

TOWN LACKING IN PUNCH

STRENGTH CARRIED ARSENAL THROUGH

Wind And The Light Ball Made Things Difficult

FIRST Division I visit of the Town to the famous Highbury Stadium on Saturday is not one that they will remember with a particular amount of pleasure.

In difficult conditions, they were beaten as the result of a sudden goal rush at the start of the second half by a team less methodical than themselves, but who produced the strength and thrust in attack that the Town lacked.

Particularly in the first half, the Town played a lot of neat, clever football in midfield, most of it inconsequential because it continually broke down before the penalty area was reached.

SO aimless were Arsenal in the first half when they had a strong wind behind them that the slow handclap broke out on a couple of occasions.

Some of the passing was woefully inaccurate and although they had a lot of the early play, their finishing was wile to say the least.

Holton shot tamely straight at Baynham when the Town middle had been opened up and he could well have taken the ball on another five yards and Haverly missed his kick completely from close range.

What would have happened had the Town been awarded a penalty which they deserved when Evans handled the ball just inside the area, can now be only a matter of conjecture.

Two Penalty Claims Were Dismissed

ADMITTEDLY, there was no danger to Arsenal, but the handling seemed a clear case and the referee who waved on play, was right on the spot.

In fact, there was a lot of waving on from the official who made one most curious decision late in the game when Shanks, to retrieve an error, blatantly pulled down Tapscott from behind when the inside-right must have scored.

Everybody thought it could be nothing but a penalty but, instead, a free kick on the six yards line was awarded, though how the offence could be classified as obstruction I fail to see.

Easy Afternoon For Kelsey

AT that stage, it did not matter because the Town were three goals down anyway, but the earlier decision could very well have changed the whole course of the match.

Certainly, with the wind, Arsenal were playing without much confidence and there would have been less had they gone into arrears early on.

Only rarely in the first half, did the Town get close enough to Kelsey to suggest their ability to score.

Once Adam nearly did the trick, but Kelsey pulled off a great close-range save.

Otherwise, the Welsh International spent a deal of his time as a spectator and could watch the bulk of what other shots there were sailing over the bar.

Arsenal Were Better Against The Wind

HAVING remained level against the strong wind that played all sorts of tricks with the lively ball, the Town had every reason to fancy their chance in the second half.

Things, however, did not turn out that way. Whether it was that there had been a half-time pep talk or whether they found that the wind against them, holding up passes as it did, suited their direct style better, Arsenal suddenly found rhythm.

With four minutes gone, Tapscott made a low cross drive that Baynham, at full length, could only push out to Holton, who was left with the easiest task in the world to side-foot the ball into the net.

Thought Second Goal Was Offside

THOROUGHLY convinced that Holton was offside when he secured the second goal 10 minutes later were the Town and it certainly looked a very near thing, for Holton was very close to goal when he tapped in a pass by Clapton.

In addition, another Arsenal player, having found himself offside, ran into the back of the net and stayed there until the ball was in.

Initially, the movement began from a mistake by Jones and it was when Kelly failed in a tackle on Holton, bringing the ball along the dead line, that Haverly was left with the third of the afternoon's gift goals after 62 minutes.

Groves Went Off With Concussion

IMMEDIATELY that had happened, there was a stoppage for attention to Groves, and he was taken off suffering from concussion.

With the match in the state it was then, it was thought wiser that Groves should not return and, in fact, until afterwards, he knew very little of what was going on.

Trouble was caused in the first instance in the first half when a hard drive by Holton struck him on the back of the head and he had another knock there in going up to head a ball just before the third goal came.

In his absence, the Town could claim no alibi, for the game was won and lost when that happened and they never suggested sufficient forward punch to produce even a mild scare for Arsenal.

Spearhead Missing From Town Attack

THE prompting of Morton and Shanks and the upfield forays of Dunne enabled the Town to have quite a share of the play, despite their handicap, but apart from a shot by Gregory that Kelsey saved one-handed there was never much prospect of a goal.

While both tried hard and Groves made a very good impression in the first half with his ball control and ability to beat an opponent, he and Cullen are not the ideal pair of inside-forwards, because they more or less conform to the same pattern.

Both are ball players who like to operate in the middle of the field, with the result that the usual two pronged spearhead on which the Town have relied this season was not in evidence.

Gregory Largely Had To Fend Alone

FROM both in midfield, there was cleverness, but the punch was lacking and Gregory was left to play very much of a lone hand, especially as there was little support from the wingers.

Gregory is too inexperienced to be expected to fend for himself against a purely defensive type of centre-half like Dodgin, but he often flickered into the game with clever footwork, a real sign of his ability.

Considering the limited support and the number of aerial passes that reached him, he did nothing to damage the good opinion that has been formed of him.

Little Came From The Wingers

DAVIES is in a bad patch and could make little of Evans, while Adam, though showing occasional skill in approach and promising a lot, his work tended too often to fizzle out before anything tangible had been achieved.

From Morton and Shanks, there was a deal of hard work. They kept chasing, tackling and covering, but even they could not prevent the defence having a bad spell when the goals came.

Some of this was due to the fact that Kelly began to be drawn out of the middle after he had stood up to Holton very well in the first half.

Jones Was Over Confident At Times

KELLY, I feel, is finding a little more difficulty in coping now that the hard grounds have come along, but he kept fighting and defending bravely.

Neither Arsenal winger was particularly dangerous and although there was a lot of trickiness about Haverly, it did not amount to a great deal in terms of danger.

So, that on the whole, Dunne and Jones did their jobs, though there were times when Jones tended to be over-confident when inside his own penalty area.

Most times this pays off, but there is such a thing as being too cool.

Baynham Criticism Not Justified

DUNNE, too, has formed the habit of using the short pass to Morton which often has the effect of putting the right-half into trouble, and there are times when more forthright clearances

FOR THE RECORDS

ARSENAL 3
Holton (2), Haverly
LUTON TOWN 0

ARSENAL: Kelsey; Charlton, Evans; Goring, Dodgin, Bowen; Clapton, Tapscott, Holton, Bloomfield, Haverly.

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

Referee: E. T. Jennings, Stourbridge.

Attendance: 45,968.

would achieve better and safer results.

With Walter Winterbottom, the England team manager watching, Baynham obviously needed to make a good impression, and the criticism of his display in certain quarters seemed to me to lack justification.

Admittedly he could be faulted when the first goal came for the somewhat tame push he gave to the ball, but the only other real error I saw came in the first half when he failed to gain possession when rushing out to challenge Holton.

To offset this there were several top-class saves and some impressive catching of high centres.

Reserves' Good Home Win

ON Good Friday, at Highbury, when they were beaten 2-0 by Arsenal Reserves, the Luton Reserves' forward line could do little right, and it was the defence which took all the honours.

On Saturday, at Kenilworth-road, the attack made amends for their poor showing against Arsenal by banging home six goals against Millwall Reserves.

Judged solely on their first half performance, the Town did not look a lot better than Millwall, for they had experienced considerable difficulty in controlling a light ball on the hard pitch, and a blustery wind did not help matters, either.

Hat-Trick For Arthur Taylor

THEY were somewhat fortunate to be a goal in front at half-time, but in the second half there was only one team in it.

Arthur Taylor scored a hat-trick in 12 minutes to put Luton well on top and McLeod and Pounder added further goals. Pounder also obtained the goal in the first half. Millwall never gave up fighting and Prior, their outside-left, scored a consolation goal to make it 6-1.

One of the most pleasing features of the game was the tremendous promise shown by L. Smith, a young amateur centre-half from Toddington. He was cool and confident in everything he did and showed many clever touches.