

THIS GROUND SUITS THE TOWN DEFENCE

Mastered Hammers, Then Mitchell Scored Winner

By Chiltern

WEST HAM UNITED 0 LUTON TOWN 1

One ground on which the Town defence almost invariably does well is that of West Ham, for in nine League visits there they have conceded only seven goals and have prevented the Hammers from scoring on six occasions.

However, on the other hand, the Town forwards have never shown any marked liking for these surroundings as is evidenced by the fact that they have never managed to score more than once in any of the nine encounters. Yet, despite this, the Town have averaged a point a match at West Ham over the years.

Set in the old, familiar pattern was the latest meeting, with defences taking such a grip that a goalless draw seemed the most likely result, barring a mistake by one of the many sure-footed defenders.

Sure enough, it happened, and it was the home centre-half, Allison, who had been putting up one of his best displays of the season who was the unfortunate culprit.

He bungled a clearance in front of goal when he could have pushed the ball back to the goalkeeper and MITCHELL, hanging around in the region of the centre forward position, gain possession.

Ernie Gregory pushed out his first terrific right-footed shot but Mitchell met the rebound with his left foot and this time the goalkeeper had no chance.

The goal came 20 minutes from the end and there were few among the Hammers' supporters who had any real confidence that their team could hit back.

A single goal was as much as this match ever looked like producing and, sure enough, it was the one that brought the Town a brace of invaluable points to keep them in the promotion hunt with a real chance.

OWED BIG DEBT TO DEFENCE

For the success, the Town owed a considerable debt to a cast-iron defence which exposed the limitations of the Hammers' attack, especially in the inside forward positions.

Neither inside man could make much impression on Morton and Shanks who broke up attack after attack before it had really got under way.

The tackling of both was extremely good and Morton again took the eye through his forceful, accurate play.

Kearns never even looked like posing a problem to Owen who was the master throughout and he never lost command of the situation even though he was handicapped a little by a painful ankle injury.

Sound contributions came from the full-backs and there was a well-knit look about the whole defence.

While the Hammers' forwards did have plenty of the ball and there was quite consistent pressure during the early part of the second half, their shooting caused Baynham little trouble.

Once though, he had to produce a sensational save to keep out a brilliant cross drive from Andrews and all through he showed keen anticipation and looked most capable.

In attack, apart from the first 10 minutes when they showed such sparkle that it looked as if the Hammers might be over-run, the Town forward line did not strike one as being a thoroughly cohesive force.

PYE CLOSELY WATCHED

Part of this was due to the fact that Pye was allowed little scope by the close-marking, hard-tackling Allison and although the centre-forward tried all his wiles and displayed footwork that earmarked him as the cleverest forward on the field, he could never entirely escape the attentions of the centre-half.

From Cullen, back in the team for the first time for four months, there was a pleasing display and he had a splendid spell in the second half when he gained the mastery over Bond.

Cullen did not make the mistake of being too artistic, but used his deft footwork to round an

opponent and then make use of the ball.

The inside forward set-up was not completely satisfactory and the switch between Moore and Turner made in the latter part of the second half was not a real success.

Moore accomplished rather more than Turner, but since the omission of Watkins he has been forced to change his style a little in order to do some of the hard work in the middle of the field.

Turner's main forte is his ability to score goals, but he had little opportunity of doing so in this match and although he made some good attempts, his general play did not impress.

From Mitchell came one of those opportunist goals during a time when he was not being brought much into the game and he saw most of the ball before the interval when he made some splendid runs and showed signs of returning to his best.

WEST HAM UTD.—Gregory (E); Wright, Bond; Parker, Allison, O'Farrell; Woodgate, Gregory (J), Kearns, Foan, Andrews.

LUTON TOWN. — Baynham; Jones, Aherne; Morton, Owen, Shanks; Cullen, Moore, Pye, Turner, Mitchell.

Referee—W. B. Everett, Beccles.
Attendance.—23,500.