

Pleat finds that defeat at Luton has compensations

By Clive White

Luton Town..... 3
Tottenham Hotspur 1

David Pleat clearly appreciates life's little ironies. Only this could explain the mischievous grin he failed to suppress after Saturday's game when Luton Town, the quaint Bedfordshire club he forsook in search of fame and fortune elsewhere, took over as the south's leading challenger to the Merseyside monopoly.

Pleat must have taken a masochistic delight also in watching 11 of his old boys give a good caning to 11 of his new. Less pleasurable must have been the sight of Tottenham's championship hopes disappearing, despite his protestations that they never had a chance.

Certainly, their aspirations after last Sunday's win against Liverpool seemed to have come and gone as quickly as the freak shower of hailstones in the second half.

It was Luton's own intimate experience of the opposition that opened the way for their success. Hill's interception of Thomas's blind clearance in the fifth minute seemed to owe something to prior knowledge. He then sent Breacker on his way and, from the cross, Harford drilled the ball firmly into a corner of the goal.

Hill, who wants to leave Luton, was at the forefront of the shop window, not that Pleat, as a potential buyer, needed reminding of Hill's sterling qualities. Hill was at the origin of Luton's second goal too. Stein's perfectly-weighted angled pass

owed much to the experience of plastic pitches and not a little to a sure foot. Newell's finish was equally assured.

A breakaway goal by Waddle from Hoddle's finely timed through pass briefly threatened Luton's superiority which had been hard won by; their mid-field of McDonough, Nicholas and Hill, though outnumbered, were rarely out fought. And it was fitting that they should conspire for the third goal when Hill's cross cleared the Tottenham defence and McDonough stabbed home, grateful no doubt that he had turned down a move last week to Manchester City.

LUTON TOWN: L Sealey; T Breacker, A Grimes, P Nicholas, S North, M Donaghy, R Hill, B Stein, M Newell, M Harford, D McDonough.

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR: R Clemence; G Stevens, M Thomas, S Hodge (sub: O Ardiles), R Gough, G Mabbutt, C Allen, P Allen, C Waddle, G Hoddle, N Claesen.

Referee: D R Elleray.