

BUNGLING CARLISLE MAKE IT EASY FOR LUTON

Town beat offside trap for biggest victory

By ROGER DUCKWORTH

SINCE Scotsman Alan Ross left Luton for the far North 14 years ago he has played against his old club 14 times. Never has there been such a disastrous result for him as on Saturday.

As Luton surge towards the First Division on the crest of this five-goal win, Carlisle look to be going just as fast towards the Third.

Ross, who spent the afternoon screaming instructions at the squarest defence we've seen all season and picking the ball out of the net, moaned: "My God, and to think we always used to do well against Luton."

"I remember some great games, even back in the Malcolm Macdonald days. But we never used to lose."

"Then one day they thrashed us 6-1, and it's never been the same since. But today was one to forget. Luton seemed to come through our defence as they liked. It was a nightmare."

That just about sums up the game. Without stretching themselves Luton could have had at last three more goals. And even then they didn't play as well as they have done at

other times during their magnificent run.

More chances came from Carlisle's mistakes than from their own creation. But it is never easy to play against a massed defence. It's like trying to play golf in the jungle.

They tried it all ways. Aston attacked down both wings, Ronnie Futcher thundered through the middle and Jimmy Husband used his pace and agility to try to prise openings. It was very difficult.

Offside trap

The midfield players tried to open up Carlisle by going wide, at the same time playing with some caution. They looked anxious not to muck up their run of success.

Carlisle looked equally anxious — for a different reason. So it was a real relief when a superb through pass from Paul Futcher was missed by Bonnyman, and Lilly Fuccillo calmly beat Ross.

Husband was Luton's liveliest player. He went close before giving Ron Futcher a beautifully weighted pass to beat the offside trap and score the second.

But at half time it was not at all obvious that Luton were going to run up their biggest

win of the season.

After the break they played with real purpose, and on the hour Husband scored the best goal of the game. After being half-buried by a McVitie tackle which halted his fast run on the left, Husband thrashed in Buckley's free-kick, which had been well headed on by Ron Futcher.

The Carlisle defence got itself deeper and deeper into trouble. They kept trying the offside game, but were too dozy about it to be effective.

Afterwards their manager Bobby Moncur turned his palms to the sky and said: "I don't know what the hell they were playing at."

"That offside business was none of my doing. They just took it upon themselves to try it. It was fatal. We've got one hell of a struggle now."

"I knew it was going to be hard when I came to Carlisle in November. I never kidded myself. But it's hard going home after losing five-nothing."

Macdonald and Parker were the main culprits in defence. Luton quickly learned to time their runs to beat the sluggish attempts to leave them stranded in no-man's-land.

Twice the hard-working Ron Futcher got through, but couldn't produce the speed to



go clear. Then, the one time the trap worked, he put the ball in the net and was whistled offside.

But Luton had nothing to worry about. The diligent West scored with a long shot after Aston had cleverly laid a corner back some 30 yards to his skipper.

And just before the end Aston hit a post after taking a cheeky pass from West. He

made amends a minute before time by robbing the unfortunate Ross out on the by-line and scoring from what seemed an impossible position.

In goal Aleksic made a rare fumble early on, then went on to give a commanding performance and collect his 10th clean sheet since arriving in December.

Faulkner was determined at

MATCH DETAILS

Luton: Aleksic, Price, Buckley, Chambers, Faulkner, Paul Futcher, Husband, West, Ron Futcher, Fuccillo, Aston. Sub: Geddis.

Carlisle: Ross, Carr, Bailey, Martin, Macdonald, Parker, McVitie, Bonnyman, Tait, Rafferty, McCartney. Sub: O'Neill (for Bonnyman, 68 mins).

Referee: Roger Kirkpatrick (Leicester).

Attendance: 11,735.

Goals: Fuccillo (19 mins), Ron Futcher (39 mins), Husband (60 mins), West (74 mins), Aston (89 mins).

Booking: Bonnyman (Carlisle) foul on West.

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the centre of the defence, and his partner Paul Futcher swung between cool brilliance and an over-casual approach, which cost him his first penalty goal.

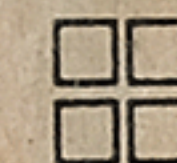
Ross got a bit of his own back by diving to save Futcher's spongy kick after Fuccillo had been tripped late in the game.

Full-backs Price and Buckley gave a good account of themselves, and probably did more attacking than defending, while West, Fuccillo and Chambers searched for the ideas in midfield.

It was another most satisfactory performance, capably handled by that bubbly referee Roger Kirkpatrick.

He doesn't always get full marks from the players because he steals a bit of their thunder. On Saturday he made all the right decisions, and managed to keep going

JOHN O'REILLY's picture says it all. Carlisle keeper Alan Ross sprawls full length, but Alan West's shot squeezes into the corner of the net for Luton's fourth goal.



Millja "elastic" Aleksic has made a number of tremendous reflex saves since moving to Luton from Plymouth. This one foiled Tait's bid to bring Carlisle back into the game just before half-time.

despite a face injury collected in a collision with a player. He had to be seen by the Luton doctor after the match.

