

Cahill inspires Millwall

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By Mike Berry

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MILLWALL'S share price might be languishing in the doldrums, but on the pitch they are in much better shape.

A fourth win in five games — their fourth in successive seasons at Luton — brought instant rejuvenation after Tuesday's surprise home defeat by Scunthorpe.

Millwall command a culture of sturdy resolve, and in David Tuttle and Sean Dyche, they fielded a new central defensive pairing worthy of such tradition.

And in Tim Cahill, they have a goalscoring midfield player who is a major figure in their pursuit of automatic promotion.

Cahill, an assiduous Australian, took his tally for the season to 11 — five of which have arrived in the last three games — with two decisive first-half strikes.

Luton, betraying both inexperience and inconsistency, are unsure where they are heading, though clearly it is not through any lack of direction from above. Few managers can hold a candle to Lennie Lawrence's tactical sagacity.

It was men against boys in the first half as Millwall taught Luton a lesson.

Cahill, 20, converted Robbie Ryan's cross, and then picked up the crumbs when Ben Roberts spilled Richard Sadlier's drive. Luton could have had no complaints had Millwall netted four.

But Lawrence worked the oracle in raising his side's sagging soul during half-time, made some judicious substitutions, and only the heroics of Millwall goalkeeper Tony Warner halted an improbable fightback.

Warner, who admitted to "a sleepless night" after a midweek slip against Scunthorpe, reserved his best save for Phil Gray's quickly taken free-kick.

But Lawrence retained a sense of perspective. He said: "The first half was a disgrace and I would like to apologise to the fans. We were outfought, outbattled and out-everythinged."

"Defensively, it was our worst half of the season. Without Julian Watts, I thought Sadlier and Harris were Ferguson and Shearer."

"Yet, amazingly, we could have won. In the second half we had four attempts on goal from inside the six-yard box, and missed them all. But it was a fascinating and fiercely competitive game, and one that was excellently refereed. He got it 95 per cent right."

A disgruntled manager exalting a referee after a home defeat? Memo to the Premiership please.

Luton Town: Roberts; Doherty, Sodje (George 46), Johnson; Boyce, White, Spring, McGowan (Taylor 66); Locke; Douglas (Fotiadis 70), Gray.
Subs: McLaren, Abbey (g).

Millwall: Warner; Neill, Tuttle, Dyche, Ryan; Ifill, Cahill, Bull, Gilkes; Harris (Moody 83), Sadlier.
Subs: Odunsi, Kinet, Dolan, Smith (g). **Goals:** Cahill (17, 38). **Booked:** Neill.

Referee: M Dean (Heswall).