

Stirring up right sort of passion

Luton 1, Bolton 1

BOLTON stumbled in the straight and then applied the whip too tardily at Kenilworth Road yesterday as they began their final effort to snatch the Second Division's third promotion place with a late run on the rails, writes **Colin Malam**.

Having allowed a depleted Luton side to equalise early in the second half, Bolton did not display the urgency of a team seeking elevation to the First Division until the last quarter of an hour.

Even then, they could not overcome Luton's spirited resistance and had to be satisfied with one point instead of the two that looked to be theirs for the taking in the first 25 minutes.

That means they are left with the far-from-easy task of taking five points from their remaining three fixtures, two of them at home, in order to avoid a repetition of last season's heartbreak, when they missed promotion by a point.

On yesterday's evidence, certainly the task of successfully coming from behind to pip Nottingham Forest at the post looks to be a little more than Bolton are equipped to handle. Once Luton had worked up a head of steam, doubts arose about Bolton's ability to scuffle as they must to reach their promotion target.

Their studied, methodical style of play in that early period, when Reid and Greaves in midfield were calm, constructive influences at the eye of the storm, made it easy to understand why they had enjoyed so much success and acclaim earlier in the season.

One wonders, however, whether it is a style capable of

copying the demands of the trying situation in which they now find themselves, a little more dash and bustle is required.

Luton had a monopoly of those uncomplicated methods for longing the injured Paul Futcher and periods yesterday. Despite lack of the U.S.A.-bound West and Ron Futcher, they played with remarkable vigour and enthusiasm for a side already resigned again to missing promotion themselves.

Indeed, the season should not be allowed to end without a tribute to the entertaining contribution made to the Second Division promotion race by a club threatened with extinction not so many months ago.

Bolton opened the scoring after eight minutes in their very first attack. Reid, taking a return pass from Taylor just outside the Luton penalty area, cleverly sidestepped an opponent before re-adjusting his sights and floating a left-foot shot high into the far corner of the net.

The first challenge to Bolton's authority came from a stealthy free kick by Chambers in the 27th minute. Aston sneaked through to meet it at the far post, and McDonagh had to throw his body in the way of the winger's close-range shot to prevent further damage.

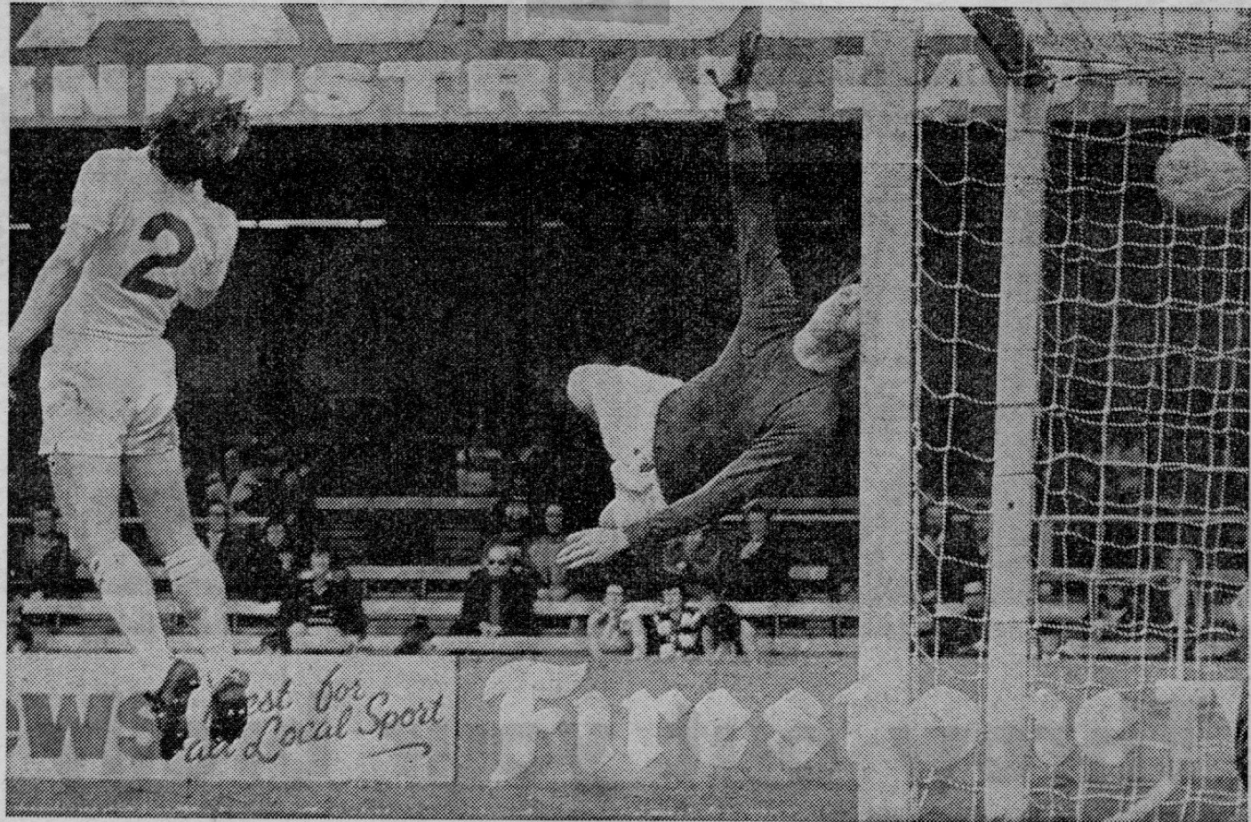
The Bolton goalkeeper also went down quickly to stop the ball when Geddis dispossessed Allardyce, made ground swiftly and shot fiercely. By then, the game had developed a nastier side. Having sent Greaves crashing painfully into the advertisement boards along he touchline, Aston became something of a marked man. He and Ritson were both warned by the referee for starting a scuffle, and then Ritson was booked for scything down the increasingly elusive Luton winger.

It was a corner by Aston that led to Luton's equaliser three minutes into the second half. But the goal was essentially an act of self-destruction by Morgan and Bolton's tall, imposing central defenders, Jones and Allardyce.

Morgan capped an uncharacteristically poor performance by dribbling back towards his own goal and needlessly conceding the corner with a wildly inaccurate pass-back to McDonagh. Then, when Aston's kick came across, Geddis was given a free header to score.

As Bolton finally introduced some vigour into their play, Whatmore shot into the side netting and Chambers got a foot in the way of Taylor's shot after Aleksic had failed to hold a downward header from Allardyce; but the die was already cast.

Luton: Aleksic; Price, Buckley; Chambers, Faulkner, McNichol; Husband, Hill, Geddis, Fuccillo, Aston.
Sub.: Carr.
Bolton: McDonagh; Ritson, Nicholson; Greaves, P. Jones, Allardyce; Morgan, Whatmore, Taylor, Reid, Train.
Sub.: G. Jones.



● **UP IN THE AIR:** Bolton goalkeeper Jim McDonagh and full-back John Ritson get airborne in vain attempts to reach the header by David Geddis which gave the Town a point at Kenilworth Road.