

Snowballing Fans On Target

REF. CONVENES MID-FIELD POW-WOW

Fisticuffs Feature In Battle Of The Mud

By CHILTERN

LUTON TOWN 0, LEICESTER CITY 4

HOPES that the Town, fancied in many quarters as possible Cup winners, would make the Wembley grade, were sunk without trace in the Kenilworth-road mud yesterday.

To make matters worse, they lost their captain, Sid Owen, after 37 minutes with a torn groin muscle.

"I knew what had happened immediately—it sounded like a piece of paper tearing," he told me afterwards.

Therein lay the Town's alibi for this heavy defeat, but they were two goals down when the incident occurred.

Yet even with that handicap I felt that the Town were still in the game until Owen had to leave the field.

The whole point about it was that the Town's tactics were calculated to succeed on the lush Wembley turf—not on this pitch, which on the stand side, looked like a swimming bath which had not quite been emptied.

For skilled football, conditions were just impossible. Leicester realised it from the start and were content to hit the ball hard and run.

That was the only possible way of combatting the atrocious going, which was as bad as I have seen it, and although the referee decided that it was good enough to play on, it caused the game to degenerate into a near farce.

FORTUNE OF STRONG

It was a case of fortune favouring the strong and Leicester had it in their "one two" partnership of Gardiner and Rowley.

Before the match, Luton knew that this was where the danger would come from and so it transpired.

Rowley got three of the goals, and Gardiner the other, and it was the latter who set Leicester on the way to victory in the 17th minute when Baynham could only push out a cross shot by Griffiths and GARDINER was on the spot to boot the ball into the net.

Before that happened Leicester had escaped narrowly when Anderson misjudged a centre by Cullen which landed on the face

of the bar but to offset that Rowley missed a great chance bang in front of goal.

The Town fans had not recovered from the shock of the first goal before the ball was in the net again, this time from ROWLEY who tried what must have been a completely speculative shot from 25 yards and Baynham perhaps bothered by the sun shining strongly and in view of the terrible underfoot conditions, made a poor attempt at trying to prevent the ball from getting under the bar.

Leicester always looked the more dangerous because they were more direct whereas Luton tried to do the impossible.

They attempted to play cultured football in a mud bath and it just could not or would not work out.

Yet the Town had their chances Morton shot straight at Anderson from inside the six yard line.

CULLEN SHOOT

Anderson who made four brilliant saves kept out a cross shot from Cullen and then dropped on the ball as Turner tried to turn it in from an angle.

Fincham was off for four minutes with a knee injury but the Town could not take advantage of this.

Owen's injury was the crowning blow and Morton went back to centre-half and for the remainder of the first half the rest of the forward line had a somewhat hit

and miss look but even so Turner all but reduced the lead on the stroke of half-time.

When the teams came back after the interval Pearce who had previously switched with Cullen for a time was at centre-forward. In the first minute Turner again went near to scoring, Anderson saving finely at full length.

PENALTY DECISION

There should have been a penalty for the Town when Froggatt, lying on the ground, blatantly handled the ball which brought one of many strange decisions by the referee—he gave a free kick to Leicester!

Frequently, his decisions caused the slow handclap from the crowd who also tossed snowballs on to the pitch, and so much did things get out of hand that, in the latter part of the second half, he called all the players together in the middle of the field and gave them a general caution.

This was brought about finally by an outbreak of fisticuffs in the Town penalty area something that had been threatening previously.

The crowd chanted, "What a referee," and certainly they seemed more than justified in much of their criticism.

From the Town there was a gallant but unavailing fight. They go so far but no further, and their finishing had nothing like the power of that of Leicester.

Gradually they were worn down, and after 78 minutes ROWLEY removed the last vestige of hope for the Town when he beat Baynham from close in following a free kick by Webb.

Then, with less than a minute left, ROWLEY completed a "hat-trick" when he fastened on to a big clearance, kicked the ball ahead, beat Morton to it, and Baynham could get only one hand to the ball which landed just inside the post.

WRONG TACTICS

This was an enormous disappointment for the Town, but classic football cannot be played in conditions like this.

Difficult it may be to change tactics considerably to suit such conditions, but the Town have had

much experience of them recently, and they certainly failed to adapt themselves to them.

Neither Turner nor Cummins suited their play to the going.

The former made the best scoring attempts but did little else of note, and Cummins found that his clever footwork did not enable him to make a lot of progress.

Pearce impressed with his fighting spirit, but Cullen, who made many promising moves, tended to keep the ball too close, and there was a sad need for more punch in the front line.

Due allowance, of course, must be made for the time Owen was absent, and Morton, that most versatile of players, again showed that he can be the equal of most centre-halves by holding Gardiner most securely, and he was most strong and forceful when he took over from his captain.

Shanks, who nearly missed this game because of a boil which he had lanced on Tuesday night, tried with a fair modicum of success to fill two or three positions in the second half, and his was a non-stop display.

From Griffiths, except when the first goal came, there was not a great deal of threat, and Dunne and Hogg had a rare tussle which ended about 50-50.

It was a full-blooded, uninhibited Cup struggle that raised two important points.

Why play Cup-ties in a month when the weather is at its worst?

Secondly, when is something going to be done about the unfairness of a team having to struggle along with ten men in such a vital match?

Certainly the Town had none of the luck in either of these respects and Leicester's biff-bang tactics won the day, as they were bound to in this mud bath.

Marks to the Town for their fighting spirit, but few for the tactics they used.

Official attendance: 23,221.

Receipts: £4,300.

Only 6,000 paid for admission to the Keilworth-road terrace.

LUTON TOWN: Baynham; Dunne, Aherne; Pemberton, Owen, Shanks; Cullen; Turner, Morton, Cummins, Pearce.

LEICESTER CITY: Anderson; Cunningham, Webb; Froggatt, Fincham, Russell; Griffiths, Morris, Gardiner, Rowley, Hogg.

Referee: T. L. Wood, of Bury.