

Reading walk off with trophy on Wembley debut

By Christopher Davies

Luton Town..... 1 Reading..... 4

READING, one from the bottom of the Second Division and playing without a recognised striker, made nonsense of their League placing with a comprehensive victory over Luton in the Simod Cup final, watched by a crowd of 61,740 at Wembley yesterday.

The critics, who regard the competition as little more than an intrusion into an already crowded programme, would have been hard-pressed to find anything negative to say about the match, which contained much creative, attacking football, mainly by Reading.

Luton, surely, cannot play any worse when they return to Wembley to meet Arsenal in the Littlewoods Cup final on April 24. Ray Harford, Luton's manager, kept his team in the dressing room for an hour.

He said: "I was embarrassed by our performance. It was painful. This was as bad as I've seen us play and, if we don't improve against Arsenal, we'll lose by six or seven goals."

Luton's defence were given little protection from the mid-field players and Gilkes, who has played most of this season at full-back, and Tait, usually a midfielder, found too much room in the last third of the field.

One wonders what the scoreline might have been if strikers Whitehurst and Moran had not been cup-tied for Reading.

Luton went ahead in the 13th minute to a typically brave header by Harford. Allinson's left-wing corner was headed across the goalmouth by Mark Stein and Harford dived in among the Reading defenders to nod the ball past Francis.

Far from being demoralised on their first visit to Wembley,

Reading seemed to gain momentum from this setback and it was no surprise when Gilkes equalised in the 20th minute.

From Smillie's penetrating pass, Gilkes shot and Sealey could only help the ball into the net. Five minutes later Reading took the lead after Breacker tripped Gilkes just inside the penalty area and Beavon made no mistake from the spot.

Luton's defensive inadequacies were highlighted in the 55th minute. Breacker failed to stop Smillie's progress down the left and Tait swept the centre past an unprotected Sealey.

The outcome was put beyond doubt in the 65th minute, when Jones beat two defenders with some delightful footwork; his shot was blocked but Smillie, running in, shot past Sealey from 15 yards.

As Reading tired, Luton had a couple of chances to give the scoreline a more respectable look from their point of view, but found Francis — who won a Full Members Cup winner's medal with Chelsea two years ago — in outstanding form.

The Simod Cup may not have the national interest of the FA Cup or the Littlewoods Cup but the £60,000 prize Reading won yesterday boosted their profit from this season's competition to £250,000.

Luton Town: Sealey; Breacker, Grimes, McDonough, Foster, Donaghy, Wilson, B. Stein (Johnson 80), Harford, M. Stein (Black 59), Allinson.

Reading: Francis; Baillie, Richardson, Beavon, Hicks, Curle, Jones (Williams 77), Taylor, Tait (Peters 83), Gilkes, Smillie.



Neil Smillie celebrates Reading's fourth goal; Les Sealey is dejected