

NEW-STYLE TOWN TEAM FULLY DESERVED VICTORY

EVEN the longest lane must have a turning, but the Town have waited a long time to find it in their Second Division meetings with Birmingham. It came last night at Kenilworth-road amid scenes of jubilation when two goals scored by inside-forwards Downie and Cummins in the last ten minutes gave the Town a victory of which they were well worthy.

While the injury theme may be wearing a bit thin, it ran through the story of this match as for all but five minutes of the first half the Town were deprived of the services of Michael Cullen. Despite that, they made a tremendous fight against rugged opposition and were the better, more constructive side.

With a bit more finishing power they might have exacted complete revenge for the 5-1 defeat they suffered at Birmingham the previous week.

This was a new-style Town, full of confidence, fighting spirit, dash and teamwork.

The forwards moved smartly, with Scott, although he did not score, a big success at centre-forward.

He led the line with any amount of zest, and continually worried a Birmingham defence that did not live up to its reputation for refusing to become unsettled.

NEVER A CHANCE

Cummins, too, had a grand match sealed by a brilliant goal, not only his first for the Town but his first in the League.

Downie did his share of foraging and so did Davies, though his finishing was poor.

In defence the Town were so strong and well-knit that the Birmingham forwards never had the semblance of a chance of revealing their devastating form of last week.

Morton, blotting out Purdon completely, was again outstanding. Aherne made a happy return after injury. Shanks and Watkins were great workers and Dunne did splendidly, too. As a result, Baynham was not much troubled.

LUTON TOWN: Baynham; Dunne, Aherne; Shanks, Morton, Watkins; Cullen, Cummins, Scott, Downie, Davies.

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

Referee: A. W. Smith, Aldershot.

Mitchell had not recovered sufficiently from illness to play and his place at outside-left was taken by Davies.

After an early attack, eventually broken up by Merrick, the Town suffered a severe blow when Cullen fell heavily with his arm underneath his body and was led off the field in obvious pain.

The Town, however, kept play in the Birmingham half for a spell and Merrick saved a good shot by Downie.

Cullen returned after five minutes and immediately was only inches off the mark with a drive from 20 yards, following a long solo run by Davies.

LEFT FIELD AGAIN

The Town were at full strength for only a few minutes, as Cullen, after speaking to the trainer on the touch-line, left the field again.

Some neat football was coming from the Town, who were having more of the play, and two or three free kicks came their way after over-robust tackling by Birmingham.

Downie went close with a shot, made as he was heavily tackled by Bannister, and he was shaken up more than a little.

Despite their numerical inferiority, the Town continued to look the more dangerous, and Davies switched over to his natural position on the right.

Not until more than a quarter of an hour had gone did Birmingham produce a shot of any note,

and then Murphy was not much wide.

When Birmingham attacked again Dunne saved the situation by kicking the ball away from the feet of Purdon as he shaped to make a shot.

There was a ruggedness about the Birmingham tackling to which the crowd did not take kindly.

Nearly all the constructive football was coming from the Town, and their four - men attack was moving a good deal more smoothly in mid-field than was that of Birmingham.

Merrick saved a header from Downie near the foot of the post, and Baynham's most severe task was to divert for a corner a low shot by Purdon.

Shanks dropped the ball on top of the net, and Davies just failed to get his head to a centre from Shanks.

Scott was leading the attack with any amount of energy and worrying Boyd a good deal.

There was a stoppage while Cummins, whose nose was bleeding, was attended to by the Birmingham trainer, Ralph Hann still being away with Cullen.

NEAR DISASTER

The referee had a word with Warhurst after another foul on Cummins, and a free kick nearly brought disaster.

Although Merrick picked up the ball easily enough, his clearance kick rebounded off the back of Green, but not sharply enough to cause any undue concern.

The Town were giving an extremely good show considering their handicap, and Downie was unlucky with a header that went just wide.

The referee took Warhurst's name when he again pulled down Cummins, who headed narrowly wide from the free kick. Half-time:

LUTON TOWN 0
BIRMINGHAM 0

Cullen returned at the start of the second half, and went to outside-left.

During the interval, I learned that he had dislocated his shoulder which was put back by the doctor.

The dislocation had caused pressure on a nerve in the arm which brought considerable pain.

Early on, Davies went near to scoring, following another free-kick.

PENALTY APPEAL FAILS

Appeals for a penalty against Green for pushing Scott were not upheld, and although his final effort after another dash sent the ball straight at Merrick, there was spontaneous applause for the lively centre-forward.

Cheered on by the crowd the Town strove might and main for the goal they deserved, but Davies shot badly when left with a chance by Scott.

During this attack Scott received a knock on the ribs and went to the touch-line for attention but was soon back again.

Against the close marking of the Town defence the Birmingham forwards were seldom in evidence.

Scott was unlucky with a shot that struck the outside of the post, and Davies missed a chance.

The Town had two free kicks,

one of them on the penalty area line, both against Boyd, and then had turned down appeals for a penalty for handling by Martin.

DOWNIE SCORES

It was all the Town now, and Merrick luckily saved a fine shot from Cummins.

At last a Luton penalty claim was allowed when Warhurst brought down Cummins heavily just inside the line, and this time the referee had no hesitation in pointing to the spot.

This was after 80 minutes, and DOWNIE made no mistake, planting the ball firmly low, wide of Merrick's left hand to give the Town a thoroughly deserved lead.

The Town were clearly on top, and with six minutes left they increased their lead with a fine goal by CUMMINS, his first in League football.

He left Merrick hopelessly beaten with a beautiful shot taken from the edge of the penalty area during a full-scale Town raid which had the Birmingham defence wide open.

There was not much sign of a Birmingham rally; the Town defence's grip was too tight for that. Result:

LUTON TOWN 2
BIRMINGHAM 0
Attendance: 12,227.

CULLEN'S SHOULDER

It was disclosed after the match that Cullen's shoulder "came out" again in the second half. He was taken to hospital for attention.