

PENALTY AWARD WAS THE TURNING

PUT CHELSEA RIGHT BACK INTO GAME

Town's Two Goals' Lead Was Wiped Out Late On

By Chiltern

LUTON TOWN 2, CHELSEA 2

A WONDERFUL chance of beginning the holiday programme on a winning note slipped through the Town's fingers at Kenilworth-road yesterday when 24,261 spectators saw them slump badly in the last 20 minutes and lose a comfortable lead of two goals.

What began a Chelsea revival was the award of a penalty kick against Kelly which a vast majority thought was harsh when he was judged to have brought down Bentley when no particular danger was threatened.

It happened in the 69th minute when the two players went for the ball together and Bentley finished sprawled full-length well inside the penalty area and the ball ran over the dead-ball line.

Bentley, I thought, made the most of the situation by the way in which he went down and the next thing we knew was that the referee was pointing to the penalty spot.

Up came SILLETT, one of the hardest kickers of a dead ball in football at the moment but, on this occasion, he did not use his powers of blasting the ball, but contented himself with side-footing it to the left-hand side of Baynham.

In any case, it was effective, for it put Chelsea back into a game that they seemed to have lost already and renewed their hopes of breaking their run of five consecutive defeats.

Conversely, the encouragement that Chelsea received was matched by the discouragement felt by the Town after being on top, and deservedly so, for most of the game because of their superior constructive ability.

AT SIXES AND SEVENS

Confidence went to the winds, everybody seemed to be at sixes and sevens, and Chelsea, scenting the chance to rescue a point that had never seemed to be within their reach after the

early stages, suddenly began to look more than a kick-and-rush team.

A certain amount of panic developed in the Town defence and, with 14 minutes left, there came the vital goal scored by DICKS who, in the most intelligent fashion, ran into the open space anticipating the through pass by Bentley, who had been allowed to gain possession of the ball because of lax marking from a throw-in on the Town's left flank.

Apparently, no-one had noticed Dicks's foray and there was a sudden rush of defenders at him. Once, the ball was almost scrambled away but, in the melee that followed, he regained possession and swept it into the net.

So Chelsea gained a point that had never seemed within their reach, especially in the first half, when the Town, despite the somewhat unorthodox look of their attack, sadly weakened by injuries, had looked by far the more constructive side.

CULLEN PAVED THE WAY

Cullen, tried at inside-right for the first time, was a success and paved the way for the first goal after 36 minutes when, after gaining possession of the ball near the centre line on the Town's left flank, he pushed it through to Adam, who immediately swept it through the middle to GREGORY.

The youthful centre-forward brilliantly controlled it and, although harassed by Wicks, banged the ball into the net for his first home goal in League football and a very well-taken effort at that.

Before that happened, there had been a short spell when Chelsea threatened to get on top and during which Baynham was quite busy.

However, their main aim in making progress seemed to be by banging the ball high down the middle and hoping that the Town defence would make mistakes. These did not develop, at least not seriously, and when

DAVIES increased the lead a minute after half-time, there seemed to be no danger.

Nor did there in the beginnings which this goal had, for it came direct from a long goal-kick by Baynham. Wicks had become so used to allowing the light, bouncing ball to run through to Robertson that he did so automatically in this case, and failed to notice Davies coming through on his blind side.

IT WAS TOO LATE

When he did, it was too late, for Davies was left with a clear run to goal and he cleverly beat Robertson with a well-placed low shot with his left foot.

Unfortunately, when the score was 2-1 and just before the equaliser came, Davies had a goal disallowed for offside because Gregory had delayed his pass just that fraction too long.

A goal at that stage would have broken the Chelsea spirit but, as it was, they discovered the fight that had deserted them after the Town's successes, no doubt as the legacy of their long run of non-success.

Had the game gone on a little longer, the Town might well have been deprived of even the consolation of one point, because they faded right out of the picture.

Disappointing as the result was, there were grounds for pleasure at the way in which what was really an experimental attack moved in the first half, despite a measure of lack of finishing power.

Certainly, there was more method and constructive skill than was shown against Aston Villa and both Cullen and Groves, fighting for the ball, tried to use it to advantage when they got it in the first half.

PROMISE OF GREGORY

Later, they were not so prominent, though Cullen kept firmly in the game and Gregory, much at a disadvantage against the tall Wicks when the ball was in the air, still contrived to show his great promise when low passes came his way.

Often, Adam had the beating of the burly Sillett and did not hang on to the ball so long as usual. Some of his quick passes, such as the one that led to the first goal, were accurate, but in the second half, his finishing fell below standard.

The goal that Davies secured relieved for him what would otherwise have been an unhappy afternoon. He is most dangerous when wandering into the middle, but otherwise, he does not seem to be reacting quickly enough to the differing sets of situations.

Part of the Town's second-half trouble stemmed from the fact that Morton and Shanks largely lost control of the middle of the field.

Earlier, Shanks had been outstanding, covering here, covering there, and coming through with the ball constantly but, perhaps because Groves faded, he, too, fell away.

This was one of Morton's few below-par games, though he might have been affected by a kick on the calf muscle which made him doubtful for this afternoon's match.

BENTLEY WAS SUBDUED

Kelly made a few mistakes for which he fortunately did not have to pay and again prevented the opposing centre-forward from scoring.

In fact, until Bentley began wandering after Chelsea's first goal when they seemed to realise for the first time that a point was not an impossibility, the England player was rarely in the game.

Cooler player on the field, without any doubt at all, was Jones, who not only gained the mastery over Parsons, but managed to use to advantage a greater percentage of passes than anyone else. Maybe he was too cool at times, but his was an impressive display.

Apart from the somewhat annoying habit of using the too-short pass, often with Morton as the other half of the duet, Dunne did very well, considering that he was facing a winger with the match-winning potentialities of Blunstone.

He matched the winger's speed, but the defence as a whole must guard against the tendency to use the short pass when the situation is crying out for the long upfield clearance.

Apart from one or two clearance kicks that gave all Luton fans the jitters, Baynham was very safe, cutting out centres in his best style and the fact that he had to rush out at least three times to kick clear, pointed more to lack of covering than to any fault on his part.

Yet, until Chelsea gained their first goal from the penalty spot, their rather unimaginative forward line seldom looked like scoring, apart from one occasion in the first half when a most deceptive shot by Blunstone bounced off the bar.

LUTON TOWN: Baynham; Dunne, Jones; Morton, Kelly, Shanks; Davies, Cullen, Gregory, Groves, Adam.

CHELSEA: Robertson; Sillett, Willemse; Dicks, Wicks, Casey; Parsons, McNichol, Bentley, Stubbs, Blunstone.

Referee: F. B. Coultas, Hull.

FOOTBALL

LUTON TOWN F.C.
MONDAY, 2nd APRIL

Combination League

Luton Town Reserves

versus

ARSENAL

RESERVES

Kick-off 3 p.m.

Admission: Centre Stand 2/-;
Enclosure and Wing Stand 1/6.
Boys 1/-; Bobbers' Stand 1/3.
Boys 10d.; Terraces 1/-, Boys 9d.