

BUT A 5-1 DEFEAT NOT JUSTIFIED

Lack Of Combination In The Town Defence

By Chiltern

CAUGHT in an amazing goal storm at St. Andrew's last night, when Birmingham, in a sensational four minutes, scored three goals, the Town went down to a severe defeat which the run of the play scarcely justified.

Counting the one just before the interval, Birmingham actually got their five goals in the space of 22 minutes, and with the Town replying once, there was an amazing transformation to a game that had looked anything but likely in the first half to produce a crop of goals.

Certainly no one would have backed Birmingham to do so for their shooting had been atrocious. Then they struck absolutely irresistible form, and the Town simply could not cope with speedy thrusts followed by terrific shooting.

Birmingham found holes in the Town defence that had looked tight enough before half-time. Strength, speed and directness did the trick, and Purdon suddenly became a danger after having been completely in Owen's grip. In fact, the Town defence had been right on top until this inspired spell that might have cracked any defence.

Streten stood little chance with any of the goals and individually there was not a great deal of fault to find in the defence.

THERE WAS LACK OF COVERING

It was just as a combination they could not stave off Birmingham when they struck peak form. Lack of covering had something to do with it, and quite a lot of the danger started from the home wing-halves. More directness would have been a very welcome factor in the Town's attack.

Boyd obviously had instructions not to leave Pye, with the result that the centre-forward was largely shut out and did not really receive the sort of service he needed.

Both Cummins and Downie tended to try to do too much with the ball, and showed a liking for the square or back pass when a through ball would have been of more value. Neither Turner nor Mitchell had a lot of chance, but the latter was more threatening.

Liverpool were again represented at the match. Both teams were unchanged.

Owen, leading the Town against his old club, lost the toss, and the Town had to face a fairly stiff breeze. Birmingham settled down first with Kinsey prominent, but Streten was not troubled though he would have been had Purdon been quicker on to a through pass.

First shot for the Town came from Cummins, a too lofted affair, after a centre by Morton had been headed away.

Birmingham were looking the more dangerous, and for a time kept the Town defence at full stretch, yet without producing a telling shot.

First time Streten had to handle was when Martin tried a long shot from just inside the Town half. Birmingham were giving the ball plenty of boot and Green had a shot which went over from highly optimistic range.

TURNER AND MITCHELL EFFORTS

Best efforts for the Town came from Turner and Mitchell. The former dropped the ball just over the bar and the latter was beaten by Merrick after he had rounded Green.

So far, the Town forwards, although trying to play constructive football, had not been able to settle down. Birmingham were relying on dash, hitting the ball hard and following up quickly.

So far, these tactics had not proved productive, but they were giving the City the bigger share of the play.

Then came a sudden Town spurt in which only a fine Merrick save prevented a header by Boyd, trying to clear from Downie, going into his own goal.

A corner was the result, and from it Merrick made a firm two-fisted punch.

For a spell the Town called the tune, but a quick break by the City led to Stewart racing down the middle, and Streten saved what looked like a certain goal by throwing himself on the ball.

Most of Birmingham's shooting was wild in the extreme, but they were pressing again.

Purdon missed a chance from close in, and Murphy drove yards too high. The light ball was much too often in the air, but the

Town were making the greater effort to keep it low.

Certainly, there was more order about the Town forwards when they got away, but Birmingham's bustle made them a potential danger. However, the Town defence, with Owen shining, was firm.

Murphy headed over from point-blank range from Govan's centre, and Purdon headed into Streten's hands.

After 42 minutes Birmingham took the lead through MURPHY who pounced on to a through pass and just beat Streten to it as he came out.

It looked to me as if Murphy handled the ball but there was no protest from the Town. Half-time:

BIRMINGHAM 1

LUTON 0

At half-time the Town players said that Murphy shaped as if to handle before he scored, but, in fact, headed it.

Streten was in action early in the second half, going full length to a shot from Purdon, and then punching away from Stewart.

THE CITY FORGE AHEAD

Then after 50 minutes Birmingham increased their lead through PURDON who beat Owen brilliantly almost for the first time in the game and left himself with a clear course for goal.

Streten came to the edge of the penalty area but had no chance, as the centre-forward drove the ball firmly into the net.

Worse was to follow, for two minutes later the Town were three down as the result of a good shot into the far corner by MURPHY.

Warhurst again began the move, and Purdon squared the ball to Murphy, who did the rest.

MURPHY DOES IT AGAIN

A drastic change had come over the game, and two minutes later there was another goal from MURPHY. He snapped up a loose ball fully 40 yards from goal and blazed it into the top corner of the net with Streten desperately clawing at the air.

This was a knockout blow, but the Town hit back, and the goal rush continued when DOWNIE replied for the Town with a shot from Cummins's pass which Merrick parried, but could not prevent going into the net.

It was all action now. Mitchell and Purdon in turn went close, and Streten made a couple of great saves.

Birmingham were showing all the punch and shooting power they had lacked in the first half, and there were more hectic scenes in the Town goalmouth.

The Town defence could not get a grip on them, and Streten was kept busy.

PURDON GETS CITY'S FIFTH

Only Merrick's long reach enabled him to keep out a cross shot from Downie, but Birmingham were constantly dangerous now, and PURDON increased their lead after a pass from Kinsey had found another gap in the defence.

Back came the Town, and Merrick fisted over a header by Downie from Mitchell's free kick.

Pye and Turner changed places, and it was noticeable that the former was limping slightly.

Further pressure came from Birmingham, with the Town often hard pressed as Purdon headed just over.

A close-range shot from Murphy struck Streten, and at the other end a free kick by Mitchell was deflected for a corner. Result:

BIRMINGHAM 5

LUTON 1

Teams:

BIRMINGHAM: Merrick; Green, Martin; Banister, Boyd, Warhurst; Stewart, Kinsey, Purdon, Murphy, Govan.

LUTON: Streten; Dunne, Jones; Morton, Owen, Watkins; Turner, Cummins, Pye, Downie, Mitchell.

Referee: A W Smith, of Aldershot.