

Hall's talent says it all

93/94

Portsmouth..... 1, Luton 0 **Frank Clough**

PORTSMOUTH manager Jim Smith, has decided this season to copy his old friend Brian Clough and refuse to do post-match press interviews. His attitude is a pity for here he could have fascinated the media with his views on a budding star he has found, Paul Hall.

They say there are no real bargains in football anymore, but when you cannot compete with the giants and their fat cheque-books you have to scour the lower leagues. Smith did just that last season and eventually paid Torquay United about £100,000 for the winger.

He gave him his full debut yesterday and the youngster made enough of an impact to suggest the money has been well spent. He certainly did enough to impress Luton's captain Trevor Peake.

Peake said: "If the lad keeps up this sort of form he is going to be a real handful. He got in a lot of crosses and he knows where to put the ball. A less commanding goalkeeper than ours would have struggled."

Hall teased and tormented the Luton defence every time he had possession. He has poise, pace and balance — and he also popped up with the goal that gave Portsmouth their first win.

When new signing Lee Chapman cements a better understanding with Paul Walsh, this could be a trio capable of troubling any defence in the division.

Chapman is tough, battle-hardened and vastly experienced and Walsh is still a

class act with his ability to hold the ball under pressure and bring team-mates into the game.

Portsmouth, after all the heartache of last season's promotion play-offs, are now 10-1 shots to make the leap into the Premiership this time but manager Smith is taking nothing for granted. Luton, apparently, are. They have already introduced squad numbers and names on shirts like the big boys are doing this season.

But there the resemblance ended. Luton struggled to make any serious impact until late in the second half, and then Portsmouth goalkeeper Alan Knight bravely denied Kerry Dixon and substitute Scott Houghton.

Portsmouth should have won far more comfortably than they did. Chapman might have had a hat-trick before the interval. He had a 12th minute header disallowed for offside, just failed to get a touch to a curling cross by Alan McLoughlin that had beaten Luton's huge American goalkeeper Jurgen Sommer, and then rammed another header straight at Sommer.

Hall's goal in the 39th minute was a direct result of a Dixon error. Back in defence, he tried to dribble clear but lost possession to Mark Stimson, who prodded it forward and Hall did the rest.

Portsmouth: Knight; Neill, Symons, Awford, Stimson; Blake, Burns, McLoughlin (Aspinall 69); Hall, Chapman, Walsh (Price 82). **Sub:** Horne (g).

Luton Town: Sommer; James, Peake, Dreyer, Johnson; Telfer, Preece, Hughes; Dixon, Williams, (Houghton 69), Oakes (Benjamin 45). **Sub:** Pettersen (g). **Booked:** Dreyer, Houghton, James.

Referee: Mr G Poll.