

DIVISION 3 TEAM HAD A SHOCK FOR THE TOWN

Attack Weaknesses Led To Floodlit Cup Exit

By Chiltern

LUTON TOWN 0, READING 1

AFTER having held Reading to a draw at Elm Park, it was thought that the Town would not have much difficulty in succeeding in the replay at Kenilworth-road on Monday and thus qualifying to meet Portsmouth in the final of the Southern Floodlit Cup, of which they are holders.

However, they had a considerable shock against the strong, hard-fighting Third Division side who, after thoroughly deserving their first half lead, resisted heavy pressure after the interval.

On a tacky, sticky sort of surface, the go-ahead, first-time methods of the visitors proved to be far more effective than those of the Town, who persisted in keeping the ball too close.

Nor was their passing crisp enough, nor accurate enough, and many times the ball was intercepted and attacks broke down.

With Brown still out of action, the problem posed by his absence was underlined by the way in which the tall Davies was able to dominate the middle of the field.

As a variation, Cullen led the forwards on this occasion, but was blanketed out of the picture and generally had a thin time, though he missed a great chance of scoring his first goal since his recall to the first team.

Cullen was one who kept the ball much too close, and another was Groves, who had a nightmare match in which nothing went right for him.

With weaknesses in these two positions, far too much responsibility was thrust on Turner, who tried desperately hard.

TURNER CLOSELY WATCHED

However, there was evidence of keen planning, because Turner was rarely allowed a clear shot at goal, and there were usually a couple of defenders marking him closely.

Yet he came near to gaining an equaliser in the second half, when he struck the bar, and again when he found Jones in the path of a crashing drive.

The goal that was to prove vital came in the 27th minute, when DIXON went up to head a centre from Whitehouse just under the bar and over the clutching hands of Baynham, who was a little out of his goal.

Previously, Whitehouse had shot against the inside of a post, and, afterwards, Dixon missed an open goal by shooting too high from point-blank range.

The Town had their slices of bad luck, and the whole course of the game might have been entirely different had McGuffie been able to keep his shot a few inches lower, when, just after the start, he came striding through and crashed the ball against the bar.

With no sign of improvement

from the forward formation, Pacey was moved to centre-forward ten minutes after half-time, with Cullen going to inside-left and Groves to left-half.

Pacey livened things up a bit and was unfortunate to have a fine header kicked off the goal-line.

Reading were still dangerous in snap raids, during one of which Dixon hit the bar.

PENALTY INCIDENT

Then came the incident that caused much speculation afterwards, when there was a brush between Baynham and Wheeler, and the former had a penalty awarded against him.

Obviously the referee thought this penalisation was sufficient, because he did not even caution Baynham.

This seemed to be the end of the road for the Town, but Penfold came up to take the kick, which he sent rather carelessly wide.

In the closing minutes the Town threw everything into attack, but the strong, robust Reading defence stood firm, though Whitby nearly took the game into extra time with a shot that was scrambled off the line.

Whitby confirmed the promise he showed at Newcastle with a workmanlike display in which he used the ball very well, and it might have been better had he been brought more into the game in the second half.

As things turned out, it was McLeod who had more of the ball, and although he often looked dangerous, his finishing was not of the best.

By and large the Town allowed themselves to be upset by the hustle and bustle of the opposition, but their finishing was very poor.

There could not be much complaint about the defence, which is carrying a heavy burden at the moment. There was strength at half-back, and Dunne was the more successful full-back.

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

READING: Jones; McLaren, Penfold; Anderton, Davies, Evans; Wheeler, Whitehouse, Dixon, Walker, Harrison.

Referee: C. A. R. Worn, London. Attendance: 4,606.