

TRAGEDY HIT TOWN IN THE DYING SECONDS

Blackpool Had Reprieve

In "Extra Time"

By CHILTERN

BLACKPOOL 1, LUTON TOWN 1

A MERE 25 seconds. That was the margin by which the Town failed to qualify for the F.A. Cup semi-finals at the first attempt at Bloomfield-road on Saturday.

There was just that short space of time left and the referee was already looking at his watch when the sensational happened to turn the triumphant Town players into dejected figures, completely taken aback by the totally unexpected.

When BINGHAM headed the Town into the lead with only six minutes left, it looked as if the favourites were out and the Town had only to hang on to make club history.

Hang on they did, comfortably enough until those dramatic last seconds when Blackpool were presented with a gift goal.

What had to be the last Blackpool attack developed, not very dangerously in midfield, and, as the ball reached the edge of the penalty area, it went to Hawkes.

He had the time to kick it anywhere and, if he had sent it into touch, there would scarcely have been time for the throw-in to be taken.

Instead, he turned around and tried to push it back to Baynham. Unfortunately, he failed to get enough power behind it. CHARNLEY saw the possibilities and nipped in smartly before the astounded defence could sense danger.

Baynham was left high and dry, and Charnley pushed the ball for the far corner, and all the Town could do was to watch it roll just inside the post.

REPRIEVED IN EXTRA TIME

As Charnley was mobbed by his relieved colleagues the whistle went for time and, by my watch, the half had lasted 46 minutes, due to injuries, so that Blackpool's reprieve literally came in extra time.

The Town players looked as if they just could not believe what had happened from them as they walked off the field in a vastly different atmosphere to the one they had every reason to expect confidently a minute before this tragic happening.

Bingham's fifth goal in Cup-ties this season, headed through from Morton's centre, had seemed to be the Town's passport to the semi-finals and Blackpool were very fortunate indeed to have a second chance.

All through the first half, the Town were the better, more constructive team, making progress by clever midfield work and generally looking the more dangerous.

Twice, Brown went close to scoring against his old colleagues and it was a most satisfactory first half showing from the Town, except that they had not obtained the goal they deserved.

In a tense atmosphere, much of the play was hurried, but it was always hard, with the Town forwards finding scoring openings difficult to work out against this very tight defence.

On the other hand, the Blackpool forwards, mostly trying to make ground by hitting the ball hard and following up, were much in the grip of the Town defence.

DANGEROUS SPELL

Early second half play was much on the same lines, with neither goalkeeper being troubled much, but then came the most dangerous Blackpool spell of the match.

Mounting attacks of a more furious nature than anything they

had produced previously, Blackpool made it a testing time for the Town and Baynham saved brilliantly from Charnley.

For a time, the Town's raids were confined to breakaway in one of which Morton shot inches wide while, in another, Gregory drove over from a good position.

Then came the high drama of the last minutes to provide a finish that will be talked about for a long time.

From the Town defence there was a magnificent display which blunted the power of the Blackpool forward line to such an extent that Baynham was a spectator for quite long periods.

Before the match there was some anxiety about McNally and Hawkes facing such famous wingers as Matthews and Perry, but we need not have worried.

Both approached their tasks in a confident frame of mind and the undoubted threat from the extreme wings was cut down to a minimum.

ROCK-LIKE BARRIER

Only when the wingers wandered inside was there any danger, and it was most unfortunate that Hawkes's late blunder should mar his excellent display.

There was great strength, too, in the middle line, with Owen never putting a foot wrong or ever looking likely to. Against a lesser player, Charnley, always working hard, would have been a distinct danger.

But Owen was a rock-like barrier in the middle, and attack after attack foundered against him.

Inside-forwards, Mudie and Durie, were kept very quiet indeed by the hard-tackling and good positional play of Groves and Pacey, who were both more constructive than their Blackpool counterparts.

Forward, there was a brilliant first half display from Cummins, during which he distributed the ball with almost uncanny accuracy and Blackpool could never completely subdue him.

Most dangerous of the line was Bingham, who had the beating of Garrett, and might, with benefit, have been given more of the ball.

To try to break down this tenacious defence, Morton and Brown worked hard and willingly, and with quite a lot of success, and it was through Morton intelligently moving out of the middle that the goal came.

Gregory's finishing was not so good as it can be, and he did not always take up a good position, but he did a useful job in coming back to challenge Matthews at times.

BLACKPOOL: Farm; Armfield, Garrett; Hauser, Gratrix, Kelly; Matthews, Mudie, Charnley, Durie, Perry.

LUTON TOWN: Baynham; McNally, Hawkes; Groves, Owen, Pacey; Bingham, Brown, Morton, Cummins, Gregory.

Referee: K. Howley, Middlesbrough. Attendance: 30,634.

WHAT THE CRITICS SAID

"What a finish! What a breath-taking, unexpected finish! Blackpool dramatically equalised with the last kick of the match. So they are still in the Cup, but hundreds of their fans will never know why. They had left the ground bitterly disappointed when with Luton leading 1-0 it seemed that all was lost."—"Sunday Dispatch."

"Luton should win the replay at Kenilworth-road. They showed more skill and a shade more power—and that's something to boast about for visitors to Blackpool."—"Sunday Express."

"There wasn't a weak link in this Luton side. Baynham was safe. Full-back Brendan McNally and Hawkes tackled well. Sid Owen was a tower of strength at centre-half, and wing-halves John Groves—the man of the match—and Dave Pacey never let Jackie Mudie or Dave Durie escape their tenacious grip."—"The People."

"Sensational—there's no other word for it. Read on and rejoice at the biggest, most fantastic footballing finale of the season, one which swept Blackpool and Luton through to a sixth-round Cup replay on Wednesday."—"News of the World."

"What a fantastic finish! Cup favourites Blackpool were as good as out when they were gifted an astonishing goal in the last second."—"Sunday Pictorial."

"The only time Blackpool got together at Bloomfield-road was when they showed their affection for their long-legged centre-forward Charnley, who had pushed out an optimistic boot seconds before the final whistle and put just enough spin on the ball to carry it an inch or so inside Luton's goal."—"Daily Telegraph."