

Super-show is knock-out for Coventry

87/88 (FLC)

LITTLEWOODS CUP

WITH ALL the odds stacked against them Luton Town rose to the occasion magnificently to beat Coventry City at Filbert Street, Leicester on Tuesday night.

They adapted to difficult conditions perfectly, in a stadium 70 miles from home for a match which they were not allowed to play at Kenilworth Road.

And the 1,500 Luton supporters who made the 70 mile journey up the motorway found every yard well worthwhile.

Ironically the team that is so used to the perfect smoothness of a synthetic pitch turned on the style on a boggy quagmire which needed hours of work by the groundstaff to make it playable.

With Ian Allinson cup-tied Rob Johnson was recalled at left-back with Ashley Grimes going into the left of midfield and Darron McDonough playing the defensive role ahead of Steve Foster and Mal Donaghy.

And simple direct passing carved Coventry apart with the Town never looking in danger.

Mick Harford put the icing on the cake with his ninth and tenth goals of the season, but missed the chance of his second cup hat-trick when a last minute penalty was brilliantly saved by Steve Ogrizovic.

It made little difference

because Coventry had already been well buried in the mud as the Town took revenge for the league defeat they suffered at Kenilworth Road earlier this season.

Manager Ray Harford said: "We would be quite happy to come and play here again in the next round."

The Town were always the better attacking side although Coventry were unlucky. Having lost Cyrille Regis and David Phillips through injury before kick-off, they were robbed of skipper Lloyd McGrath after 20 minutes

following an accidental clash of headers with Danny Wilson.

The defence soaked up what little Coventry could produce and the attacking passes were always incisive.

Foster, Harford, Weir and Breacker created the goal which Harford scored in the 28th minute with a snap shot from Breacker's cross. Six minutes into the second half Weir fed Stein down the left and an accurate centre to the far post was met by Harford's decisive header.

Three minutes later Weir punished a Coventry defensive

error to make it 3-0 and Coventry's reply, after rare lethargy in the Town defence, with Nick Pickering scoring made no difference to the result.

Harford looked every inch a one million pound player despite passing up his hat-trick chance. The game was in injury time when Steve Sedgley tripped Stein, but although Harford's penalty was well struck, Coventry's giant goalkeeper made a marvellous save.

Few other Coventry players were allowed to shine, because the Town produced 90 minutes of controlled football.

Donaghy took care of the potential threat of David Speedie, who was reduced to a series of niggling fouls and petulance and finally got a booking for dissent.

Harford was also cautioned, for a pointless tackle on Brian Borrows, which was retaliation for the Coventry man's foul for which the Town had already been awarded the free kick.

But there was not much else wrong with the whole team performance by the Town, with Stein, Harford and Weir constant threats to the Coventry defence, and Danny Wilson again providing the ammunition from midfield.

And while Coventry had two men missing, the Town without Preece and Hill, showed that 11 men welded into a team are much more important than the individuals.

Match details

LUTON TOWN 3 COVENTRY 1
HALF TIME 1-0

LUTON TOWN: Sealey; Breacker, Foster, Donaghy, Johnson; McDonough, Wilson, Grimes; Weir, B. Stein, Harford. Subs: M. Stein and Harvey not used.

COVENTRY: Ogrizovic; Borrows, Rodger, Sedgley, Downes; McGrath (Cook 20 mins), Bennett, Gynn, Pickering; Houchen, Speedie. Other sub Livingstone not used.

THE GOALS: Mick Harford close range shot 28 mins; Harford again, far post header 51 mins; Mickey Weir, low 20 yard drive 54 mins; Nick Pickering for Coventry 69 mins.

OTHER STRIKES: Town eight saved, including Harford's last minute penalty and nine wide. Coventry five saved and three wide. Corners: 5-2 to the Town.

ATTENDANCE: 8,113 on a pouring wet night, with 1,500 making the 140 mile round trip for the "home" game.

REFEREE: Tony Ward, North London — played as brilliantly as the Town on a greasy surface where some of the Coventry tackling was too exuberant.

ENTERTAINMENT: The Town's best team performance for a long time, adapting perfectly to a muddy pitch with every man getting it just right.