

TEARAWAY OPENING WRECKS CARDIFF

TWO BADLY-NEEDED points were earned the hard way when the Town put on a cameo performance against Cardiff City. Their problems this season have revolved mostly around inconsistency — some games have seen positive brilliance while others have been diabolical.

On Saturday they managed to get both features into one match, although in the end the good things about their play far outweighed the bad.

Jimmy Andrews, once a coach at Kenilworth Road, claimed that luck was against him on his first visit back as Cardiff's manager.

"We had half a dozen attempts at goal which just scraped by, the wrong side of the woodwork," he said. "I thought we were worth a draw."

Luton boss Harry Haslam disagreed, and so did I. The Town were not only worth the two-goal lead they built in the first half—they could easily have been three or four up.

It was disappointing to see them allow Cardiff to take the initiative in the first half-hour of the second half, and concede a goal.

But the goal turned out to be Car-

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diff's downfall, not the Town's. The message got through that it was no time to try to sit on the slim lead, and the Town fought their way back by going on to the attack again.

It all added up to an enjoyable afternoon for Town supporters, with thrills in both goalmouths and several close calls for both sides.

The Town looked the better balanced team, and their victory was earned by teamwork rather than through one or two individuals.

Cardiff were below the Town on that score, although in John Buchanan they had the player who made the day's biggest impression in midfield.

But there was an all-round display of grit and determination by the Town players, even if they didn't all achieve peak performances.

Ron Fletcher and Dixie Deans earned goals for a lot of hard work. In defence, Paul Price, who had struggled in recent games, bounced back with a better display, and Graham Jones gave everything as John Faulkner's stand-in.

The midfield had a



● Ron Fletcher, on the left, who hit the Town's second goal, smashes in a shot which almost brought the third: goalkeeper Ron Healey was beaten but the ball missed the far post.

Match Details

LUTON TOWN 2, CARDIFF CITY 1
Half-time: 2-0

TOWN: Barber; Price, Buckley, Jones, Paul Fletcher; Chambers, West, Fuccillo; Ron Fletcher, Deans, Aston. Sub: Husband, not used.

CARDIFF: Healey; Dwyer, Pethard (Alston, 70 minutes), Went, Lamour; Buchanan, Sayer, Livermore; Evans, Showers, Anderson.

THE GOALS: Dixie Deans, 15 minutes, from cross by Paul Price; Ron Fletcher, 31 minutes, after Aston headed on through-ball from Paul Fletcher; Tony Evans for Cardiff, 75 minutes, after Town failed to clear cross by Anderson.

ATTENDANCE: 8,845 — but the missing ones will be back if they can see more of the football the Town produced in the first half.

REFEREE: Brian Homewood, Sunbury-on-Thames: Played consistently for the whole 90 minutes.

BOOKING: Paul Went for showing dissent — he saw a handball by Dixie Deans which the ref didn't.

ENTERTAINMENT: Flagged in the second half, but generally good value for money.

patchy afternoon, controlling matters for two-thirds of the game, but vanishing for the one spell in which Cardiff held the upper hand after half-time.

I made Lil Fuccillo the best of the three, with Alan West only just behind him.

Cardiff moaned about their bad luck when Steve Buckley and Paul Price both cleared off the line with Keith Barber beaten, but their goal had many more narrow escapes than the Town's did.

Lamour covered well to save Cardiff after Deans beat goalkeeper Healey, and Healey had a far busier afternoon than Barber.

He had no chance when the Town opened the scoring after 15 minutes of continual pressure through Deans, who was back in the side after injury. Price made the goal by overlap-

ping down the right wing and crossing low to the near post, where Deans beat Dwyer to the ball.

Ron Fletcher added the second after 31 minutes, from a swift one-touch move. Paul Fletcher hammered a long pass forward, John Aston headed it on, and the Cardiff defence was all over the place as Ron went through on his own.

But Cardiff came back in the second-half, and gambled by putting on striker Adrian Alston in place of full-back Pethard for the last 20 minutes.

It almost paid off. But Alston was unable to do a Roy of the Rovers. Cardiff threatened much but achieved only one goal, through Evans in the 75th minute, after Barber and Graham Jones were unable to dispose of a centre by Anderson.