

A case of too many tired legs

THE TOWN'S party to end the season at Kenilworth Road lost a little of its sparkle after early promise.

Brian Stein collected his Bobbers Club player of the year prize three days before being told that he was being given a free transfer.

Ray Harford received a gallon of whisky for being the April manager of the month, and an encouraging crowd of 9,108 turned up for a match that mattered little to either club in terms of league table safety.

But while the football was relaxed, it was short of any real cutting edge, and sheer weariness eventually set in.

From early promise, the Town fell into a pattern of too many misplaced passes.

They had the perfect tonic in five minutes when Mal Donaghy smacked in his first goal of the season before leaving to win another Northern Ireland cap.

Mick Harford, returning to the side to prove his fitness to the satisfaction of England manager Bobby Robson, rose powerfully to the game's first corner. Goalkeeper Steve Sutton blocked the header, but Donaghy converted the rebound.

But in a game without bite, Frost equalised a minute into the second half. Nigel Clough tried to get Franz Carr away down the right wing. Ashley Grimes seemed to have won the ball, but

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NOTT'M FOREST.....1

then lost it, and Carr's hard low cross did not stick in Andy Dibble's hands. Lee Glover collected a bit of a present.

If the Town had shaded the first half, Forest had slightly the better of the second, and each side had rare opportunities to snatch the winner.

Tim Breacker and David Oldfield created a chance for Kingsley Black, but his first-ever league goal was prevented by Sutton's acrobatic dive.

And when Forest threatened, Dibble twice rose to the occasion, to deny Carr who had wriggled past Grimes, and Neil Webb, whose half-volley from 20 yards looked a cert until Dibble took off to tip the ball over the bar.

Forest were content to hold and stroll, and the Town could not summon up the extra energy and commitment needed to get the final pass right.

The last serious action of the season at Kenilworth Road was a drive by Black which Sutton saved.

It was no day to judge the prospects of the Harford/Oldfield attacking partnership, but perhaps there were just enough glimpses of it to give encouragement for next season.

MATCH DETAILS

LUTON TOWN: Dibble; Breacker, Foster, Donaghy (M. Johnson, 72 mins), Grimes; R. Johnson, Wilson, Preece, Black; Oldfield, Harford. Other sub: Allinson.

FOREST: Sutton; Fleming, Walker, Chettle, Williams (Foster, 50 mins); Carr, Wilson, Webb, Crosby; Clough, Glover. Other sub: Gary Parker, ex-Luton.

THE GOALS: Mal Donaghy, fifth minute; Lee Glover, 46th.

REFEREE: Mike Reed, Birmingham.

ATTENDANCE: 9,108.

ENTERTAINMENT: Interesting rather than exciting.