

NO SPARKLE BY THE TOWN IN POOR GAME

Old Familiar Story Of No Punch In Forward Line

By Chiltern

SUNDERLAND 1, LUTON TOWN 0

NEITHER team emerged with much credit from as scrambling and unexciting a match as could be imagined, but Sunderland deserved the two points to help them along in their fight to get away from the danger zone.

From the Town, there was a drab, uninspired display, and unless they can find improvement soon, they themselves will be faced with the trouble confronting Sunderland and find a fight on their hands to retain their First Division status.

It was the old, familiar story of recent weeks so far as the forwards were concerned, with some pattern weaving in midfield which broke down all too often because of a misplaced pass, and barely even a suggestion of punch in front of goal.

They went to Roker Park with the record of not having dropped a point to Sunderland in their three League meetings, and they might have retained it had Turner accepted a simple chance early on.

With the offside trap, of which Sunderland are so fond, failing them on this occasion, the inside-right was left with only Bolland to beat, but his shot struck the goalkeeper's legs.

Thus was a golden opportunity allowed to slip by and the only other time that a goal looked imminent was when Morton all but managed to lob the ball over the head of Bolland, who caught it after a desperate leap.

On the other hand, Sunderland, with more of the play, looked the more likely scorers and Stretton made great saves from Fleming and Hedley. Mainly as a result of his work, the Town reached the interval still on level terms, a state of affairs that did not last long.

MUDDLE CAUSED GOAL

Immediately the second half began, the ball was in the Town net after a defensive muddle caused when Groves passed the ball back unnecessarily, straight from the kick-off.

It went to Owen who, perhaps waiting for Stretton's advance, hesitated. FLEMING challenged and appeared to stick out a leg past the centre-half and toe end the ball into an empty net, for Stretton had already come out.

Afterwards, Owen said that it was he who put the ball through and that Fleming had not touched it, but the centre-forward was congratulated by his colleagues and was credited with the goal.

A muddled, scrambled affair if ever there was one, but it was enough to give Sunderland precious points and the Town for-

wards, badly out of gear, never seriously suggested that they could equalise.

In desperation, Owen joined in the attack for a few minutes at the end, but the home defence was far more sound than on previous occasions, and they did not spare themselves in the tackle.

Apart from slowness in approach, and a tendency to be caught in possession, the Town found untold difficulty in combating the offside trap.

Almost completely under a cloud were the inside trio, with Turner looking as if he badly needs confidence, and Groves wanting too much time in which to work the ball and passing backwards far too often.

EVERYTHING BROKE DOWN

Persistently, everything broke down before the penalty area could be entered and Morton, who is out of form anyway, had little support and could make little of Daniel.

Only forward who looked as if he might lift the Town out of the rut in the second half was Pearce, particularly when he came inside looking for the ball.

In the "shop window" because of his transfer request, Adam made a couple of brilliant runs during the first half, but little was seen of him afterwards and Hedley marked him closely.

Once again, it was the defence who had to bear the brunt of the weaknesses in the attack.

Not always happy under pressure, they yet kept the Town in the game with a chance, with Owen battling away and Shanks and Aherne doing well against the home right wing.

Pemberton was not quite at his best, but Dunne came out well from his tussle with Elliott and would have done even better had he been closer to him on occasion.

In the end, though, it was Stretton to whom the Town owed the greatest debt for the fact that their defeat was not heavier, and the display of the forwards was a distressing experience for anyone with Luton connections.

For the fact that play never rose above a very low standard, some blame could be attached to the conditions, which were difficult because of a tricky, gusty wind.

This caused the white ball to be difficult to control and made accurate passing a matter of considerable difficulty, but it did not excuse all the mistakes and errors of judgment.

SUNDERLAND: Bolland; Hedley, McDonald; Anderson, Daniel, Aitken; Bingham, Hope, Fleming, Shackleton, Elliott.

LUTON TN—Stretton; Dunne, Aherne; Pemberton, Owen, Shanks; Pearce, Turner, Morton, Groves, Adam.

Referee—J H Clough, Bolton.
Attendance: 28,473.

Other Critics

CALLED TOWN POOR AND GUILLESS

"Clueless," Guileless," "Surprisingly poor," "Disappointing." This was just a selection of the extremely unflattering adjectives applied to Luton after their lacklustre display against Sunderland.

Critics of national newspapers really let Luton have it, and they were unanimous in their condemnation of the Town's display.

Sunderland fared little better in the Sunday newspapers, but at least they scored a goal, even though it was a scrambling sort of affair, and they were given credit for their fighting spirit.

Here are some quotes — and they do not make very encouraging reading:

"Luton were a surprisingly poor side, with nothing to offer in attack and Sunderland were very little better, although they had much more of the play." *News of the World*.

"Luton hadn't got a clue!" *Empire News and Sunday Chronicle*.

"On the whole it was a most disappointing display . . . Sunderland might have won by a bigger margin but for the goalkeeping of Stretton." *Sunday Dispatch*.

"Luton may claim their technique to be superior, but they sadly lacked a marksman. Time and again their approach work broke down when a shot was needed." *Sunday Express*.

"This defence-minded Sunderland made it a tough job for Luton. Luton's guileless long passing gave Daniel and his partners the little extra help they needed." *Sunday Pictorial*.

"Neither side looked like scoring in a scrappy game in which the finer points were seldom seen. Luton can have no excuses." *The People*.