

Heads — it's Elliott

PRE-match predictions must have meant a lot to David Pleat before the game at QPR on Saturday.

The Luton boss promised us a fine clash at Loftus Road — and that is exactly what 15,000 supporters were treated to in West London.

There was absolutely no doubt that Paul Elliott's splendid headed goal in the 10th minute gave the Town a justified victory which was nowhere near as artificial as Rangers' plastic surface.

Skill, thrills and a sending off contributed to an excellent 90 minutes of what the game is all about, but often lacking — all-out attack.

Rangers may have pointed to splendid saves from Les Sealey for denying them a point. But even the London club must have realised they were finally let off the hook lightly after Luton failed to take full advantage of their enthusiastic breaks.

The Town's flowing performance won them many accolades from the experts in the Press box

Paul's up and at 'em! ^{8/89}

By ERIC HARRIS

which included well known television and radio commentators.

Even England manager Bobby Robson, sitting in the stand, must have been impressed with Luton's tenacious approach — and the excellent game Elliott, completely dominant in defence, enjoyed.

But it would be grossly unfair to heap all the praise for this result on Elliott's young shoulders. He was only part of a team that so many people are going to take notice of this season.

Arrogant Luton completely controlled the first period and, when Rangers finally rose from their slumbers in the second half, the Town were an adequate match for anything Terry Venables' lads could throw at them.

The game also provided a golden opportunity for 18-year-old Gary Parker to again prove the wealth of

young talent waiting in Luton's wings.

After making his debut last season at Manchester United, Pleat gave Parker his second outing and it was fitting he was involved in the set piece which gave the Town their precious goal.

Skipper Nobby Horton pushed a short corner to Parker who showed a much more mature approach than his tender years by turning his marker inside out before floating his cross to the far post.

Elliott gauged the flight of the ball perfectly and ran in to whip it past Peter

Hucker powerfully with his head.

Ricky Hill also attempted to slide his name on to the scoresheet with a drive which was just wide before Mal Donaghy's screaming 30-yard drive was tipped around by the keeper.

Victim

Poor Rangers hadn't had a proverbial sniff in the first half and, within 20 seconds of the resumption, Trevor Aylott should have put the issue completely beyond Rangers but allowed Hucker to scramble the ball away with his legs.

That error could have been the turning point of the game because Rangers, obviously the victim of Venables' wrath at half-time, suddenly woke up.

It was 49 minutes before they managed to put their first effort on target when Sealey tipped Simon Stainrod's shot around a post.

The Luton keeper also responded to a Clive Allen header before making yet another superb save from Stainrod.

In between, Rangers had been reduced to ten men when John Gregory was sent off for kicking Sealey. But the final venom of the Town's attack was reserved for Parker who, in the last few seconds, forced Hucker to make a better than average stop.



Stein avoids keeper Hucker

MATCH DETAILS

QPR: Hucker; Neill, Dawes, Waddock, Wicks, Fenwick, Micklewhite, Stewart, Allen, Stainrod, Gregory. Sub: Fillery.

LUTON: Sealey; Stephens, Turner, Horton, Elliott, Donaghy, Hill, Stein, Walsh, Aylott, Parker. Sub: Antic.

ATTENDANCE: 15,053. REFEREE: L. Burden (Dorset). GOALS: Elliott (10). BOOKING: Stainrod (dissent). SENDING OFF: Gregory (kicking Sealey).



Faces of determination . . . Trevor Aylott (left) and Steve Wicks