



LUTON XXXX! No, strictly Foster's as he wins the aerial battle

Picture KEITH L

OUTSIDERS!

PAUL FLEMING stood outside Kenilworth Road and followed every move of the match through the roar of the crowd.

As a Manchester City supporter, he'd taken a chance in coming to Luton, travelling down from Manchester in a hired van and praying that he wouldn't be turned away at the gate.

His prayers went unanswered. Luton's ban on away fans was rigorously observed, and Paul had missed his first City match in seven years.

Wandering past the main entrance, he bumped into David Evans; not a difficult meeting since the Luton chairman was not keeping the lowest of profiles.

For five minutes, the 32-year-old labourer stated his case. 'I had to come,' he said. 'I follow them everywhere and I've never been in trouble.'

'I've got a lot of sympathy for you, trying to get rid of the hooligans. But why should I be deprived of my football?'

Evans was affable but firm. It

Luton 1 Man City 0 By PATRICK COLLINS

was an experiment and it was working. Next season, under proper conditions, things might be different. But this year, only Luton fans were welcome at Luton.

So Paul stood outside the ground, awaiting the silences which would indicate that City were attacking.

As it happened, there were precious few periods of silence. The Luton penalty area was almost as empty as the visiting directors' box. City had not scored in their previous four matches, and one could quite see why.

Perhaps loneliness played some part in their woeful performance; they had arrived, after all, without fans, directors, a chairman or a manager.

More likely it was a simple lack of ambition and a failure to string three passes together on the artificial surface.

For their part, Luton were spec-

tacularly wasteful. Chances were created almost to order, and were squandered just as regularly. True, the City keeper, Perry Suckling, enjoyed an inspired match, but excuses were hard to discover.

In the end, all Luton had to show for their superiority was the goal nine minutes from time when Mark Stein drove a cross, Ricky Hill delivered an inviting square pass and Brian Stein produced the only piece of efficient finishing.

Yet for all the indifference of the match, the day had its compensations. The atmosphere was civilised, the familiar undercurrent of threat was absent, and Chief Superintendent Glyn Spalding was able to release large numbers of his officers from duty at half-time.

Paul Fleming took his disappointment like a man, while David Evans offered the most persuasive words of a turbulent week.

'There's just a chance that this way we can get rid of the hooligans,' he said. 'If I'm wrong, well, what has football lost? But if I'm right . . . now there's something to think about.'