

Late goals build platform

TWO LATE goals ended the frustration for the Town and their supporters in Tuesday's Milk Cup-tie at Bramall Lane.

The Town did more than enough to suggest that they should complete the journey to the third round in the second leg at Kenilworth Road on Tuesday week.

And if they can produce finishing accuracy to match the approach work they showed against a gritty and determined Second Division side there could be a feast of goals.

They always looked a class above the home side but made problems for themselves by failures in the penalty area.

And United, always willing to run and chase, even if they did not have outstanding skill, shook the Town by scoring 55 seconds into injury time at the end of the first half.

The defensive cover was caught lacking as Steve Foley, a free-transfer signing from Grimsby, moved up for a free kick. Phil Thompson floated it into the penalty area, Peter Withe and Colin Morris helped the ball on its

way with two more headers, and Foley looped the third header over Les Sealey's head into the net.

United, packed with experienced players, had opened at some pace in the first 15 minutes with Glenn Cockerill, whose future interests Luton boss David Pleat, driving them forward from midfield down their left flank.

But with Steve Foster coping admirably with his former Aston Villa colleague Withe the Town's defence rarely looked in serious trouble.

And their counter-attacking, particularly down the left through David Preece and Mitchell

Thomas, forced United to pull back and defend in depth.

Preece was unlucky in the 33rd minute when a sweeping Town move ended with him hitting a cross shot from the left which hit the post and bounced to safety while veteran John Burridge was still making his dive.

The Town should have taken the lead long before Foley's shock, but Nwajiobi had strayed off-side before netting with a header, and then when he delivered a hard low cross the ball skidded under Mick Harford's boot when a goal looked certain.

COMPOSED

The Town always looked composed and the one goal deficit might not have been disastrous

had it stood. With Hill creating cleverly from midfield they put plenty of pressure on United throughout the second half.

But the excellence of the approach work was not matched by the final touch, with Hill, Harford, Stein and Peter Nicholas all producing shots or headers off target.

Sealey had to make his only difficult save of the match to keep out a header by John Morris, but in the 78th minute the equaliser the Town deserved arrived.

Nwajiobi made progress down the right, crossed accurately, and Stein was unmarked to score. And in injury time a move started by

Hill ended with Nwajiobi, completely unmarked, driving in the Town's second goal from Stein's cross.

The lead should give the Town the platform to complete the cup-tie victory on their synthetic pitch. But they will not be over confident in view of their recent unhappy memories against South Yorkshire teams in the Milk Cup—defeats in the last two seasons at the hands of Rotherham and Sheffield Wednesday.

85/86 (FLC)

TUESDAY'S MILK CUP GAME

Match details

SHEFFIELD UNITED 1, LUTON TOWN 2
Half-time: 1-0

TOWN: Sealey; Breaker, Foster, Donaghy, Thomas; Hill, Nicholas, Preece; B. Stein, Harford, Nwajiobi. Sub: Elliott, not used.

SHEFFIELD UNITED: Burridge; Eckhardt, Thompson, McNaught, Bolton; Foley, Lewington, Cockerill; Morris, Withe, Edwards. Sub: Stancliffe, not used.

THE GOALS: Steve Foley for United, header 55 seconds into first half injury time; Brian Stein, side-foot volley from Meka Nwajiobi's cross 78 mins; Nwajiobi, calm low shot from Stein's cross four seconds after 90 minutes.

OTHER STRIKES: Town five saved, 10 wide, one hit a post. United three saved, four wide. Corners: 6-5 to United.

REFEREE: John Lovatt, Crewe: Was given an easy ride by both sides.

ATTENDANCE: 8,948. 3,000 below United's best Second Division gate so far.

ENTERTAINMENT: Reasonable, with the Town looking very good in approach but spoiling it by poor finishing.