

TOWN LACKED PUNCH IN Highbury Mud

By CHILTERN

ARSENAL 1, LUTON TOWN 0

THOSE who expected a similar thriller at Highbury on Saturday were disappointed because on a very heavy pitch on which water was still standing in some parts, both teams found difficulty in controlling the ball.

Nor was it possible to judge a pass with accuracy and the result was much of a scramble in which defences were very much on top almost throughout.

Bearing in mind the happenings of the previous day, Arsenal left out Evans, Ward and Fotheringham and made, in all, four defensive changes.

This had the desired effect, because the gaping holes that appeared down the middle and down their left flank the previous day were effectively plugged.

Even so, the Town had their chances to score goals, particularly in the last ten minutes of the first half when three distinct opportunities came their way.

Best of them fell to Brown who shot straight at Kelsey from close in, though credit must be given to the goalkeeper for his quick advance. Then Brown headed over from short range and, on the stroke of half-time, a cross from Gregory flashed dangerously across the face of the goal.

These were the distinct chances that came the way of the Town and acceptance of even one of them might have made a deal of difference to the course of this match.

GOAL AFTER WONDER SAVE

At that stage, Arsenal were clinging to a lead given them after 20 minutes by BLOOMFIELD in rather fortunate circumstances because the ball came back to him after Baynham had made a wonder save from his first point-blank shot.

Even then, the ball just rolled over the line, as McNally and Kelly tried to scramble it away.

When it was seen at the start of the second half that Vic Groves was a limping passenger at outside-left, the Town's chances of gaining at least a point seemed to be very bright indeed.

However, despite some attractive work in midfield, much of it too close for these conditions, the Town showed little sign of punch in front of goal.

They were unlucky when Gregory was pulled down headlong inside the penalty area as Dodgin ran across to challenge, but the expected penalty did not

materialise because the referee decided to give an indirect free-kick.

All this brought was a tremendous scramble in which the packed Arsenal defence prevailed.

As the closing stages approached, the Town made desperate attempts to secure the equaliser, with Pacey and even McNally joining in the attacks.

Nearest to scoring was Bingham with a curling centre that nearly deceived Kelsey, but switching about by the forwards failed to unsettle the Arsenal defence decisively, though it needed all Kelsey's ability to prevent John Groves from snatching a shock goal in the last minute.

On the grounds of their superior midfield football, I thought the Town unlucky not to have gained a point, but there was a tendency on the part of some members of the front line to try to drag the ball through the mud, instead of making use of the long pass.

One offender was Cummins, who negated much of his brilliant footwork for this reason, and there seemed no earthly explanation why Adam should desert the comparative dryness of the wings for the thick mud of the middle so many times.

Once again, Bingham, with less scope than on the previous day, was the best of the forwards, and he was continually seeking a way in which to break down this defence.

Continually, Gregory sought to get out of the midfield mud and exploit his tactics of the previous day but, hard though he worked they did not come off on this occasion.

Captain for the day, Brown might have been expected to have been the man for the occasion, but he did not reach his acknowledged best and his finishing was not strong enough.

Plenty of praise can be handed out to the weakened

(Continued in next column)

In the return match at Highbury, however, Luton lost much of the brilliance they had displayed 24 hours earlier, and the Gunners took partial revenge for that Kenilworth-road thrashing. Strangely enough, the Sunday newspaper critics accredit Luton's failure at Highbury to . . . poor finishing.

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"Minus their stars—Bob Morton, Gordon Turner, Sid Owen and Seamus Dunne—Luton, nevertheless, played better football, but lost because they had so little zip near goal. It was only during a ten-minute spell before half-time that they looked like equalising."

—"News of the World."

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"If they (Luton) had had another livewire like Billy Bingham, one of the few players in the match to use his head to save his feet, or even another like inside-left George Cummins, they might have won."—"The People."

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"Luton played pretty football, with left-half Dave Pacey, Bingham and inside men Allan Brown and George Cummins producing the clever stuff."—"Sunday Express."

(Town, continued from prec. col.)

defence for the gallant way in which they fought. John Groves rivalled Docherty for the amount of ground he covered and the amount of effective work he did.

Once again, Kelly came in to give a rugged, capable display, as he can always be relied upon to do and, without being ambitious, he rarely found himself in serious trouble.

In defensive mood, Pacey was strong, too, and Hawkes put another feather in his cap for the way in which he held the speedy Clapton again.

After his long absence from the team at full-back, it was a lot to ask of McNally to be pitchforked into this match, but although he was out in his judgment and use of the ball at times, on-one fault him on the score of enthusiasm and fighting spirit.

Baynham earned his money for some daring saves in the early part of the match and he could count himself most unfortunate to have been beaten at all.

ARSENAL: Kelsey; Wills, McCullough; Docherty, Dodgin, Petts; Clapton, Groves (V), Julians, Bloomfield, Henderson.

LUTON TOWN: Baynham; McNally, Hawkes; Groves (J), Kelly, Pacey; Bingham, Brown, Gregory, Cummins, Adam.

Referee: R. E. Smith, Newport, Mon.