

Switch is too late

**LUTON TOWN
MILLWALL**

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LIONS WIN AT KENILWORTH ROAD

MANAGER RAY Harford took the responsibility after the Town were beaten by Millwall for the third time this season.

"I should have been braver earlier," he said after his half-time decision to push four men in-to attack had so nearly paid off.

The Lions, pressing the big clubs at the top of the table in their first season of Division One soccer, won the first half handsomely before the Town's reshaped formation turned the tables after the break.

But the two-goal deficit turned out to be too much, although the manager thought that if the Town had managed to get an equaliser they might well have gone on to win 3-2.

The absence of skipper Steve Foster, for his presence, leadership and organisation, was noticeable in the opening half, although Darron McDonough, in his first full game for nearly a year, worked tenaciously alongside David Beaumont to oppose the threat of big mobile strikers Teddy Sheringham and Tony Cascarino.

DIE CAST

The boss had been thinking of using John Dreyer, for his heading ability, then putting in McDonough against Liverpool on Tuesday evening, where aerial power was not be as important as tackling strength.

It was a pity that the Millwall die was

cast by the time the Town got Saturday's tactics right.

Millwall boss John Docherty would not have a plastic pitch at The Den, but proved that the right preparation for a visit to Kenilworth Road was to forget about the pitch and get on with the game.

His team did exactly that, working hard for each other, and building attacks simply and quickly. They looked for long balls towards the edge of the penalty area, with Cascarino and Sheringham always capable of flicking on headed passes, and they had the Town on the run for the first 45 minutes.

CRACKER

Jimmy Carter struck with two goals in seven minutes. His 23rd-minute opener was a cracker. Goalkeeper Brian Horne punted a free kick down the middle, Cascarino helped the ball on into the inside left position, Sheringham sent it wide to the right, and Carter's stunning volley gave Les Sealey no chance.

Seven minutes later defender David Thompson hoisted another long ball towards the Millwall left wing. The Town moved up to try to play him offside, but Ashley Grimes was a yard too late on the other flank and Cascarino was clear. He mis-hit his shot, but the ball fell conveniently for Carter to make it 2-0. We will never know if it would have happened if Foster's bellowing voice had been available to drill the back four as a line.

At half time the Town decided that the

best way to defend against Millwall's front pair was to work harder at the other end of the field, and deny their forwards regular service from defenders.

Mick Harford and Roy Wegerle were given additional support and the pattern of play changed dramatically. At last the Town were running the game, with Ricky Hill and Danny Wilson providing an encouraging mixture of guile and power. David Preece sparked into life in attack and at last the lowest league crowd of the season had something to cheer about.

McDonough had a volley deflected inches wide, and the Millwall goal was put under increasing pressure. And the powerful Londoners were wilting when the Town were awarded a penalty in the 54th minute. Wilson's curling through pass sent Preece scampering into the inside right position, Terry Hurlock tried to hold him back and referee Joe Worrall spotted the foul. Wilson blasted in the penalty and the scene appeared to be set for the Town to complete a dramatic revival.

ANXIOUS

They were caught on the break a couple of times, but it was Millwall who waited anxiously for the final whistle.

Iain Dowie, hungry for a First Division chance which beckons more brightly now David Oldfield has left, almost made it a heroic entry when he replaced Preece for the last 20 minutes.

The Town then had two men in midfield and four in attack, and Dowie's first three touches all went close to embarrassing

Horne. A shot on the turn provoked a full-length save and a looping header had the keeper scrambling to shove it away from the top corner.

Mick Harford was just wide with a shot from a cross by Kingsley Black and a booming drive by Wegerle rose inches too high with Horne looking beaten.

But Millwall rode their luck, leaving the Town and their supporters to regret the time it had taken them to warm up and suspect that the way to compete with Millwall was to defend in their penalty area, not ours.

MATCH DETAILS

LUTON TOWN: Sealey; Breacker, Beaumont, McDonough, Grimes; Wilson, Hill, Preece (Dowie, 70 mins); Wegerle (Dreyer, 87 mins), Harford, Black.

MILLWALL: Horne; McLeary, Thompson, Wood, Sparham; Briley, Hurlock, O'Callaghan; Carter, Sheringham, Cascarino. Subs: Horrix and Salman, not used.

THE GOALS: Jimmy Carter twice for Millwall, 23 and 30 minutes; Danny Wilson penalty for the Town, 54 minutes, after Terry Hurlock fouled David Preece.

OTHER STRIKES: Town seven saved and ten wide; Millwall six saved and five wide. Corners: 10-2 to the Town.

ATTENDANCE: 7,838, lowest of the season, but rather than the full house we had the last time Millwall came to Luton.

REFEREE: Joe Worrall, Warrington. One of the best, and looked it.

ENTERTAINMENT: A rousing second half was a lot better than the first, but defeat made it an unhappy afternoon for Town fans.