

Town fail to nail struggling Millwall OWN GOAL SINKS BATTLING LUTON

INSTEAD of knocking what should have been one of the last nails in Millwall's Second Division coffin, Luton allowed the London club another gasp of breath in their fight for survival when a second half own goal from Paul Price gave them two valuable points.

But the Town left London wondering how they had failed to penetrate a Millwall defence which looked anything like Second Division material for next season.

Luton lost the game at a time when they looked most like winning it. After surviving a couple of scares in the first half, the Town began the second period well and played all the football.

With the midfield trio of Alan West, Ricky Hill and Lilly Fuccillo coping more than adequately, there was little to trouble Luton. But the old failing of not accepting the half chance proved costly, and the Town have now slipped to a mid-table position.

That situation will obviously have to be resolved for next season, and whispers that manager David Pleat is still looking for new players will give their supporters renewed hope that the Town's young side will mature even more.

Millwall manager, George Petchey, rarely a man of many words, was delighted with his side's victory, but still admirably praised Luton's performance.

"Luton are a very good side and it is always pleasing to beat teams which play good football. The pressures of possible relegation have been tremendous for my team, but they played their way out of it tonight."

Achievement

Millwall's Den has not been a happy venue for the Town this season. In addition to last night's disappointing result, Luton were knocked out of the FA Cup at the fourth round stage.

"To beat Luton twice in three months is a fine achievement," Petchey added. "After we had beaten them in the FA Cup I fancied them for promotion. But I'm sure they will come good next season."

Millwall started furiously with the nippy Trevor Lee

Millwall 1, Luton Town 0 By ERIC HARRIS

causing a few problems on the left, and Milija Aleksic prevented Luton from falling behind as early as the second minute when he ran out quickly to block the ball with his legs at Lee's feet.

But the Town should have taken the lead shortly after when Ron Fletcher, who rose to meet Lilly Fuccillo's cross, failed to find any direction and headed over.

The Town came forward and, prompted by Brian Stein energetic runs, went close when he and Ricky Hill shot narrowly wide.

Any tension and frustration in the occasion for Millwall showed after 30 minutes when Aleksic was forced to run out of his area to clear a long through ball.

He succeeded only in putting the ball at Lee's feet who, if he had lobbed the ball over Aleksic, would almost certainly have found the unguarded net.

Dangerous

The Luton keeper was caught hopelessly out of position but, fortunately, Lee delayed his effort too long and gave Luton defenders time to run back and cover before shooting wide.

Lee was Millwall's most dangerous forward and one cross, knocked across the face of the goal, was completely wasted when his colleagues failed to read the situation with none of them running into the box.

Luton's best first half chance came in the 41st minute when, from Stein's cross, Ron Fletcher knocked the ball on. Keeper Nicky Johns knew little about the situation but, as he fell backwards, the ball hit him on the shoulder and bounced to safety.

The Town went behind in the 63rd minute. Tony Hazell's free kick was knocked on by Dave Mehmet and Price, attempting to head over the bar, deflected the ball past Aleksic into the net.

MATCH DETAILS

MILLWALL: Johns, Donaldson, Moore, Mehmet, Kitchener, Hazell, Lee, Hamilton, Seasman (Pearson), Walker, Allen.

LUTON: Aleksic, Price, Carr, Hill, McNichol, Paul Fletcher, Stein, West, Ron Fletcher, Fuccillo (Ingram), Boersma.

REF: T. R. Glasson (Salisbury).

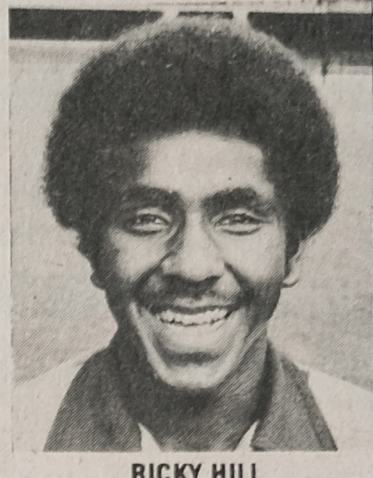
ATTENDANCE: 7,334.

GOAL: Price (og) 63 minutes.

BOOKING: Jones (foul on Seasman)



LILLY FUCCILLO



RICKY HILL