

MOSS'S DOUBLE LIFTS THE TOWN

By ERIC HARRIS

78/79

TWO goals which would have done ample justice to Match of the Day provided Luton with a strong foothold in their New Year bid to regain a place in the top half of the Second Division table.

David Moss struck twice in the first half with an articulate sense of professionalism to dampen the enthusiasm of Millwall's fans and almost certainly drove another nail in the London club's relegation coffin.

With the knowledge of Orient's shock 2-0 victory at West Ham only a couple of hours earlier still fresh in their minds, the Town's players realised their match was clearly worth four points.

They could never, however, have expected to find a Millwall side who would have so willingly presented them with both points. On this display Millwall would find it difficult to compete at Third Division level and, if there was one fault to find with Luton's performance, it was their inability to win by more than two goals.

But they finally won with so much ease it was difficult to appreciate that the contest was being staged by two teams in the same division. Rooted at the bottom of the table, Millwall rarely looked like scoring and their contribution to the game was a terrible advertisement for entertaining football.

Millwall's Den has not provided Luton with many points in recent years. But the Lions failed to provide even a whisper of defiance against a no-nonsense Luton performance which must have given manager David Pleat sound hopes of at least a mini-revival after four defeats.

Disappointing

Yes, it was that easy for the Town. They overcame the clogging mud — ground staff had spent the entire morning forking the pitch after heavy overnight rain — and often swung the ball about with so much precision that they gave the impression the match was being played in August.

Millwall's poor form contributed to a disappointing attendance of only 6,068. And those East End fans who did turn out on a mild afternoon were not slow to let their team's players know exactly what they thought of the holiday entertainment.

Even the players started bickering among themselves as Luton gratefully capitalised on their almost non-existent fighting spirit, and the eerie atmosphere provided testimony of Millwall's failings.

But while Moss provided the finishing touch with two superb goals, David Carr

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deserves equal praise. He ran himself into the Coldblow Lane mud with a tenacious performance which, I hope, the manager has thoroughly noted and digested.

Carr has not seen much of the action at first team level this season. But his display yesterday should stifle some of his early season critics. He may not have the benefit of finesse but his ability to win the ball in midfield with an aggressive attitude yesterday continuously frustrated Millwall.

But after 22 minutes Luton broke to take a deserved, if belated, lead. West contributed much to the goal with a clever dummy which allowed Hatton to run energetically down the left and cross for Moss.

The build-up completely mesmerised Millwall's defence and Moss was left with wimple opportunity to head low, and with precision, into the bottom corner of the net.

Millwall, however, were presented with two opportunities and, from the second after Findlay had made a fine save from Walker, the Town broke for their second goal.

From Findlay's save the ball was worked quickly out to Hill. Realising the opportunity, Hill released an early ball which found Moss just inside the Luton half. He quickly made ground, glanced briefly up and delicately chipped the ball over Cuff's head.

It entered the net from 25 yards and thoroughly warranted the elation shown by physiotherapist Roy Johnson and assistant manager Ken Gutteridge, who leapt from the dug-out to acknowledge Moss's brilliant opportunism.

Millwall were left to dwell on the thought of the Third Division next season after a competent Luton demolition job. But the Town will realise that, while they won well, they would be foolish to regard this game as the turning point.

They travel to Fulham on Saturday and entertain Stoke on New Year's Day. Before we start singing the Town's praises let's see how they fare in those two games.