

Forward Failings Led To Town's Downfall

By Chiltern

LUTON TOWN	0
BIRMINGHAM CITY	1
Bodle	

The result of this match was perhaps not the best of portents for further Cup success for the Town, but it may well have been that next Saturday's match cast its shadow before it.

Birmingham, with no obligations in the Cup competition, are now able to concentrate all their energies on their League programme, and they gave their customary workmanlike, solid display.

Main reason for the Town's second home defeat of the season was that the forwards were below form and could not break down the City's excellent defence.

There was little in it at the end, and, indeed, the Town had some excuse for considering that they were unfortunate not to save a point.

Had they done so, it would have been solely because of their fighting spirit in the second half when the City goal had to withstand a series of all-out assaults.

Withstand them they did by virtue of the way in which they packed their goal, but the Town inside-forwards failed in what should have been their first task.

Obviously their job was to draw the City defenders out of position, but they seldom did so because they tried to do too much individual work. Result was that the line lacked cohesion, and few scoring openings cropped up.

THIS GOAL SETTLED IT

Only goal of this very hard-fought match came after exactly half an hour. Hall fouled Stewart out on the right wing and Dougall placed the free kick accurately into the goalmouth.

BODLE jumped higher than Soo, and nodded the ball into the far corner of the net, well out of Streten's reach.

There was no doubt that the City deserved this goal lead at the interval, but they could scarcely have grumbled had they been forced to a division before the end.

The attack was the most disappointing part of the Town team, and only Billington managed to be dangerous consistently. Nelson was none too successful on his debut and O'Brien was subdued.

As for the defence, that vied with Birmingham's for soundness, and Hall again proved a great stumbling block.

Cooke played a magnificent game in which his hard tackling was a feature, and Soo and Hughes were consistently good. Gardiner took time to reach his recent form, but played some great stuff in the second half.

Streten pulled off several of his usual brand of daring saves and, altogether, made a distinguished opening to his professional career.

LUTON TOWN: Streten; Cooke, Hughes; Soo, Hall, Gardiner; Nelson, Brennan, Billington, Ottewell, O'Brien.

BIRMINGHAM CITY: Merrick; Green, Jennings; Harris, Duckhouse, Mitchell; Stewart, Dougall, Trigg, Bodle, Edwards.

Attendance: 19,697