

TOWN EQUALISED THREE TIMES AT READING

Found Third Division Side A Tough Proposition

By Chiltern

READING 3, LUTON TOWN 3

THIS could have turned out to be another Stockport from the Town point of view. Finding from somewhere that extra fight and fire that most Third Division teams seem to discover when facing First Division opposition, Reading in the semi-final of the Southern Floodlit Cup at Elm Park on Tuesday gave the Town a considerable run around in the first half.

In the end, the Town were a bit fortunate to force a replay at Kenilworth-road next Monday.

Reading had the advantage of an early goal when after nine minutes, DIXON shot through from close range after a corner had been deflected, something that caught the defence flat-footed.

Until the 29th minute, when TURNER scored from the penalty spot after Groves had been pulled down, the Town rarely looked like scoring. Even this penalty expert was nearly off the mark on this occasion because his shot struck the inside of a post and rebounded into the opposite corner of the net.

Six minutes from half-time, Reading regained the lead following another corner, badly placed this time, but WHEELER popped up to flick at the ball which struck the surprised Baynham and rebounded into the net.

Heavy pressure came at the Town end in the early stages of the second half and, in one hectic period, Hawkes kicked off the goal-line and there were three corners in quick succession.

COOL TURNER GOAL

However, there was some measure of improvement from the Town and TURNER coolly equalised after 58 minutes when he took a grand through pass by Cullen and carefully steered the ball wide of the oncoming Jones.

This state of affairs lasted just two minutes and then Baynham, going down to a shot by Dixon, could not retain his grip on the greasy ball which rebounded to WHEELER who had the easiest task in the world to tap it through.

After this, Dixon struck a post

with a lob that Baynham seemed to think was going wide and then, with more use being made of the through pass, McLeod scored, only to have the goal disallowed for offside.

Another through pass and a centre by McLeod led to the Town equalising for the third time with 11 minutes left. Adam's drive hit the bar and GROVES deliberately headed through the rebound.

While Reading's strong, direct methods generally gave them a larger share of the play, they faded in the latter part of the second half and the Town could have made certain of appearing in the final had there been more thrust in attack.

Here, there was too much holding on to the ball, particularly on the part of Groves and Cullen, though the latter had much to do with how the first two goals came and was a hard worker again.

WORRYING TIME FOR TOWN

Turner was always dangerous in the region of the penalty area but his partner, Adam, had a poor match and much of his finishing was very weak. With the ball in front of him, McLeod looked as if he could be a threat, but there was not enough of this sort of material served up.

For the defence, this was a worrying match against the eager Reading forwards and, of them, McGuffie and the hard-battling Owen came out best.

Maybe Pacey felt some effects of his bruised thigh muscle, because he was not so assertive as usual and Wheeler was a continual menace to the Town.

Dangerous, too, was King because Hawkes' judgment was often at fault and Dunne, after being caught "in between" several times in the first half, settled down later.

Conditions were far from good. The match started in a haze which did not improve the lighting effects and then came heavy rain that caused the pitch to become slippery and treacherous.

Probably through a combination of all these circumstances, Baynham was not the supremely confident goalkeeper we know him to be, and he did not cut out high crosses in his usual style.

READING: Jones; McLaren, Reeves; Anderton, Davies, Evans; King, Wheeler, Dixon, Walker, Harrison.

LUTON TOWN: Baynham; Dunne, Hawkes; McGuffie, Owen, Pacey; Adam, Turner, Groves, Cullen, McLeod.

Referee: K. G. Aston, Ilford.
Attendance: 10,881.