

FANS JEER AS TALENT VANISHES

RAY HARFORD PUT a brave face on it after the Town and Queens Park Rangers had struggled to produce mediocre entertainment at Kenilworth Road.

He picked out what positive encouragement he could, taking some pleasure from a point and a clean sheet.

But then he went home to ponder privately on what has to be done to give the Town a chance of getting anywhere near the ambitions the chairman has.

It was his first experience at Kenilworth Road of hearing a crowd make its displeasure known as they booed an inept performance. And it was awful.

Rangers looked marginally the more likely to win, and if there is pleasure to be taken from another clean sheet, the fifth in the last eight games, the lack of firepower in attack is in danger of wrecking everything the back four achieves.

With Mick Harford missing, the manager opted for the experience of Ian Allinson to play alongside Roy Wegerle in attack.

Neither did himself justice with Allinson pulled off after 54 minutes to make way for David Oldfield. It produced more positive threat, but not enough to shake up a Rangers system that uses three men at the back and a mobile midfield which defends or attacks in turn.

The Town midfield is still in a transitional stage, capable enough when it has the ball, but powderpuff when it hasn't.

Without Darron McDonough, who was out again after only two comeback matches, this time with an ankle injury, midfield was largely ineffective.

We know the creative ability is there, but so far the combination of Steve Williams and Ricky Hill has not hit the highspots.

Danny Wilson is having to be defensive, when his best ability is to get attacks moving, and against Rangers Kingsley Black was also forced to be a midfield harrier instead of a left wing raider.

The manager made the point that several of his players were less than fully fit, but played because they are good professionals.

And the defence, on a weekend when Mal Donaghy was making a Manchester United debut at Everton in another

Reports: Brian Swain
Pictures: Josh Levy

draw, was too good for Rangers.

Mark Stein, on his first visit back missed two good chances. His manager, Jim Smith, thought the striker tried too hard, and Stein admitted that he had snatched at chances that might have been converted with a little more coolness.

The Town didn't even have that consolation: they simply didn't create enough chances to worry David Seaman in the QPR goal.

Les Sealey, enjoying his most consistent spell with the Town since he saw off Andy Dibble, kept his team in it as Rangers opened with a barrage of attacks.

He spread himself to hook the ball away with his legs when Stein got through a square defence in Rangers' first raid.

A Simon Barker run from midfield gave Wayne Fereday a shooting chance. Steve Foster deflected that effort wide, but the corner led to a scramble in which Sealey made two saves in quick succession from shots by Danny Maddix.

Kevin Brock instigated another neat Rangers attack which ended with Martin Allen going clear on the right. Sealey went to meet him, was cleverly lobbed, and Foster, cool and composed, gently volleyed a pass back into the goalkeeper's arms.

Rangers were sure they should have had a penalty in the 24th minute when Trevor Francis wriggled through towards goal until he went sprawling as Foster challenged. A penalty award would not have surprised me.

Jim Smith thought that Rangers should have had it sewn up by half-time, but suffered through not getting the final touch right.

Mark Stein agreed, and added that he was happy to

Match details

LUTON TOWN 0 QPR 0

TOWN: Sealey; Rob Johnson, Foster, Marvin Johnson, Dreyer; Williams, Wilson, Hill, Black; Allinson (Oldfield, 54 mins), Harford, Other sub: Harvey.

RANGERS: Seaman; Parker, McDonald, Maddix; Barker (Kerslake, 73 mins), Allen, Brock, Fereday; Falco, Stein, Francis (Coney, 73 mins).

GOAL ATTEMPTS: Town five saved and six wide; Rangers five saved and three wide. Corners: 6-3 to Rangers.

ATTENDANCE: 8,453, nearly 2,000 better than for the Rangers visit last season.

REFEREE: Joe Worrall, Warrington — probably made a mistake when he failed to give Rangers a first-half penalty when Trevor Francis tripped over Steve Foster.

ENTERTAINMENT: In very short supply.

be a QPR player, and had no regrets about leaving Luton.

He made Les Sealey man of the match because of his brilliant shot-stopping in the early stages, but thought Rangers deserved more than one point.

Against that, the Town could point to a couple of near things on their rare attacking thrusts, notably a brainy lob by Williams when the Town started to look a better side after the first half hour.

Wilson had tried to work the ball through midfield, Rangers cleared and Williams, from 30 yards, took careful aim and first-timed a looping shot towards the top corner.

Seaman saved, and also escaped when Marvin Johnson and Hill put on a little pressure.

At least the Town got better after a poor start, but the welcome increase in attendances will not be sustained if crowds don't get value for money. The display on Saturday was well out of character. Rarely has a Town side been so poor at the basic passing skills.

The first goalless draw of the season at home was a disappointment. But seven points out of the nine in away games at Everton and Forest, and at home to Liverpool, ought not to be forgotten. And even without Mal Donaghy, I can't see any side giving the Town a passing.