

PENALTY COST YET ANOTHER POINT

Latest Forward Line-up Did Not Produce Goods

By Chiltern

LUTON TOWN 1 BRISTOL ROVERS ... 1

In their last four home League matches the Town have dropped four points—points that would have kept them among the promotion-seeking clubs—and, in each case lack of scoring power has been at the root of the trouble.

So it was at Kenilworth-road on Saturday when the Town had sufficient of the first-half play to have ensured adequate revenge for that Cup defeat unexpectedly inflicted on them by Bristol Rovers in 1951.

As has been pointed out before, one goal can never be regarded as a winning margin in any match, for there is always the possibility of accidents in defence.

Whether what happened immediately before the Rovers' equaliser in this match can rightly be regarded as in this category is a moot point and the home fans stood aghast 20 minutes from the end when Owen blatantly handled the ball in front of goal and there was never any doubt of what the referee's decision would be.

The official immediately pointed to the spot to give the Rovers the chance to save a point which they had not looked like doing previously.

PITT made no mistake, despite a frantic dive to his left by Streten, who was beaten by the pace of the ball.

Before this, the Town had been going along holding the lead that DOWNIE had given them in the 32nd minute with a shot that went in off Bamford after Turner had made the opening for him.

There had been signs of goals before this arrived, including near misses by Turner and Downie and, afterwards, Turner was unlucky to be the victim of a trip from behind by Warren after he had beaten the centre-half and was steering a clear course for goal.

More activity by the Town forwards followed after the interval, but, after the opening stages, goals did not look probable and the match looked like fizzling out into a narrow win for the Town until Owen conceded the penalty.

INSTINCTIVE ACTION

Explanation of the incident by the manager afterwards was on the lines that it was an instinctive action by Owen after the flight of the ball from a corner by McIlvenny had been changed by Watling's head.

Whatever the reason, it was a costly affair to the Town, even though Hale would have been a possible scorer had the ball been allowed to go through.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that the forwards are still not giving the defence any margin for mistakes and too much reliance is being placed on the strength of this department.

And strong it was in this match, as was discovered by the Rovers' forwards, who relied mainly on dash and bustle as their means of making ground.

This did not cause the Town a great deal of concern, even when Hale tried to steam-roller his way through, for Owen was in dour mood and had full command of the middle of the field.

Strong tackling and quick covering by Morton and Shanks meant that there was not the slightest suggestion of weakness in the middle line and the water-tight look of the defence as a whole was added to by the soundness of Jones and Aherne.

On this occasion Jones cut out the frills in favour of more straightforward tactics and Aherne gave another first-class display.

Seldom did the Rovers produce anything in the nature of shots calculated to trouble Streten who dealt safely and speedily with everything that came his way.

Forward, there was a different story, for although there was some neat and accurate approach work during the first half that looked as if the goal-starved fans might be given a long-awaited treat, goals did not appear as a result.

Choice of Pemberton for inside-right was not a success, hard

though he tried, and Adam, last-minute deputy for Mitchell, did not make the most of his opportunity, mainly because his use of the ball and his finishing were erratic.

Some of his footwork was very good, but finish is all-important and there is not sufficient of that in the front line as it is.

More use could have been made of Davies, who had a long spell in the first half when he rarely saw the ball.

Most constructive of the forwards was Downie who also produced most of the shooting, but Turner impressed by the way in which he led the attack before the interval.

Afterwards, with less support, he was overshadowed by Warren.

LUTON TOWN: Streten; Jones, Aherne; Morton, Owen, Shanks; Davies, Pemberton, Turner, Downie, Adam

BRISTOL ROVERS: Radford; Bamford, Fox; Pitt, Warren, Sampson; McIlvenny, Biggs, Hale, Leonard, Watling.