

Plastic win

85/86

Luton 1 Sheffield Wednesday ... 0

by Malcolm Winton

THE CRUSADE of the Leicester City officials against the perils of plastic will have received no encouragement from this match. The pitch was shorn of its fleece of snow in the morning and emerged as green as lettuce. Ten thousand people paid to watch and two teams managed to ease the League's fixture problems.

Sheffield Wednesday's hopes of ending in the talent money took another knock, it's true, but after their lucky draw against Third Division Derby in midweek, they can hardly blame the pitch for that. Wednesday were ponderous, predictable, and never looked like scoring, despite every encouragement from Sealey to do so. The knickerbockered Luton keeper looked like a baseball pitcher and played with all the barnstorming judgement of Bruce Grobbelaar - even to the point of making a final redemptive save, in this case from Megson with five minutes left.

The goal came from a corner over on the right. Luton's right-wing corners were taken by Preece. Preece's kick had its ears plugged against the sirens of

modern coaching. It sailed high and old-fashioned to the far post and Luton centre-forward Harford rose above the defence so startlingly that there was the suspicion that the massed shoulders of that defence had served as a vaulting horse. This suspicion was not entertained by referee Axcell and the goal stood. Luton were ahead and there was an hour and a quarter to go.

Many in Luton think the scorer of that goal should be playing for England. But their player of most international potential was Mitchell Thomas, their tall and willowly left-back who looks more and more like Grace Jones. Luton's captain, too, an old warhorse called Steve Foster is playing very much better now than he ever did in the days of his England heyday.

Weather: overcast. **Ground:** plastic.

Goal: Harford (15min).

Luton Town (4-3-3): Sealey; Johnson, Foster, Donaghy, Thomas; Hill, Nicholas, Preece; Newell, North, Harford.

Sheffield Wednesday (4-3-3): Hodge; Morris, Shirliff, Hart, Smith; Megson, Sterland, Shelton (sub: Shutt 60min); Marwood, Thompson, Snodin.

Referee: D Axcell (Southend).