

CHANCE TO IMPROVE RECORD SLIPPED BY

Then Fulham's All-Out Attack Won The Day

By Chiltern

FULHAM 3 LUTON TOWN 1

A better opportunity to improve their melancholy record at Craven Cottage has seldom presented itself to the Town than in the first half of this match on Saturday, when they had the opportunities to put themselves into a commanding position, but had to be satisfied with being on level terms after looking the better team.

Chances squandered often do not recur and that was the case in this match, for they found Fulham a vastly different proposition after the interval when their forward line lived up to the reputation they have carved out for themselves.

From Fulham, there was the sort of start that must have been encouraging to their supporters, for, right from the kick-off they were dangerous but their finishing was largely inaccurate and so became the quality of their passing.

Having come through the first 10 minutes without disaster, the Town began to do something on their own account with the result that they caused some scares among a Fulham defence that certainly looked anything but water-tight under pressure.

Groves, Adam, MacEwan (though it was not wholly his fault) and Turner all missed chances that should have counted as goals.

Not so clear-cut were the chances that came the way of Fulham, principally because of the close marking of the Town defenders.

COMPLETE TURN-ABOUT

Rarely has there been such a complete turn-about in a match as occurred in the second half when Fulham from the floundering team they had been earlier, suddenly struck streamlined form in attack that found gaps in what had previously been an immaculate Town defence.

After STEVENS gave them the lead in 52 minutes there was no holding them. Speedy approach work, cleverly accomplished, made an opening for the outside-right to try a shot from the edge of the penalty area.

He aimed through a narrow gap for the far corner of the net, and succeeded helped by an in-off the inside of the post.

Following this, with the Town forwards being given little scope due to a vast improvement in the home wing-half play nearly all the pressing came from Fulham.

Long through passes caused the main trouble, and the Town goal was plastered with shots. That they survived so long without having another setback in the 76th minute was a surprise and then STEVENS scrambled the ball through from close range.

That settled the issue because the Town forwards had shown little sign of a revival and then along came ROBSON with a great goal after another of those sweeping movements that pulled the defence out of position and left the inside-right with a clear shot at goal.

What happened after that was purely of academic interest, but the left-wing pair did raise a cheer from the now-dispirited Town fans by providing TURNER with an opening to beat Black in the 89th minute.

LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

There were lessons from this match for the Town to digest. One is the necessity of finding increased finishing power, because to miss easy chances away from home is fatal, as they have experienced on other occasions this season.

Another is that the latest attempt to fill the centre-forward position was a failure, and MacEwan, who again showed that he lacks ball control, did not even show the dash and fire that the Town gambled on upsetting the home defence.

That there was a weakness

in the middle throughout was a sore handicap, but the attack rose above it in the first half to the extent of playing some neat football that worked out scoring openings.

Groves, in particular caught the eye with clever footwork, and Turner's thrusts were a danger. Threats came from both Davies and Adam in the first half, but, somehow, the forwards got out of the game as an attacking force afterwards, and there was little material for the wingers.

Until the Fulham forwards found their tearaway form, the defence had done everything asked of it, but they were harassed for almost the whole of the second half, and there was seldom a rest for them.

Morton and Shanks lost the grip they had had earlier, Hall, who had held Jezard finely, was frequently in trouble because of the through ball, and Stevens's wanderings set a problem for Aherne.

While he could never be said to be the complete master, Dunne had quite a good day against the elusive Mitten but, in the end, it was probably Stretten, as much as anyone or anything else, that saved the Town from a heavier defeat.

FULHAM: Black; Chenhall, Lawler; Smith, Brice, Lowe (E.); Stevens, Robson, Jezard, Haynes, Mitten.

LUTON TOWN: Stretten; Dunne, Aherne; Morton, Hall, Shanks; Davies, Turner, MacEwan, Groves, Adam.

Referee: E. Crawford, Doncaster. Attendance: 33,500.