

Defences on top at Carrow Road

96/87

BUT FOR THE sending off of Ashley Grimes, Saturday's game at Carrow Road was one to consign to memory's back-waters.

Neither side looked like scoring, with defences dominant and the midfields cancelling each other out.

The draw was a fair result, and more satisfying to the Town, for whom Mal Donaghy was in faultless form.

John Moore's feelings were a mixture of controlled anger over Grimes's silliness and frustration at knowing how easily the Town might have taken the three points which would have lifted them into third place in Division One.

"I can't condone what Ashley did," said the manager. "He could have cost the game. But he didn't — and we nearly won it with ten men."

He was referring to a last-ditch saving tackle by Steve Bruce on Mike Newell which prevented the Town grabbing a late winner. Their only other threat had come just before the sending-off incident, when Ricky Hill smashed in a shot which looked like scoring, but hit Brian Stein.

Defences were so much on top that the game failed badly in terms of entertainment despite promising performance in approach between the penalty areas.

Les Sealey took a shuddering head knock in the 17th minute to beat Robert Rosario's

**NORWICH CITY 0
LUTON TOWN 0**

fierce aerial challenge and looked shaky for a few minutes afterwards.

But the Town's midfield and back four put up a solid protective wall and Norwich were unable to penetrate.

The Grimes flashpoint came on one of the rare occasions Norwich looked like sneaking a goal. Ian Crook was put away down the Norwich left, and with four or five attacking men piling into the danger area Rosario was allowed to get up for a free header.

The ball hit the bar and was scrambled away for a corner, and customers in the main stand were mystified when Grimes was sent off.

It was a kind of professional anger, at the one late lapse in defensive covering. Town fans behind the goal thought Grimes was making gestures to Rob Johnson to illustrate his belief that a clearing header should have been made.

That gave rise to suggestions that Grimes had head-butted one of his own players. Referee Mike James from Horsham would only say that the dismissal was for violent conduct.

The best I could discover was that Grimes had spat at a colleague.

It detracted from the respect the Town had earned for the way they had smothered the Norwich attacking threat, with Stacey North again deputising for Steve Foster with the assurance that comes from playing alongside the man of the match.

Donaghy's performance was superb, even if most of the customers went home talking about another Irishman.

MATCH DETAILS

LUTON TOWN: Sealey; Breacker, North, Donaghy, Johnson; Hill, Nicholas, Grimes; Brian Stein, Newell.

Harford. Sub: McDonough, not used.

NORWICH CITY: Gunn; Brown, Bruce (Biggins, 90th min), Butterworth, Spearing; Phelan, Crook, Putney; Gordon, Drinkell, Rosario.

GOAL ATTEMPTS: Town three saved and seven wide; Norwich three save, nine wide, one hit the bar. Corners: 11-3 to Norwich.

ATTENDANCE: 16,440, Carrow Road's best for two months, with a good following from Luton giving it a boost.

REFEREE: Mike James, Horsham. Played well, and received full support from John Moore for his handling of the Ashley Grimes incident. Peter Nicholas was booked for preventing a quick free kick being taken by Norwich.

ENTERTAINMENT: Spoiled for the customers through lack of penetration in both penalty areas. Good defending might earn points, but attracts few unless there is successful attacking as well.