

Bomber Byrne

86/87

QPR 2 Luton 2: by RAY BRADLEY

RANGERS' blond bomber John Byrne buried Luton's faint title hopes with two second-half strikes in this rugged battle of the plastic pioneers.

High fliers Luton had to be satisfied with a point, but they had only themselves to blame.

They dominated the first-half with slick, composed moves and should have built up a three-goal lead. Yet they could not land the pay-off punch.

Stirring

Rangers staged a stirring second-half recovery, and Luton manager John Moore confessed: "I would have been very disappointed if we had not got a point. We played brilliantly in the first-half, then let Rangers off the hook.

"But give full credit to Rangers, they never gave up and Byrne hit us twice on the break."

Frankly, classy Luton surrendered the initiative. They lacked clout up front where Mike Newell rarely managed to get the better of Rangers strongman Alan McDonald.

As Rangers manager Jim Smith admitted: "Luton took us apart in the early stages. I gave my lads a ticking off at the interval because we were giving them too much space.

"We showed a lot more resolution after the interval, scored twice, and then had the best goal of the game disallowed. It was a great strike by John Byrne, but the linesman flagged. Mike Fillery was adjudged offside, but he was not interfering with the play.

"It was the sort of decision thatangers fans because they love to see spectacular goals."

Luton swept into the lead in the 21st minute with a gift goal that caught Rangers cold. Defender Stacey North took a mighty throw-in and little Mark Stein nipped in to score with Rangers defence looking decidedly ragged.

Cultured

Twice Brian Stein tested Rangers' keeper David Seaman with first time efforts and Newell fluffed two more good chances when put through by Preece and Hill.

Despite the cultured touches of Ricky Hill and Brian Stein, Luton continued to fritter their opportunities before Byrne swooped in the 66th minute to equalise when he drove home a long pass from all-action skipper Robbie James.

Barely a minute later Byrne had the ball in the net again with a sweet left-foot volley, but his effort was ruled offside.

Rangers continued to bustle Luton out of their elegant stride and deservedly took the lead in the 77th minute with a cracker.

The industrious Fillery turned and hammered in a fierce 25-yarder that rebounded off the upright with Les Sealey beaten. Byrne was left with the simple chance which he gleefully accepted.

Luton's frustration showed five minutes later when Brian Stein and Gavin Maguire were involved in a flare-up and were booked.

Rangers looked as if they had pillaged the points only to be caught out three minutes from time when the skilful Hill waltzed past two defenders and tucked the ball inside the post—a late equaliser that saved those Luton blushes.