

Robert Armstrong
Luton 1, Man City 2

24-9-80

Good timing for Allison

Manchester City gave their manager Malcolm Allison some much-needed relief with a sparkling and confident victory over Luton Town in a third round League Cup Tie at Kenilworth Road last night.

No doubt City will be delighted merely to have achieved the right result, especially with the Manchester derby imminent on Saturday, but their performance was in addition a positive indication of the all-round attacking skills on which Allison rests his reputation.

There were no goals after a first half packed with attacking incident but the commitment shown after the interval was of a kind that would halt the general decline in attendances if repeated on a wide scale. Bennett and Henry were the City scorers and both Caton and Ranson received a yellow card, but the tie was memorable chiefly for Antic's goal direct from a 20-yard free kick which will linger long in the memory.

Certainly neither set of supporters could complain about lack of entertainment. Both sides showed a refreshing sense of wit in the way they constructed their attacks, cleverly changing pace and making adroit use of the short through ball to put Findlay and Corrigan under pressure on their respective goal lines.

However, City showed the greater penetration, with their strikers Bennett and Reeves reacting rather more swiftly and finding free space more often than the Luton partnership of Antic and Stein. Indeed it was Reeves' quick thinking in dispossessing Donaghy on the right flank that allowed City to take the lead in the 12th minute through Bennett who surged forward unchallenged to score with a low drive from eight yards.

City always seemed to have a little bit more poise than Luton, mainly because their midfield trio of Daley, Palmer and Power had the fruitful habit of despatching early passes to the front runners. Even so, the speed and unexpected direction of Luton's assaults induced sufficient anxiety in the City defence for Caton to earn a caution after a desperate tackle on Hill and for Henry to bring down West just outside the 18-yard line. From the resulting free kick, Raddy Antic, a Yugoslav with Spanish league experience, curled a cunning chip over the City wall to bring Luton level after 26 minutes.

Neither of the Luton centre-backs was within yards of Henry when the City forward, stationed on the six-yard line, headed Daley's cross powerfully past Findlay after 43 minutes for what proved to be the winner.

Luton Town: Findlay, Stephens, Donaghy, Grealish, Saxby, Price, Hill, Stein, West, Antic, Moss.

Manchester City: Corrigan, Ranson, Reid, Booth, Caton, Henry, Power, Daley, Palmer, Bennett, Reeves.

Referee: S. G. Bates (Bristol).