

CUP MARATHON COST LEAGUE POINT

PLAYERS and supporters alike paid the price at Kenilworth Road of the Town's long battle in the Football League Cup. The team was unable to produce the sort of form that worried Manchester City stiff at Maine Road on Tuesday week, and Hull just about deserved to go home with a point.

Manager Harry Haslam refused to accept that this was a case of the Town losing a point. "I think our play was the after-effect of all the travelling of recent weeks, and of the cup replay at Manchester. It's bound to take it out of you, and our players were tired.

"I felt that we could have played better, but I didn't have harsh words for the players. They earned one point, and that kept us in touch with the promotion fight."

Hull boss Bobby Collins, who has led a remarkable revival after moving up from coach to take over the hot seat from John Kaye, was highly delighted.

"Luton are a very good side indeed," he said. "But we knew that they had

gone through a hard two-hour game in midweek and I thought that their tiredness showed."

His only complaint was about a Hull "goal" that was ruled out by referee Tom Bune just before half-time, when the Town were a goal ahead.

Hull used a 4-4-2 formation to contest the midfield, but the Town still had a slight edge there. Ricky Hill had a quiet first half but turned it on in the second.

Alan West and Lil Fuccillo kept the Town in the game, but the match developed into a mistake-ridden bore for long periods.

Neither attack showed too many signs of outwitting the opposing defence, but the Town found a way through in the 34th minute.

Hill delivered a beautiful pass to West on the left wing, and his cross into the box was equally perfect. Jim Husband was on the spot to head in his eighth goal of the season.

The Town began to look as though they were going to get through the game without breaking into too much of a sweat, saving themselves for Tuesday's date at Old Trafford.

Three minutes before the break West was caught in possession by Chris Galvin, who made ground down the right and slung over a centre deep into the penalty area.

Milija Aleksic and Alan Warboys jumped for it together, and when the ball ran loose Bruce Bannister netted at the second attempt. But the whistle had already gone for a foul by Warboys on the goalkeeper.

In the second half, the game developed into an even struggle between two sides which rarely looked top class, although the Town went close when Ron Fletcher side-footed a volley on to the top of the bar from a cross by West.

Penalty claims were rejected when Peter Daniel and Gary Heale went down in the box, and then a brilliant through-ball by Fuccillo sent Ron Fletcher clear. He outstripped the defence, and dribbled wide

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Sports Editor

of the goal to get round goalkeeper Jeff Wealands.

But there was no close Town support, and Fletcher's attempt to cross before the goalkeeper could recover failed when Ian Dobson intercepted.

Hull launched a counter-attack, and Vince Grimes was allowed to make nearly 30 yards in midfield before passing to Bannister, and from the edge of the area Bannister shot the equaliser under Aleksic's dive.

That reverse, with 22 minutes to go, stung the Town into their most active spell of the game.

Heale went for goal and was half-stopped, and Hill laid the ball back for Steve Buckley. It was on his "wrong" foot — the right—but even so Buckley's drive took off like a shell from a gun, and was swerving towards the net when Wealands arched upwards to flip the ball over the bar.

Four minutes from time came the most entertaining action of the whole match. Hill picked up the ball just inside his own half, and set off on a close-control run with it.

With the crowd at last finding its voice, he sliced past five men, and was all set to score the goal of the century, never mind the goal of the season, when he ended the run with a low drive towards the corner of the net.

But Wealands stretched himself to the limit, and dived to tip the shot round the post.

Hull boss Collins admitted: "That would have been a wonderful goal, and if it had been scored I don't suppose we would have minded losing to it."

Match Details

LUTON TOWN 1, HULL CITY 1

Half-time: 1-0

TOWN: Aleksic; Price, Buckley, Faulkner, Paul Fletcher; West, Hill, Fuccillo; Husband, Ron Fletcher, Heale. Sub: Carr, not used.

HULL CITY: Wealands; Daniel, de Vries, Dobson, Haigh; Bremner, Galvin, Grimes, Stewart; Warboys, Bannister. Sub: Sunley, not used.

THE GOALS: Jim Husband for the Town, 34 minutes, header from pinpoint centre from left wing by Alan West; Bruce Bannister for Hull, 68 minutes, after Vince Grimes was allowed to make a long run from midfield with no serious challenge to lay the goal on. Milija Aleksic might have been quicker to get down to the shot.

ATTENDANCE: 8,936, and they didn't make much noise. Perhaps they didn't have much to shout about.

REFEREE: Tom Bune, Billingham, Sussex — rarely noticed, which means that he had a good game.

ENTERTAINMENT: In short supply, with the Town suffering after-effects—and before-effects?—of their League Cup marathon.



● RICKY HILL earned warm praise all round for his performance in the Town's midfield against Hull. "He was most impressive," said Hull manager Bobby Collins. "He was the midfield man who did most damage to us." In Steve Templeman's picture, above, Hill shows the style of a player heading for the top, beating an opponent to the ball.