

ANOTHER CARBON COPY OF THOSE WOEFUL MISSES

Birmingham C. O, Luton T. O

THIS business of missed chances is becoming such an unhappy feature of Birmingham City's football that one could almost make a carbon copy report of their attacking play that would last from week to week. They made a no-goals draw with Luton at St. Andrew's this afternoon, and they yielded a point simply and solely because of their inability to put the ball into the net when they had made wonderful opportunities to do so by flashes of football worthy of goals.

Nearly no match at St. Andrew's

THERE was nearly no match at St. Andrew's this afternoon. Luton Town, making the journey from Bedfordshire by coach, were involved in an accident on the Southam to Daventry road ten miles from Warwick.

One of the passengers in the coach, describing the accident, said: "I all happened when our bus was overtaking a lorry."

"A sports car was coming in the other direction, round a slight bend."

"In trying to avoid a collision the coach driver swung to the roadside and the coach left the road."

He added that as the coach swung towards the ditch it struck a tree, which prevented it from overturning completely.

Winning hand

Right winger Mike Cullen said: "I was in the back of the bus playing cards with five others when the collision occurred."

"I had just got a winning hand, and his head struck the top of the coach. He had a cut on his head, but it did not need stitches."

McEwan said on arrival at St. Andrew's: "I have a thumping headache and I do not feel like playing, but I do not intend to let the side down."

At Luton, hasty arrangements were being made to fly up a reserve for McEwan until he looked on playing.

When the Luton team turned out at St. Andrew's as selected they were given a tremendous ovation by the crowd.

By half-time Birmingham should have been three goals in the lead and they were playing with sufficient power and confidence then to have given Luton a good beating. But, as we have seen before, the longer the game went the more Birmingham fell away until, in the closing stages of the second half, they rarely looked like scoring at all.

STRONGER ATTACKING SIDE

There was more football in the game than when these two teams last met back in April in that match of so much tension when it seemed that whichever side lost would lose promotion, too.

BIRMINGHAM WERE THE STRONGER ATTACKING SIDE TODAY AND THEY CERTAINLY HAD BY FAR THE MOST OF THE GAME.

Even so, for the most part they were unable to produce the high standard of skilful inter-passing that has been seen in most of their matches this season.

Apart from a flurry of neat attacking play right at the start of the first session, it was all Birmingham in a most dominating way before the interval. The second half was much more even but far less exciting for the 31,000 crowd, with only occasional flashes of the kind of football worth remembering.

In that first half Birmingham could have taken a goal-scoring grip on the game that might have made a picnic of the second half.

INSTEAD, WE SAW A SCENE UNFOLD THAT IS NOW BECOMING ALL TOO FAMILIAR, AND IS ROBBING BIRMINGHAM OF THE POINTS THAT THEIR APPROACH FOOTBALL DESERVES.

SKILFUL COMBINATION

The general picture of the first half was great and determined Birmingham pressure, studded with bursts of skilful combination that brought the openings. Once again the chances to take goals were there for the picking.

THERE WERE FIVE GOOD OPPORTUNITIES BEFORE THE BREAK AND THREE OF THEM WITHOUT QUESTION SHOULD HAVE BEEN MADE INTO GOALS.

Early on, Murphy sent Brown through with a beautiful pass but the ball was on the centre forward's wrong foot and that was that. Govan flicked a header against an upright and then completely miskicked when he was only a few yards out in the middle of the goal. When Badham sent Brown clean through, the centre forward tried to dribble round the goalkeeper and was smothered off the ball.

ONCE AGAIN IT WAS TOUGH ON BROWN, WHO TAKES SUCH WONDERFUL POSITION AND USES HIS SPEED TO MAKE THE OPENINGS AND BE EASILY FOUND.

In defence, Birmingham looked sound enough with the strength to hold a Luton line that, while skilful and with great possibilities, lacked the bite and thrust around the penalty area to overcome strong, determined tackling.

Despite the severe shaking all the Luton team received when their coach was involved in a smash, they turned out as originally selected.

It is just possible that changes might have been made for those players who received minor injuries. Possibly Mike Cullen and Peter McEwan, but 12th man Eddie Smith was the most shaken of the whole party and could not be considered. Nor could replacements be brought from Luton in time.

Birmingham City were without their regular centre half, Trevor Smith, who is ill, and once again Johnnie Newman took over the position.

Birmingham City.—Merrick: Hall, Badham; Boyd, Newman, Warhurst; Astall, Kinsey, Brown, Murphy, Govan.

Luton Town.—Baynam; Dunne, Abner, Morton, Owen, Shanks; Cullen, Turner, McEwan, Cummins, Adam.

Referee: J. Powell (Rotherham).

Three minutes late

Following the crash, Luton travelled on to Birmingham in taxis and arrived at the ground 25 minutes before the scheduled start.

They made a quick change and the game was on three minutes late in starting. Right winger Cullen had his left arm heavily bandaged and centre forward McEwan had a piece of sticking plaster over the crown of his head.

Otherwise there was no visible indication they had been involved in an accident.

Birmingham warned on to the Luton goal from the kick-off and Owen was glad to put a header over his own goal.

From the corner, Murphy headed down rather weakly from a good unmarked position close in.

Then, with three minutes gone, it was Luton with a beautiful clear-cut move down the right—full-back Dunne to Cullen and through to Turner.

The inside right, moving in, shot so hard and true that the ball swerved out of Merrick's arms for a corner.

Chances missed

It was certainly an all-action opening for, within a minute, Turner missed a fine heading chance when unmarked close in and Astall headed over the bar when equally well placed.

The best chance in the first quarter of an hour was Birmingham-made and should have brought a goal.

A passing error by wing half Shanks

PRESENTS FROM EUROPE'S ANGLERS

Mr. T. A. Waterhouse, of 55, Victoria Road, Birmingham, president of the National Federation of Anglers, was honoured by anglers from overseas at the annual conference of the International Confederation of Anglers which opened in London today.

Delegations from six of the 19 countries attending the conference, organised by the National Federation of Anglers, presented him with gifts.

He received a clock from Holland, a statuette from Spain, a picture from Germany, a medalion from France, a piece of Roman Pottery and a book on Roman angling from Italy, and a plaque from Austria.



In this mix-up in the Luton goalmouth Peter Murphy leaps above colleague Eddie Brown to head towards goal. Close at hand are Len Boyd and two Luton defenders.



Luton's Ron Baynam, England's new goalkeeper and former Worcester City player, throws himself full length in an attempt to save this shot from Len Boyd. The ball hit the post.

Deflected

Warhurst, running in, met it first time, but his fierce shot was deflected off wing half Morton's back.

In the 26th minute came another incredible miss by Brown.

Badham took the ball up and seeing the centre forward whipping head, and a fine through pass to him that split the defence and sent Brown clear.

Baynam came rushing out, Brown tried to work the ball across the front of the goalkeeper but was smothered out of a shot by the quick recovery and dive that the goalkeeper made.

The first really dangerous movement by Luton for a very long spell came four minutes before the break when, in a sudden attack Turner sent McEwan clear.

Merrick had seen the threat very quickly came racing out, and smothered the shot almost at the centre forward's feet.

Half-time—Birmingham City 0
Luton Town 0

It was all action and excitement again at the start of the second half.

In a matter of five minutes Merrick saved from McEwan and Turner. Govan shot just over the bar. Baynam twice took the ball off the heads of attackers with beautiful clean catches, and went full-length to turn a Govan header round an upright.

The activity packed into the first few minutes had to last the 30,000 crowd, for the football suddenly deteriorated and defences got on top.

It was 20 minutes after the restart before the crowd had another major thrill when they thought Birmingham had finally got into the lead.

Certainly Brown got the ball into the net but what must have been a wonderful moment of elation for him ended too quickly.

Murphy shot for goal from near the penalty spot in a fairly crowded goalmouth. It looked as though the ball was deflected to Brown who, standing very near a post, hooked the ball in.

The referee had a word with a linesman who had flagged at the moment of the incident, and he ruled Brown outside, presumably at the moment Murphy made his shot.

Luton were much more in the game in this half and Merrick stopped a shot from Adam and saw Turner drive wide of an upright.

At the other end, Baynam several times had good cause to show his brilliance in the air and on another occasion was very well positioned to hold a hard shot from Govan.