

Town's system springs a leak to let in Luton

by Dave Allard

LUTON 1, IPSWICH TOWN 0

record in all four divisions of the Football League, a meagre tally of four.

The teams

Luton: Sealey, Breaker, Thomas, Nicholas, Foster, Donaghy, Hill, Stein, Harford, Nwajiobi, Preece. Sub. Parker

Ipswich: Cooper, Yallop, Gernon, Zondervan, Steggles (sub. Dozzell 66 mins), Cranson, Atkins, Putney, Brennan, Wilson, Sunderland.

Referee: Mr. M. Cotton.
Attendance: 8,553.

EXPERIMENTAL Ipswich Town slumped to their fourth successive League defeat at Kenilworth Road last night and the second-from-bottom East Anglians have now gone a marathon seven hours of First Division football without getting a goal.

For almost an hour on Luton's new artificial pitch an Ipswich side carefully restructured by manager Bobby Ferguson to do a specific job and stop the rot looked on course for possible success.

But just on the 60-minute mark the system sprung a leak when the defence was caught square pushing up and a through ball from Thomas had them at sixes and sevens.

Stein raced onto it down the

left and from his cross Nigerian international Imeka Nwajiobi slotted home from close range despite a despairing last-ditch tackle from behind by Zondervan.

After this Ipswich had to disrupt their new ploy which featured three men at the back, new loan signing Atkins working just in front, with everyone else apart from raider Sunderland tucking in smartly to play their marking role in certain areas.

The Luton goal brought teenager Dozzell from the substitute's bench in place of Steggles and the young attacker went wide on two occasions, although it was the home team who looked more likely to increase their lead and the Ipswich goal had a charmed life at times.

So Ipswich stay in their dismal spot ahead only of bedraggled West Bromwich Albion after this latest defeat in front of an 8,553 crowd who have yet to see the "Hatters" lose on the new

synthetic surface which cost £350,000.

It is another bitter setback for the Suffolk side, but it was good to see Atkins show up well in what was his first full match for the side since his arrival from Everton.

Town looked comfortable and assured during the first hour but it was hard to see them scoring a goal and a frustrated Ferguson and coach Charlie Woods must now go back to the drawing board as they prepare for another tough away match at Nottingham Forest on Saturday.

During the first half Luton became ragged and their crowd edgy as Ipswich's one-off ploy caused the Bedfordshire team all sorts of problems and in the opening minutes Sunderland sent Wilson away down the left and the ball ran dangerously across an empty goalmouth from the striker's cross.

Luton were being effectively stifled and in this opening period the over-zealous referee Mr. Cotton booked Brennan and his skipper Sunderland for dissent while Harford of Luton got his caution for elbowing Cranson.

The referee's antics stole much of the limelight in a first half which, although far from being an attractive spectacle, was a successful exercise from an Ipswich point of view. They went in at half-time content with their containing display.

But Nwajiobi's 60th-minute ice-breaker melted the hearts of the Kenilworth Road fans and they got behind their favourites in what was a hectic final half-hour for disappointed Town.

Cooper had to make a blinding tip-over save from a Harford shot even though the referee amazingly gave a goal-kick and soon after Putney had to head off the line following a goalmouth scramble.

Skipper Sunderland, now with reinforcements up front, was trying to rally his troops into a sustained attacking

flurry and in the 74th minute, after good work by Yallop, he played out to Putney who shot at Sealey.

It was hardly a menacing effort but Dozzell came a shade closer when he went wide following a cross from the left by Zondervan.

Throughout this worrying season long-serving goalkeeper Cooper has had to pull out the stops all too often and in the 76th minute he made a brilliant save from Stein as Luton piled on the pressure.

Putney, who passed a late fitness test on a back injury, had to show his defensive qualities again with another goal-line clearance, this time from a Foster header, and soon after Cooper had to take smartly an effort from Nwajiobi.

A diving header from Dozzell was one of the better Town efforts on the night, from a cross by Gernon, who had worked hard for much of the time in a sweeper role in the Ipswich team who had come to Luton determined to gather a point, but who were in the end left empty-handed once again.

In what is a make-do survival period for his club, manager Ferguson is trying desperately to halt the slump which only a change of fortunes up front can really cure, for a team that still hold the unwanted tag of having the worst goals for

Division I

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man Utd	10	10	0	0	27	3	30
Liverpool	10	6	3	1	25	11	21
Chelsea	10	5	3	2	14	10	18
Newcastle	10	5	3	2	17	14	18
Everton	10	5	2	3	18	12	17
Arsenal	10	5	2	3	12	10	17
Sheff Wed	10	5	2	3	15	18	17
Tottenham	10	5	1	4	22	12	16
Watford	10	5	1	4	22	16	16
Birmingham	10	5	1	4	10	14	16
Q.P.R.	10	5	0	5	13	14	15
Aston Villa	10	3	5	2	13	10	14
West Ham	10	3	4	3	17	14	13
Luton	10	3	4	3	13	14	13
Coventry	10	2	4	4	13	14	10
Nottm For	10	3	1	6	13	17	10
Oxford	10	2	3	5	13	19	9
Man City	10	2	3	5	10	18	9
Leicester	10	2	3	5	8	18	9
Southmptn	10	1	5	4	10	12	8
Ipswich	10	2	1	7	4	15	7
W.B.A.	10	0	1	9	7	31	1