

LUTON DEPEND AGAIN ON THE MAN IN WHITE

LUTON TOWN (0) 0

05/06

LEEDS UNITED (0) 0

★★★★★

Lots of competition but few chances

ONE OF THE LASTING memories of Luton Town as a force in the first division was Steve Foster, their rugged captain, towering over his defence in a white headband, especially in 1988, when he lifted the Littlewoods Cup after a 3-2 victory over Arsenal at Wembley.

In the years since, Luton have suffered decline, forced almost out of business by a heavy debt. Recovery, how-

ever, is underway. After promotion from League One in May and their goalless draw against Leeds United on Saturday, Luton sit on top of the Championship three matches into the new season.

Early days maybe, but the coincidence was not lost on the diehards at Kenilworth Road that their defence was once again superbly marshalled by a player with his head swathed in a white bandage and in Curtis Davies, 20, Luton have a new inspirational figure.

However, like the headgear that covered a gash picked up during the victory over Crystal

Palace on the opening day of the season, Davies's stay at Luton, unlike Foster's four years of service, may be short-lived. Premiership scouts have followed him since he was named the League One player of the year.

"People did say I looked like Steve Foster," Davies said after his dominant performance against Leeds. "But I am a different sort of player and anyway the bandage has gone now — the stitches have been taken out. And I don't know how long I will be here. The club cannot afford to hold on to me if they could sell and bring in three or four new

players with the money." While Davies remains, Luton have the strength at the back to survive in the Championship comfortably, as Leeds were restricted to just one clear-cut chance, squandered by the unmarked Michael Ricketts when he sidefooted wide just before half-time.

In a game that was highly competitive but desperately short of goalmouth action, Davies was also in the thick of Luton's best effort, supplying the pass from the left from which the hard working Steve Howard saw a close-range effort strike a post.

ANDREW JACK