



Above . . . on its way. Brian Stein's overhead kick creates a chance for Ron Futchter, below to head Luton's goal



Two goals, and fine entertainment

By ERIC HARRIS

IF LAST night's match against Bristol Rovers had ended in a handsome victory for Luton, it would have been no more than they deserved.

Playing with a refreshing enthusiasm for attack, Luton failed to win well simply because they missed several chances — and that failing must be manager David Pleat's biggest priority.

But Luton finally had to settle for a 1-1 draw after snatching the lead three minutes from the end and conceding the equaliser two minutes later in a thrilling finale.

Despite Luton's failure to

score, goals, the game still provided plenty of excitement for the 5,913 fans — the Town's lowest League attendance for several years.

The result left Pleat feeling deflated. "I'm sick that we dropped a point because there was no doubt we deserved the two. Although we missed chances throughout the match, we persevered and took the lead only to pay the penalty for a defensive mistake.

"But when I took the job as manager, I thought we had the makings of a good team, and that was proved tonight. I don't think the fans had anything to complain about."

There wasn't much to find fault with in Luton's performance.

They concentrated on

building attacks from midfield — prompted by skipper Alan West's return — although they could have been a goal down as early as the second minute when Milija Aleksic made a superb save from David Staniforth who had been put through by Frank Prince who completely split the Town's defence.

That was only the first of a series of close misses by both teams. Luton hit back with Phil Boersma's cross being scrambled away for a corner, and from his kick Brian Stein's header was punched over.

Difficult

Stein, Luton's most active forward, went on to hit a post when he took Boersma's pass, but Aleksic had to make a second fine save when full-back Peter Aitken broke to test him with another fierce shot.

And to it went on. West hit the bar before follow-up shots from Stein and Ron Futchter were scrambled off the line; Lilly Fuccillo's shot was tipped around the post and his corner kick was cleared off the line by Bobby Gould.

In the second half, Boersma pushed over a cross, but with his colleagues standing glued in the area, they missed the chance and, later, Ron Futchter hit the post.

Despite those misses, Luton continued to press forward, and Stein bemused Rovers' defence with another fine through ball to Ron Futchter. Again, he shot wide.

It was difficult to assess how Luton could miss so many chances, but their bad finishing continued.

Ron Futchter headed wide from West's free kick, and Stein brought a flying save from Thomas who palmed the ball out to Futchter. Once again, he failed to put the chance away.

Despite Luton's frustrating inability to capitalise on their chances, the fans kept shouting their encouragement and, three minutes from the end, it seemed the Town had taken both points.

The ball was worked into the area to Stein who, standing with his back to the goal, flicked the ball over his head onto the far post.

This time, Ron Futchter made no mistake as he ran in to head the ball cleanly and forcibly past Thomas.

But with only a minute left, Rovers made one last effort and, from a corner, Steve Harding ran in to push the ball past Aleksic from close range.

although Luton's drowdy defence were partially at fault for failing to clear it.

Ricky Hill, who made a remarkable late recovery from flu, went on for Graham Jones 15 minutes from the end and added more stability to midfield.

Pleat will be in the fortunate position of having a full squad available for the first time in several weeks for the tough visit to Blackburn on Saturday.

It would be foolish to base the rest of Luton's results this season on last night's performance. But if they can maintain this form, they won't be far away from the top of the Second Division at the end of the season.

MATCH DETAILS

LUTON: Aleksic; Price, Carr, West, Faulkner, Futchter (P), Stein, Jones (Hill), Futchter (R), Fuccillo, Boersma.

BRISTOL ROVERS: Thomas; Aitken, Bate, Harding, Taylor, Prince, Williams, Pulls, Gould, Staniforth, Randall. Sub: Hendrie.