

Everton slip on plastic

87/88

EVERTON's bitter disenchantment with plastic pitches will not have been diminished by what happened to them in the rain at Luton yesterday.

Their much-depleted team went down at Kenilworth Road as they relied desperately in the final minutes on two big defenders, sent on as substitutes, to whom the ball was banged high in the air.

These are scarcely Everton's preferred tactics, but by the same token, their defence had a very uncomfortable time indeed against the tall, bruising, intractable Luton centre-forward, Mick Harford.

There was a moment in the first half when Everton, with some reason, clearly thought that Harford should have been sent off. Fouled by Watson, Harford appeared to lunge at the Everton stopper as he lay on the ground, or the plastic. Both men were booked, and so, a moment later, apparently for something he said, was Heath.

Harford did not score either of Luton's goals, but he had

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by Brian Glanville

something to do with both of them. With Everton leading by Pointon's fifth-minute goal Harford, 14 minutes later, nodded back Grimes's cross from the left. Brian Stein met the ball with a magnificent half-volley, and Luton were level.

The second goal, six minutes into the second half, was essentially a tribute to the effect Harford had on the Everton defence. When Donaghy's long cross came over from left, it was Van Den Hauwe, rather than either of the much tried centre backs, who had to deal with it. He dealt with it very badly. His weak header only got as far as Hill, who placed a very precise low shot between Southall, playing his first League game of the season, and the right-hand post.

Everton, deprived of so many first choices, had de-

cided to play what used to recently to be the Tottenham way, with five men in mid-field and only Heath at the front.

After the first five minutes, Harper took a free-kick, Donaghy went up with Heath as the ball came in from the right and it appeared to skid off his head. Sealey, whose two fine saves in the second half would preserve Luton's lead, could only get a hand to it. It ran loose, and Pointon put it away.

Ten minutes later, Luton and Harford served warning. Brian Stein whipped the ball away from a dilatory Harper on the left (you have to be quick on this difficult pitch, especially when it is wet) and crossed. Harford got his head to the ball, but Southall saved with one hand.

Sealey made very similar saves later on. After 62 min-

utes, he thwarted Trevor Steven, who'd been set up by Marshall and Heath. Ten minutes later he tipped Watson's header from Steven's corner over the bar.

Everton produced some impressive passing movements early in the game, and looked dangerous again when they used a broader brush after the arrival of their two big men. But Luton had a great deal more to offer than Harford's head, and Harford himself, it should be said, occasionally produced an inspired pass.

Everton, already beaten twice on plastic this season, at least don't have to play on it again in the League. And soon surely, their ill-luck with all those injuries will turn.

Weather: rainy. **Ground:** plastic.

Goals: Pointon (5min) 0-1; B Stein (19min) 1-1; Hill (51min) 2-1.

Luton Town: Sealey; Breacker, Foster, Donaghy, Grimes; Hill, Wilson, Preece, (sub: Johnson); B Stein, Harford, Nwajobi (sub: M Stein 59min).

Everton: Southall; Harper, Ratcliffe, Watson, Van Den Hauwe, Adams (sub: Marshall 59min); Steven, Reid, Snodin, Pointon (sub: Mountfield 82min); Heath.

Referee: A Gunn (Sussex).