

A tedious test of endurance

By Vince Wright

Luton Town	0
Wimbledon	0

You had to envy the Wimbledon manager, Dave Bassett, who missed this horror show because he was on a scouting mission. Expectations were high as both teams had recorded noteworthy victories the previous week — Luton against Tottenham Hotspur and Wimbledon at Anfield — but the fireworks which greeted the players were not repeated during the game.

Luton's artificial surface, never easy to play on, was more of a problem than usual as steady, heavy rain caused the ball to travel at unpredictable speeds and angles. Even those with considerable skill and good balance, like Hill and Brian Stein, of Luton, failed to master the conditions.

What should have been an interesting clash of styles turned out to be a test of endurance. Wimbledon's irritating use of the offside-trap was partly responsible for that, as was their tendency to pass back to their goalkeeper, Beasant, at every conceivable opportunity. Luton's habit of giving the ball straight to the opposition was no less annoying, although their defender Harvey, a former England schoolboy international making only his second senior appearance this season, was exempt from that charge.

There were three occasions when a goal looked likely. In the first half a clever exchange between Stein and Hill ended with Hill unleashing a stinging drive which Beasant brilliantly tipped aside. Shortly afterwards Beasant's legs denied Harford. Wimbledon's best chance fell to Cork towards the end but Sealey saved his close-range shot.

The result was enough to keep Luton in third place in the first division and the point gained by Wimbledon from their first visit to Kenilworth Road raises their hopes of finishing in the top six.

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

WIMBLEDON: D Beasant; K Gage, N Winterburn, V Jones, M Morris, A Thorn, C Fairweather, A Sayer, A Cork, L Sanchez (sub: F Joseph), G Hodges.

Referee: J Key.