

REPLY IS TOO LATE TO SPUR REAL REVIVAL

TOTTENHAM 2, LUTON TOWN 1

NOT UNTIL the last five minutes at White Hart Lane did the Town do anything to cheer up the defiant supporters who hoped that a European hang-over might dull the Spurs.

Of the four English clubs involved in European competitions three days previously, only Spurs were winners on Saturday—Liverpool lost at lowly Stoke, while Manchester were being beaten at Notts County, who will be in the Second Division next season.

Spurs boss Keith Burkinshaw took pleasure from that fact, having worried before the game that his side, beaten in Yugoslavia, might find it difficult to raise their enthusiasm for a run of the mill league match.

He retained the same team, and with the Town making changes again it was Luton boss David Pleat who was once more left to look at the way the current side is losing its way.

Two or three of the men who played at Tottenham will not be at Kenilworth Road next season, but at least some of the younger recruits offer promise and optimism.

For the first 85 minutes the Town were second best to a Spurs team that showed appetite for success, with the crucial difference the home side's ability to get plenty of men forward to support attacks.

Even the full-backs joined in, with the result that Town counter-attacks could have been effective if only one man had been capable of avoiding offside.

With Paul Walsh still unfit after reaction late in the week to his knee injury, the Town recalled David Moss to partner Brian Stein and Trevor Aylott in attack.

Tim Breacker was rested from midfield and Garry Parker was given another game.

Without hitting the heights, Spurs ran the game where it mattered, with Mike Hazard taking charge of midfield, from which Glenn Hoddle and Ossie Ardiles were missing.

Chris Hughton's overlaps kept Kirk Stephens pinned back for most of the match, Graham Roberts lumbered up-field from defence to get behind attacks, and the Town's attempted breaks failed for any sign of real sharpness in the penalty area at the other end.

Mr Burkinshaw said Spurs should have scored five before the Town's late reply left the Londoners hanging on for the last two minutes.

Les Sealey, after a shaky start, did well despite suffering from two fouls by Mark Falco. The first, in the 12th minute, saw a "goal" disallowed, and the second, for a late and high tackle, ended in Falco being booked.

Mal Donaghy cleared an effort by Steve Archbald off the line, and Sealey made good saves from Falco, Tony Galvin and Paul Miller.

For the Town Stein made a good break and shot wide from the sort of chance he would have converted a year or so ago, and the industrious Parker forced Tony Parks to a difficult save in the 86th minute.

By then Spurs had a thoroughly deserved 2-0 lead, with goals by Roberts and Falco, but Bunn, unwilling to give up even at that late stage, broke down the left wing two minutes from time and when his cross reached Parker the teenager drilled a deliberate 20-yard drive into the net for a goal of real quality.

Sadly, it was an isolated highlight from a team that had

DETAILS

too many members playing without evident self-belief.

TOWN: Sealey; Stephens, Elliott, Donaghy, Thomas; Parker, Herten, Bunn; Aylott (Antic, 71 mins), Stein, Moss.

SPURS: Parks; Thomas, Roberts, Miller, Hughton; Perryman, Hazard, Habbott; Archbald, Falco, Galvin (Stevens, 76 mins).

THE GOALS: Roberts 20 mins and Falco 83 mins for Spurs; Parker for the Town, 86 mins.

OTHER STRIKES: Town four saved and five wide; Spurs ten saved, eight wide, one netted but disallowed for a foul on the keeper. Corners: 15-2 to Spurs.

ATTENDANCE: 25,390, highest at any Town match since they were at Anfield in October.

REFEREE: Martin Bodenham, Sussex.

ENTERTAINMENT: Reasonable fare for everyone except Town fans. But at least the Town performance was better than it had been against Everton the previous week.