

HERO STEIN SAVES LUTON'S BLUSHES

TWO second half goals from Brian Stein last night saved Luton the embarrassment of a Football League Cup replay at Wigan.

Until Stein struck in the 64th minute, Luton had been firing on only three cylinders and the tie looked set to end in stalemate.

Wigan, who relied on a team of former part-timers and free transfer signings for their first assault on the League Cup, made life distinctly uncomfortable for Luton in the first half and, if they had had better luck with a couple of breaks, the Town would have been on their way out.

But it finally came right, although manager David Pleat must still be concerned that his expensive rebuilding has not yet reached its full momentum on the pitch.

There was little wrong with Luton's individual skills. But when it came to putting their game together, the Town started to stutter badly and the tension of being unable to score against a Fourth Division outfit was painfully evident.

The result was vital to Luton after two defeats.

The fact that they scored twice last night will be of paramount importance as the players now face the prospect of realising they have the ability to do well this season.

Luton's inability to punish Wigan in the penalty area



**Luton Town 2
Wigan Athletic 0**
Match report
by ERIC HARRIS
Pictures by
IAN BROWN

could eventually have had the fans moaning in disbelief. The fickle crowd of 6,618 had voiced their displeasure several times as the Town attacks continually broke down in the penalty area.

Luton had a scare when Frank Corrigan broke quickly and should have given Wigan the lead when he was left with only Milija Aleksic to beat.

Lethal

Corrigan, playing in the Football League for the first time, didn't know whether to shoot or chip the ball over the keeper's head. In the end he did neither and appeared to stub his toe against the turf before the ball trickled into Aleksic's arms.

Luton's superiority was measured by their 11 corners. Wigan failed to win one throughout the match, and once the Town learn to complete their build-ups with lethal finishing Pleat will be well satisfied.

Stein, a diminutive player with a scraggy frame, has remarkable ball control and the ability to shield it from defenders.

He presented several problems to Wigan and, as early as the ninth minute, combined delightfully with David Moss whose final shot was well saved by John Brown.

Moss saw much more of the ball in the first half than he did against Crystal Palace and Newcastle and although he faded from the match slightly in the second half, looked to be settling in well.

But the pick of Luton's team in defence were right back Kirk Stephens and midfield player Mal Donaghy. Stephens showed tremendous character and strength and it was

difficult to appreciate that Donaghy has played only four games in English League soccer.

Luton should have been well in front at half-time. Bob Hatton had a header nodded off the line. Chris Turner headed over from Moss's corner, and Brown snatched the ball off Moss's toe before Lil Fuccillo and Moss had shots blocked.

Pattern

Wigan hit back with a shot from full back Tommy Gore, their best player, and Aleksic



■ A goal on its way. Chris Turner heads the ball down to Brian Stein, not in the picture.



■ Alan West, left, shows his delight with the first goal as Brown is left sprawled on the turf

Wigan out of luck

had to throw himself at John Wilkie's feet.

The second-half followed the same pattern as the first and Luton finally went in front.

The move began with Paul Price's long throw in the area which Turner headed down to STEIN. He controlled the ball well before squeezing it past Brown into the corner of the net.

The goal boosted Luton's confidence and Donaghy crashed a tremendous drive against the bar before Hatton and Stein combined in the Town's best move of the match.

They split Wigan's defence with precision passes and found West, who was a fraction wide with a fine right-footed shot.

It deserved a goal, but STEIN wrapped it up four minutes from the end with a perfect header from yet another Moss corner.

The result did not surprise

Wigan manager Ian McNeill. "We knew we had no chance of winning, but thought we may be capable of sneaking a draw," he said.

That may have been unfair to his team because Wigan could easily have snatched the lead, and that would have presented Luton with problems perhaps they couldn't have solved.

Pleat looked relieved at the end. "The longer the game went on, the more worried I became," he said. "I'm just pleased we won because we badly wanted a victory under our belts."

MATCH DETAILS

LUTON: Aleksic, Stephens, Aizlewood, Donaghy, Turner (C.), Price, West, Fuccillo, Stein, Hatton, Moss. Sub: Hill.

WIGAN: Brown, Gore, Smart, Seddon, Ward, Gillibrand, Corrigan, Wright, Houghton, Wilkie (Davids), Purdie.

Referee: Mr J. Huntin (Leicester)

Attendance: 6,618

Goals: Stein (64 and 86)