

Late Luton goal ends barren run

By Martin Smith

29/90

Wimbledon 1 Luton Town 2

LUTON TOWN ended a run of 22 matches without an away League victory before the smallest crowd to watch a First Division game since the war.

Iain Dowie headed home the 89th minute winner, to give Jim Ryan his first success as manager and Luton their first win for 13 games.

But, while Luton celebrated climbing above Millwall to third from bottom in the table, Wimbledon were left assessing the viability of top-grade football at Plough Lane.

Only 3,496 supporters turned up on a wet evening, beating by 530 the previous-lowest crowd, for Norwich's visit to the same ground two years ago.

Those who were there had little to cheer in a first half almost devoid of attacking interest, littered with misplaced passes and misguided runs.

One run by Wise was indicative. Counter-attacking promisingly through the middle, he put the pass to his left, behind Gayle and into touch.

Nogan showed his inexperience on the half hour, when shooting prematurely and wastefully wide. But he atoned for that seven minutes into the second half with his second goal in three senior appearances, although it lacked the glamour of his first, scored in front of Liverpool's Kop.

Wimbledon's defence were conspicuous by their absence as either Dowie or Nogan, unmarked in the six yard box, could have turned in Wilson's chipped centre. In fact, it was Nogan's head that sent the ball thudding past Segers.

Luton, who had earlier looked rusty in their first game for over three weeks, lifted the tempo and Dowie was unlucky with a header.

Wimbledon retaliated briefly and, after Cork's header had struck a post and bounced into Chamberlain's arms, Wise hit the 74th minute equaliser following good work by substitute McGee and Cork.

A draw seemed a fair result for an untidy night's work but, a minute from time, Dowie dived in at the far post to divert home Preece's left-wing cross and give Luton the potential to build a late break from the relegation zone.

Wimbledon: Segers, Scales, Pheland, Kruszyński, Young, Curle, Bennett (McGee 57), Cork, Gayle (Ryan 57), Sanchez, Wise.

Luton Town: Chamberlain, Breacker, Harvey, Kennedy, James, Dreyer, Wilson, Nogan, Dowie, Preece, Black (Elstrup 81).

Referee: K Baratt (Coventry).