

Real-Life Ending Was A Disappointment

By Chiltern

BIRMINGHAM CITY 3, LUTON TOWN 0

As the Town were making their way to Birmingham by road on Saturday, they heard the voice of City manager, Bob Brocklebank, coming over the radio. Referring to the afternoon's match, he said he was hopeful that his team would end their bad patch and added, "Luton have not won an away match yet." That brought a chorus of "There's always a first time," from the Town players, who were confident that they could hold Birmingham.

Fairy story ending should have been that the Town went on to register their first away success, but the real life tale was altogether different, for they found themselves struggling almost from the start.

The big, strong City team showed a better appreciation of the tactics necessary for the very heavy conditions, and settled down quickly to fast, direct football which gave them the upper hand for most of the first half.

It was then that the damage was done, for the Town found themselves two goals in arrears within 25 minutes.

Both came from headers—HIGGINS scoring from Barry's pass after nine minutes, and SMITH adding the second from a Stewart corner 16 minutes later.

As things turned out after the interval, the City were probably glad that they held this useful

lead, for they were unable to exert the same pressure as they had done previously, and found themselves faced by a determined, hard-fighting Town team.

After a first half in which the Town attack had found little opportunity of worrying the home defence, we saw them moving with more assurance, and, by hitting the ball harder, and holding it less, they held the upper hand for quite a long time.

Unfortunately the close quarter work did not fulfil the promise shown in midfield, and, as a general rule, attacks broke down before they reached the penalty area against the splendid covering and hard tackling of the City defence.

When Luton did break down this barrier, they found Merrick showing brilliant anticipation and, for all their activity, the occasions when they promised to reduce their arrears were comparatively few.

When they got away, Birmingham were more forceful in their finishing, and HIGGINS got their third goal with yet another header 12 minutes from the end. The Town claimed that Hughes had been fouled as he went up for the ball, but the referee disallowed their appeals.

Bright spot in the match from the Luton viewpoint was the refusal of the players to give up the game as lost. They kept fighting hard until the end and this spirit should stand them in good stead during the difficult future they are facing.

DEFENCE WAS WORRIED

With Aherne missing from the line-up, the defence was not so confident as usual, and had a worrying first half against the first-time, bustling tactics of the City.

It was much better after the interval, and, taking the game through, Cooke was the most consistent member of the rear-guard.

Both Morton and Watkins, after the first half, when nearly all their attention was devoted to defence, helped the forwards to get moving, and Owen, in that period, achieved some mastery over Trigg after having a harassing time before the interval.

Lake's tackling was not so rugged, nor his positional play so good, as that which we are accustomed to see from Aherne, but he stuck gamely to his task to turn in a fair performance.

An injury received before the first goal was scored meant that Hughes played under a handicap for the greater part of the match.

Whether he could have done any more to prevent any of the goals had he been completely fit can be merely a matter for conjecture, but he kept on pluckily, and made some grand saves.

Not until the second half did we see the forwards move smoothly, and, taking the game through, the wingers did not raid so successfully as in the last two matches, mainly because they were closely marked by hard-tackling full-backs.

Whent toiled tirelessly with not much good material and few shooting chances, while Shanks and Taylor did much useful work in the second half, but the finishing of the whole line did not compare with that of the City.

BIRMINGHAM CITY: Merrick; Badham, Green; Boyd, Atkins, Warhurst; Stewart, Higgins, Trigg, Smith, Barry.

LUTON TOWN: Hughes; Cooke, Lake; Morton, Owen, Watkins; Havenga, Shanks, Whent, Taylor (J), Wyldes.

Referee: R. J. Burgess, Reading.