

Bingham, Gregory Found Arsenal Gaps

GUNNERS REVENGED BEFORE 56,000 GATE

By CHILTERN

58/59

IN view of their depressing recent record, combined with the fact that both Turner and Morton had to stand down because of illness, few Town fans could have been confident about their team's chances of accounting for Arsenal at Kenilworth-road on Boxing Day..

Yet, in a thrilling match, they succeeded by 6—3 and the margin would have been wider had it not been for Kelsey's brilliant goalkeeping.

On the following day at Highbury, the Town's handicap was increased by the fact that Dunne and Owen were not available, but, due to some stout defensive work, they lost by only a single goal and could have won had their forwards shown more finishing power.

Rather surprisingly, the attendance at Luton was only 21,870, but the return drew the biggest gate of the day, 56,501.

LUTON TOWN 6, ARSENAL 3

In a shock start, both teams scored within the first five minutes and Arsenal were rocked when, in the third minute, Gregory, brought into the side at the last minute, streaked down the left wing, pulling the defence across so that, from his centre, ADAM had merely to tap the ball through.

It was JULIANS, late signing from Leyton Orient, making his Arsenal debut, who secured the equaliser after Baynham had made a point-blank save from Ward.

However, the Town, never regarded as expert exponents on this glue-pot type of pitch were the more dangerous and Gregory again provided an unmissable opening when he took Fotheringham out to the right wing and crossed the ball for BROWN to score from close range.

Shortly afterwards, there came a strange decision by the referee when, after he had turned down justifiable claims for a penalty, Gregory crashed the ball through but the goal was disallowed on the grounds of offside, so the referee informed me afterwards.

That could have been a serious turn of affairs for the Town who were unlucky not to increase their lead through Bingham and Cummins before half-time.

SENSATIONAL START

Like the first half, the second brought a sensational start because, with only two minutes gone, BINGHAM jumped above Evans to head through a finely placed cross from John Groves.

Three minutes later, Arsenal struck back through EVANS who scored from the penalty spot after Pacey had brought down Vic Groves, though whether or not the offence took place in the area, was open to argument.

At that stage, there seemed to be some doubt about a Town victory, but then came a burst of scoring that brought them three goals in 12 minutes.

First was obtained by GREGORY following good work by Cummins and a sliced shot by Pacey. This was quickly followed by the best goal of the match, from BINGHAM, who ran on to a centre from Adam and crashed the ball low into the far corner of the net.

More good work by Cummins enabled BROWN to secure his second success of the match and, with 23 minutes still to go, it seemed that the Town might reach their highest score in the First Division.

However, Arsenal, though their defence was still weak, fought back, and BLOOMFIELD made things look a little better from their point of view by heading through a centre from Clapton after 76 minutes.

But there were no other signs of further Arsenal successes, and it was Cummins who came closest with a tremendous drive that was no more than inches wide.

For this somewhat unexpected victory, the Town owed much to their appreciation of what was necessary on this occasion. Noting the weakness of Fotheringham, who was very slow on the turn, they exploited the through pass, and with Bingham obviously having the beating of Evans, made use of the Irish International's speed.

Bingham was in brilliant form,

was altogether too much for this crumbling defence, and this was easily his best showing in the first team.

Many attacks were begun by Cummins, despite the fact that he sometimes hung on too long, and there was a material improvement by Brown, who ploughed through the mud with some of his old effectiveness.

Somewhat spasmodic, but still a highly potential danger, was Adam, and this forward line really went to town in no uncertain style.

TOWN DEFENCE MORE SOLID

Conditions, of course, were all in favour of forwards because of the difficulty defenders found in making a quick turn.

Much more solid than that of their opponents was the Town defence, with Owen holding Julians pretty comfortably and John Groves turning in another of those fine performances we have come to expect from him at wing-half.

With Pacey completing a strong line, the Town had a considerable pull here, as they did at full-back.

In view of the fact that Dunne seems to be on the way back to his best form, it was unfortunate that he should be injured, and, with Hawkes in determined mood, there was little scope for the Arsenal wingers.

Not half so many opportunities came the way of Baynham to show his skill as Kelsey had, but both goalkeepers really looked what they are—in the top class.

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

ARSENAL: Kelsey; Wills, Evans; Ward, Fotheringham, Docherty; Clapton, Groves (V), Julians, Bloomfield, Henderson. Referee: K. Stokes, Newark.

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 agility 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)

WHAT THE OTHER CRITICS SAID

BOXING DAY

After a long spell in Soccer doldrums, Luton hit peak form against the high-flying Arsenal Gunners. The Town ran up their highest goals tally of the season—and also ran the Arsenal men off their feet. "This was Luton at their best," was the view of most daily newspaper critics.

"Had it not been for Jack Kelsey, in his international form, Luton's forwards could have created a cricket score. Although Billy Bingham beat him twice early in the second half, there were equally good shots—if not better—that Kelsey saved from him."—"News Chronicle."

"Larruping Luton without Bob Morton and Gordon Turner produced their best display of the season. Luton did everything right on the glue-pot pitch; they cut out the frills, cut out the close work and made the ball do all the running."—"Daily Herald."

SATURDAY

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.

"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."

"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."

"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.