

HARRY FUMES AT PENALTY

Hales' hat-trick sends the Town home pointless

Charlton Athletic 4, Luton Town 3

LUTON were defeated by an abominable penalty decision last night that left manager Harry Haslam, normally a most philosophic bloke, ranting late into the night.

"If I said what I thought about the referee I'd get six years," he said. "If that was a penalty I'm a Chinaman. Decisions like that can cost people's jobs."

The controversial issue came in the 71st minute when a shot by former Luton striker Derek Hales struck Paul FUTCHER in the penalty area. It came when Charlton were leading 3-2 and the game was delicately poised.

As far as I'm concerned it was never hand-ball. The shot struck FUTCHER who could not possibly have got out of the way. And as Mr Haslam says: "If he deliberately handled the ball why wasn't he booked? And if it wasn't deliberate, then it wasn't a penalty."

After the game FUTCHER told me: "It was a diabolical decision." And adopting the attitude of a Palace guardsman, he said: "I was standing like that."

And what about the referee, former Royal Marine Michael Taylor of Kent? When I asked him about his decision, he put on a harassed look and sighed: "Oh no. Not again?" Counting his fingers in exasperation, he said: "You're

the seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth....

No doubt

"It was a penalty. The player put out a hand and controlled the ball. I have never been more sure of anything. I had no doubt about it."

It was a decision which robbed Luton of at least a point. A point they more than deserved in an enjoyable attacking game, injected with anticipation by two dodgy defences.

Its highlight was a superbly-headed hat-trick by Hales. "I love those," he said afterwards. "And they are even more sweet against your old club."



Deans leaps between the Charlton defence to head Luton's first goal

"Pity I had to knock 'em past my old mate Keith Barber, but he's getting paid the same as I am."

"But I'll tell you one thing, Luton would have won if it had gone another five minutes. They were really buzzing at the end."

Outstanding

John Aston was again Luton's man of the match. After 22 minutes he laid on Luton's first goal for a lead they thoroughly deserved.

The Town had gone near to scoring on half a dozen occasions before Deans headed in another of those beautiful Aston crosses. Deans took the goal well, heading

down and bouncing the ball past Jeff Wood.

Before that Lilly Fuccillo, Luton's outstanding man in midfield, had almost spooked Warman into an own goal. Fuccillo also saw a header go wide. Ryan hit the bar and had

a header palmed over and Hill shot just too high.

And the biggest miss of all had come from Husband who headed an Aston cross over the target.

Then it started to go wrong. After Buckley had lost

possession, Hales found himself all along to head in a Flanagan cross. Where were Price and Faulkner?

In the 37th minute Hales popped up in an identical position and headed Athletic ahead. This came from a Paul FUTCHER mistake when he headed across his own goal. But again, where were Price and Faulkner?

And so it was at half-time. Early in the second half Luton seemed to lose their edge. They found it hard to work their openings or to put things together as they had done in the first half.

Aston, Price and Husband were all foiled in front of goal before that man Hales popped up with his hat-trick goal. And it was the best of the night. He started the move in the middle of the field and was there to finish it off with a superbly placed header from a Powell cross.

Deluge

But two minutes later Luton were back in it. Buckley was fouled by Hunt on a determined charge at goal and Aston took the free-kick from just outside the box. He found the chink in the wall and thrashed the ball straight into the goal. Nobody moved.

And that was the position of things when that penalty was given. Curtis made no mistake from the spot.

It was, however, a highly entertaining night, and even the heavy rain, which had long balls shooting along like the Dambusters' bouncing bomb, failed to spoil the thrills and skills.

The end of the drought brought a deluge of goals. This match produced six last year, with Luton winning 5-1. Last night we went one better. It is just a pity that from Luton's point of view, the decider should have been so suspect.

Ron FUTCHER, who had replaced Husband in a pre-arranged substitution, saw a shot blocked and Hill followed up smartly to finish it off.

Unfortunately there were only four minutes left, and Luton ran out of time. Deans did have the ball in the net again in a frantic finish, but the referee had already blown for offside against Ron FUTCHER who, incidentally, was not interfering with play out near the touchline.

Harry Haslam said afterwards: "Good luck to Derek for taking his goals so well. You don't mind getting beaten with goals like that. But that penalty was really rubbing it in."

"Defensively we were bad, and I was sick with the goals we had given away. But you have to suffer your mistakes and fight back. We should already have been well in front anyway."

And what did Charlton manager Andy Nelson think about the penalty that had helped his side to victory?

"I told the lads that the ref had handed it to us on a plate," he said. "It was lucky."

By ROGER DUCKWORTH

MATCH DETAILS

Luton Town: Barber; Price, Buckley; Ryan, Faulkner, Paul FUTCHER; Husband (Ron FUTCHER, 63min); Hill, Deans, Fuccillo, Aston.

Charlton: Wood; Hammond, Warman; Hunt, Giles, Curtis; Powell, Hales, Flanagan, Young, Peacock. Sub: Berry.

Referee: Mr M. J. Taylor (Walmer, Kent).

Attendance: 9,191.

Goals: Deans (Luton, 22min); Hales (Charlton, 26min); Hales (Charlton, 37min); Hales (Charlton, 60min); Aston (Luton, 62min); Curtis (Charlton, pen, 71min); Hill (Luton, 86min).