

Torture for 90 minutes

By PETER KENYON

Luton 0 Birmingham 0

SHOT-SHY Luton managed a lone 25 yard effort on goal in a torturous 90 minutes of football at Kenilworth Road.

On Wednesday afternoon Hatters applied to the Football League to have the game postponed as a result of a flu epidemic which swept through the dressing room and claimed nine victims.

On yesterday's showing, everyone would have benefited had the League said yes.

A strikeforce of Vidar Riseth, Dwight Marshall and, later on, Stuart Douglas didn't muster a single shot between them all afternoon, although Marshall created chances for himself only to hesitate at the crucial moment.

The scouts from Manchester United, Spurs and Chelsea certainly won't be buying any striker from either side if they have got any sense.

Three minutes before the break Marshall sold Andy Edwards a classy dummy on the edge of the Birmingham box to give himself a yard of space and a route to goal - but for the umpteenth time this season, he fiddled about for too long and the ball was gratefully snatched away.

Apart from a Ceri Hughes 25-yarder which Blues keeper Ian Bennett had no trouble at all tipping over, Hatters created virtually nothing.

Manager Terry Westley must have been watching a different game to 7,900 spectators by remaining adamant after the match that Luton are creating plenty but

only lack the killer instinct.

"We are creating opportunities. We had the ball as much as they did and in all the games we have played this season we could have scored goals."

Asked why therefore no-one was scoring, he answered curtly: "You can't get a good striker for £80,000" - and then proceeded to point out the flu problem.

The Hatters faithful would probably disagree with the optimism (some might say blind) which seems to follow every game.

At one point they took to joining 2,000 travelling Birmingham fans in a chant of 'going down, going down.'

As far as these eyes can see, unless finds a pair of striking boots soon, Hatters are bound for the depths of Division Two.

Still, looking on the bright side, yesterday's result was Luton's second successive game without

defeat - equalling their best run so far this season.

Birmingham weren't that much more impressive despite their lofty position in the table.

A laid back Barry Fry described the game as 'a nice little outing for the lads' following the drama of their midweek match in Italy.

"We didn't know what to expect in the tunnel at the end and when the Luton players were there waiting for us, we feared the worst," he joked. "But in the end they just shook our hands."

A nice touch of humour, but his ear to ear grin would have been all the wider if substitute Jae Martin had done better when clean through a minute before the end.

But on-loan Ian Feuer spread himself well coming forward to narrow the angle and the ball ricocheted off his body and on to the angle of post and bar and finally to safety.



● Above: Marshall hesitates and wastes a good opportunity
Below: Paul McLaren gets in a header



● Marvin Johnson goes close for Hatters

