

BACK AMONG THE STRUGGLERS

By ROGER DUCKWORTH
LUTON received cool hospitality at Cold Blow Lane on Saturday and were sent packing with the prospect of a bleak Christmas. To put it in the vernacular, the Town are in the clag.

They are suffering the frustration of a ski-jumper with his skis nailed to the top of the Cresta run. They want to get going, but are being held back against their will.

Several times this season they have pecked at the top half of the Second Division table, but each time they have been kicked back among the strugglers.

They will never have a better chance than they had on Saturday of winning a match away from home.

With half the stand still looking for its seats in the usual kick-off game of musical chairs, Luton struck. They scored before many people had sat down.

Skipper Alan West took a neat pass in the centre circle, ran forward 20 yards, and thrashed a dipping shot past goalkeeper Goddard, who had barely got his gloves adjusted.

What Luton needed then was to settle for a bit; to make Millwall sweat. There can be nothing worse than going a goal down so quickly at home.

But no — they let them off the hook.

Oblivion

A Millwall free kick was knocked away and centre half Barry Kitchener veered in from the left to hit a straight shot at goal. Keeper Barber seemed to have it covered, but somehow it flew straight through him into the goal.

Millwall knew they had been let off, and this knowledge gave them the enthusiasm to run hard, tackle strongly and use the wings to open up the game.

Barber, who in the end emerged as Luton's best player, became the busiest man on the field. He made

Luton in for a bleak Christmas?

two brilliant saves to Ray Evans, the second of which had the former Spurs defender pirouetting in mock disbelief.

But Barber could do nothing about Millwall's second goal. Trevor Lee, a talented right winger, beat Steve Buckley in spite of some hard tackling by the Luton left back, and squared the ball back for Terry Brisley to score from an easy position.

At half time the sages of the press box were announcing: "Luton will never save this now."



GRAHAM JONES

And it did look a bit that way. But for once Lady Luck took a shine to Luton. And it doesn't happen often.

A superb move between West and Jimmy Husband sent Lil Fuccillo speeding into the penalty box. As he was about to shoot Phil Walker grassed him and referee Tony Glasson, a capable official, awarded Luton their first penalty of the season.

With obvious enjoyment Steve Buckley crashed the ball past Goddard with such force in the 51st minute that it is as well it did not strike the Millwall keeper.

Millwall were then held until the 79th minute when Walker, who had already

hit the bar with a free kick, scored a scrambled goal.

As Luton were pushed further and further back, defects in defence were shown up. The two full backs were given a hard time by Lee and Shanahan, and I felt there should have been more help for the defence from midfield.

Confusion

The Luton attack was again lukewarm. Ron Futchler tried hard but could not emulate his feats of the week before; and when Dixie Deans replaced the hard-running Husband in the 73rd minute, he, too, found it difficult to make any headway against a stern defence.

Millwall's John Seasman, who looks a bigger and better player than when he was at Luton, wrapped it up in the last minute with a well-taken fourth goal.

Luton are to fight the case for Ron Futchler, who was booked after an exchange of words with brother Paul. The referee took him to be having a go at the linesman.

It was a caution of confusion, and afterwards all that Mr Glasson would say was that Ronnie had been booked for dissent.

Graham Jones playing his first game of the season in the top class, gave a wholehearted performance,

MATCH DETAILS

Luton Town: Barber, Price, Buckley, Chambers, Faulkner, Paul Futchler, Husband (Deans, 73 mins), West, Ron Futchler, Fuccillo, Aston.

Millwall: Goddard, Evans, Donaldson, Brisley, Kitchener, Hazell, Lee, Seasman, Harris, Walker, Shanahan. Sub: Fairbrother.



■ It's a penalty . . . above, Lilly Fuccillo has his legs swept from under him by Phil Walker as he moves into the box. And (right) Ray Goddard dives the wrong way as Steve Buckley's spot-kick thunders into the back of the net.

and because of his lack of experience was only too willing to bang the ball clear — anywhere.



Referee: Mr A. R. Glasson
Attendance: 10,380.
Goals: West (Luton) 2 mins; Kitchener (Millwall) 3 mins; Brisley (Millwall) 34 mins; Buckley (Luton) pen 51 mins; Walker (Millwall) 79 mins; Seasman (Millwall) 89 mins.

Bookings: Jones (Luton) foul. Ron Futchler (Luton) dissent.