

Robert Armstrong—Luton 1, QPR 1

Pleasure unlimited

79-80

It used to be said that ambitious teams had to claw their way out of the Second Division, marking tightly, closing down religiously, and releasing the ball as if it were liable to detonate.

That hypothesis may, indeed, still hold true for the majority, but other rules clearly apply to cultured Luton and a QPR side well versed in the habits of the First Division.

The most astonishing feature of their meeting at Kenilworth Road on Saturday was the undiluted stream of entertainment that sprang out of a nervous, error-ridden opening that reflected the pressure of the occasion. Most of the credit for good value must go to Luton, who never ceased to strive for two points at the risk of losing both. In spite of that, Rangers just about deserved a draw on the strength of their fighting recovery in the second half.

Tommy Docherty summed up the pattern of play neatly. "Luton were a bit unlucky," he said. "They were the better side for long spells, and the best we have played this season. But we could have won in the last minute. We are delighted with a point."

The QPR manager also gave short shrift to a reporter seeking evidence of a personal dispute between himself and Stan Bowles. "There is a place for the press—but they haven't dug it yet," Docherty remarked. "Stan is a very nice chap, just like George Best—except that he turns up."

David Pleat remarked that it was "important not to lose at this stage," though the Luton manager must have felt a little disappointed that wave after wave of attack produced only a single goal. That came in the

second minute of first half injury time when Price took a free kick at the halfway line and Saxby rose near the six-yard box to head the ball past a surprised Woods.

It was incongruous that Luton should score from a dead ball situation as their swift, intricate passing had always posed the greater threat to QPR, whose lumbering defenders often appeared out of their depth. Luton's thrusting confidence was, perhaps, best seen in the performance of Stephens, a young fullback with an appetite for scorching 70-yard runs, one of which ended with his shot crashing back off a post.

Fortunately for QPR, the prolific Moss's finishing was not sharp enough on the day to convert any one of four good chances, the best of which came from a dreadful backpass by Wicks. The big defender, who was cautioned along with Hazell, Shanks, and Hatton of Luton, sent another bad backpass to the feet of Stein a little later, but QPR survived each alarm with ominous good luck.

It did not come as a surprise when QPR equalised with the help of a deflection, midway through the second half. Roeder's 25-yard drive was charged down by a defender but spun away neatly into the path of Allen, who scored from 15 yards with a strong cross shot.

To his great disgust the QPR striker squandered a winner in the last seconds when Saxby missed his header.

Luton.—Findlay, Stephens, Donaghy, Grealish, Saxby, Price, Hill, West, Stein, Hatton, Moss.

QPR.—Woods, Shanks, Gillard, McCreery, Hazell, Wicks, Bowles, Roeder, Allen, Currie (Burke 75min), Goddard.

Referee.—B. Martin (Nottingham).