber for in a game which saw the Hatters' defence facing some potent moves from the promotion-chasing visitors.

There was a stage midway through the second half when Luton really sparkled in attack and they had their hopeful fans roaring in anticipation of a goal, but it wasn't long before the impetus faded — and the fans started giving them the bird.

Luton made two changes bringing in Andy King and leaving out John Seaman. They also brought back Jimmy Husband as substitute.

This meant that King was to play a more attacking sort of role with Jim Ryan, Anderson and John Aston.

It was in fact John Aston's first home game since September 13, when he played against Bolton Wanderers. He was injured the following week at Notts County and made his return to the side at Sunderland last week.

Bristol had a fair following at Kenilworth Road and attracted considerable interest to the match. They started today in second place to Sunderland who, of course, beat Luton last week.

The big news everybody was waiting for at Kenilworth Road today was whether or not Scottish international Jimmy Johnstone would sign for the Town.

He watched today's game and took his seat in the stand a couple of minutes before the kick-off, alongside Luton director Jim Yates.

But an hour earlier a board meeting had ended without any decision being made and it

now looks as if we will have to wait until early next week to know whether or not this fine player will join the Luton ranks.

The putting back of the hour meant the game had to start with the lights on. These were not necessary at the kick-off but it was a dull afternoon with rain threatening, yet with sunshine in the distance.

Luton took some time to get into their stride and both Paul Futchler and Faulkner, helped by Thomson, were busy in the first few minutes.

Some aggression by Chambers gave Futchler possession and he moved upfield before knocking a good ball into the goalmouth which West headed down before Jimmy Ryan shot over the Bristol crossbar.

King was playing on the right side of Luton's midfield and he made some particularly good passes to give the Luton side some feeling of confidence.

A good pass to the far post by John Ryan was challenged for by West, and Gillies had to head over his own crossbar.

City hit back when Ritchie went past John Ryan, but his pass out to the left caught Drysdale offside.

Firepower is still missing

Luton 0 Bristol City 0
By ROGER DUCKWORTH

After West had been adjudged to have fouled Mann, a good free-kick by Tainton out to the right brought a header from leading scorer Cheesley which was wide.

And at the other end, a hard free-kick across the goalmouth by John Ryan saw the ball fall to the feet of Faulkner but he missed it completely and fell on his back in disbelief.

Another good Bristol free-kick by Tainton brought another good header out of Cheesley, and Barber was forced to put the ball over his own bar.

Luton hit back again with a splendid move started by King, continued by Chambers and ending with a cross from Jim Ryan being just missed by Anderson and Cashley catching the ball.

More good work by Chambers sent Anderson on a breakaway. But there is still some punch lacking in the Luton attack and Anderson's centre went straight to the goalkeeper.

From a long throw by Bristol, Anderson was lucky that Barber was fully awake to his rather chancy back pass.

Luton were again in trouble when Thomson conceded a

corner. Barber saved one good, hard low shot, but the ball bounced out to centre-half Collier, who followed up with another but the Luton goalkeeper again managed to stop his close-range effort.

In the 29th minute the Town produced their best effort so far. From a corner West knocked the ball on to Chambers who lobbed a clever shot at goal, only to see it go just high and wide of the left-hand post.

King had to have treatment for a head injury but in spite of this, he continued — along with Chambers — to look Luton's best player.

While in defence, Futchler was the outstanding player and he again came to Luton's rescue when Whitehead slipped Thomson and got over a good cross.

At the other end, a long-range cross from Jim Ryan was narrowly missed by Aston who lunged forward but could not reach the ball as it skidded past on the wet surface.

While Luton could rarely get in scoring attempts, Bristol were always ready to have a go and both Cheesley and Ritchie had efforts stopped by Barber.

HT: 0-0

Bristol showed further ambition at the start of the second half. Right from the kick-off, Barber had to make a diving save to Whitehead, and then the hard-working West found it hard work indeed to

MATCH DETAILS

LUTON: Barber; John Ryan, Thomson, Chambers, Faulkner, Paul Futchler, Jim Ryan, King, Anderson, West, Aston. Sub: Husband.

BRISTOL CITY: Cashley; Gillies, Drysdale, Gow, Collier, Merrick, Tainton, Ritchie, Mann, Cheesley, Whitehead. Sub: Symenay.

Referee: Mr H. Davey (Mansfield)

clear the ball from the Luton defence.

Then Luton attacked but Anderson handled Jim Ryan's high centre in the goalmouth and another chance was gone.

Referee Harold Davey had not done much to please the Luton fans in the first half, but he really annoyed them when he awarded a goal kick after Aston had let the ball out thinking it was a corner — as did everyone else.

Bristol had further bad luck when a long free kick from Drysdale was headed just over the top by the high-jumping Cheesley who continually had the Luton defenders struggling.

And a couple of minutes later, City centre-forward Mann ran some 30 yards without being tackled before hitting the top of the Luton crossbar with a tremendous shot from outside the box.

When Aston made a good break down the left, he beat full-back Gillies easily but neither Jimmy Ryan or Anderson could get up in time to get to his cross.

SPORTS FLASH

■ Billy Hughes gave Second Division leaders Sunderland the lead at York.

Luton nearly scored in the 61st minute. Anderson sent Jimmy Ryan through and the winger got over a good cross for Aston to blast in a shot only to have it blocked on the line.

More intelligent football from Chambers resulted in him putting Aston clear on the left. Aston got in his centre and the Bristol goalmouth was a real shambles. The ball rebounded out to Thomson, and he had a shot but it was also blocked and skidded out to Aston.

The winger got another centre across, but again the Bristol defence scrambled the ball clear.

This was Luton's most intense period of pressure throughout the game and the crowd who had been disappointed by the Town's display, began to scream for that elusive goal.