

OFF WENT TURNER, DOWN WENT TOWN

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Defence Did Well To Keep Down The Score

By Chiltern

BIRMINGHAM CITY 3, LUTON TOWN 0

THINGS have often gone wrong for the Town at St. Andrew's, Birmingham, but never before have they gone so completely wrong as they did on Saturday.

In addition to collecting a defeat which has frequently been their portion on this ground, they returned with Turner nursing torn ligaments in his left ankle, a much more serious development from their point of view than the loss of two points.

Yet, they began this match on a highly promising note for, settling down quickly, they had Birmingham looking very shaky in the first 10 minutes.

Had Gregory not made a fraction too much ground in anticipating a centre from Davies, he could not have failed to score, with the net yawning in front of him, and there were some who thought that the Town deserved a penalty when Shanks was bundled off the ball unceremoniously.

During this period, Birmingham looked very much ill-at-ease and showed little sign of settling down until they gained an unexpected goal in the 12th minute through BROWN who ended a long, blank spell by heading through a centre by Govan.

Six minutes later came another blow to the Town when Baynham, challenged as he went up to catch a corner from Astall, dropped the ball and ORRITT tapped it through before anyone could do anything about it.

BIGGEST STROKE OF MISFORTUNE

As if these hammer blows were not enough, the Town suffered their biggest stroke of misfortune in the 22nd minute when Turner remained on the ground after going into a tackle with Warhurst.

Carried off, his ankle was strapped at the trainers' bench, and he returned for a few minutes, but went off again and a doctor was called to examine him.

For the second half, he returned a limping passenger at outside-right, but rarely touched the ball and was so obviously in pain that he was called off a quarter of an hour from the end.

With this mishap coming on top of those two quick goals, the Town's case was hopeless and it was merely a case of whether they could keep the score within reasonable limits.

After their first success, Birmingham became transformed into a hard-hitting, rip-roaring combination, moving the ball about and generally causing the Town defence considerable trouble.

Even when the Town forwards had been at full strength, they had found the hard, first-time tackling of the home defence a disadvantage and they could rarely gain close quarters when reduced to four men.

For most of the second half, Birmingham were right on top, and the Town must have feared the worst when BROWN put on their third goal with the second half only six minutes old.

However, the Town defence displayed a solid, resolute front and, aided by some luck, which included their woodwork being hit twice, they prevented any further disaster and, in the circumstances, did well to get away so lightly.

LOST ALL THEIR PUNCH

Once Turner had left, the Town forwards lost any semblance of punch, despite some clever mid-field play by Cummins and the hard work of Davies.

Most of the time after the handicap came, Gregory was ploughing a lone furrow, which made him a sitting target for Smith, a very strong, assertive centre-half.

For Legate, this was a far more trying occasion than was his League debut the previous week, for there was never any quarter from the home defenders and, with only a limited service coming his way, it meant a largely unproductive afternoon for him.

Much switching about by the home forwards, with Brown often

appearing as a threat down the extreme wings made the task of the overworked Town defence most difficult.

Owen did just about all that was humanly possible to stem the tide, Shanks ran himself into the ground not only in defending but in trying to remedy the deficiency in the front line, and Morton, too, covered a lot of ground.

Govan, who was expected to be the main threat, was well held by Dunne, whose decisive tackling made him a bigger success than his partner, Jones, who was inclined to delay his tackle too long.

It followed that Baynham had a busy time, and he made several smart saves, with the coming of the second goal the only major blot on his display.

On this showing, Birmingham, with their rumbustious style, will take some holding on their own ground, and the Town seldom sparkle against tactics of this kind.

BIRMINGHAM CITY: Merrick; Hall, Green; Watts, Smith, Warhurst; Astall, Orritt, Brown, Murphy, Govan.

LUTON TOWN: Baynham; Dunne, Jones; Morton, Owen, Shanks; Davies, Turner, Gregory, Cummins, Legate.

Referee: J Kelly, Chorley.

Attendance: 32,000.

Other Critics said:

CITY WERE THE MORE FORCEFUL

After making due allowance for the fact that Luton were under a serious handicap for two thirds of the game, because of Gordon Turner's injury, national newspaper critics voted Birmingham the better all-round side after Saturday's match at St. Andrews.

Luton got full marks for courage, but more than one critic stated that it would have been a far better spectacle had Luton been allowed to bring on a substitute. Of course, under the present rules that is out of the question.

Here are some "quotes":

"Turner's injury apart, Luton were never in it. The home forwards were the more forceful unit, with plenty of variety in their work."—"Sunday Pictorial."

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"In the circumstances, this is hardly the time to criticise too severely the beaten Luton team. Ten men against 11 will always be too much of a handicap and, not surprisingly, it was a case of one-way traffic once Turner had departed."—"Empire News and Sunday Chronicle."

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"Here was a swashbuckling Birmingham City . . . and well Luton, handicapped for more than half the time through an injury to inside-right Gordon Turner, knew it long before the end."—"The People."

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"Hitting something like their early season form, Birmingham strode to a comfortable victory. But it was a hollow win, for Luton were without their star inside-right Gordon Turner."—"News of the World."

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"Luton were beaten almost before they had started. Birmingham, who looked more like the all-purpose power unit of old, hammered them into submission after a mere 12 minutes . . . One goal down and Luton became just another ordinary side."—"Sunday Express."

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"Birmingham won comfortably . . . Gordon Turner, Luton's star forward, went out of this game with an ankle injury in the 22nd minute, and that was almost the last we saw of the Luton attack."—"Sunday Dispatch."

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"Birmingham hustled Luton out of their stride. Playing something of their old power-brand football, they won easily. There were times when the Luton defence was all at sea."—"Sunday Graphic."

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"Luton's top-scoring inside-forward, Gordon Turner, was injured in the 22nd minute, and the game promptly deteriorated, with a disorganised Luton offering little resistance."—"News Chronicle."