

A BLINDER AGAINST MATTHEWS,

THEN A BLUNDER

Seconds Away From The Semi-final

WHAT happened in the dying seconds of the match at Blackpool will probably be the subject of nightmares for the Town players for a long time to come, and nothing could have been so dramatic as the reprieve the Seaside gained.

By the referee's watch, there were just 25 seconds to go when the most tragic thing that has happened to the Town in years occurred.

They were just that infinitesimal margin of time away from their first-ever semi-final appearance and the fans were preparing to give the players a welcome in

accordance with their great performance.

Fans Could Hardly Move For Dejection

ONE minute, the Town fans were a roaring, excited lot, making plans for a semi-final trip wherever it happened to be.

The next, they could hardly move for dejection at the completely unexpected equaliser.

Normal time had run out and the match was in time added for injury stoppages when Blackpool made what had to be their last despairing move to save the game.

From midfield, the ball was worked to the region of the Town's penalty area, where it went to Hawkes, who was facing the Blackpool goal.

There seemed no danger at all because Hawkes had the time to put the ball anywhere for safety.

The Shot Rolled In Agonisingly

INSTEAD, he turned around with it and sought to push it back to Baynham.

However, there was never sufficient pace behind the ball to reach the goalkeeper and Charnley, showing good anticipation, nipped in between to push it into the far corner of the net.

All the Town defenders could do was to stand and watch it roll, agonisingly slowly it seemed, towards the target, and even then it got in only just inside the post and possibly scraped it in the process.

Charnley disappeared under a crowd of excited colleagues, and before the ball could be returned to the centre of the field, the final whistle had gone.

Thought Of Hawkes In His Anguish

SO close was it that many Town fans were asking each other afterwards whether the goal had counted, but the Town players had no doubt about it, and they looked as if they could scarcely believe their eyes.

Bewildered, they left the field dejectedly, instead of making the triumphant, mobbed exit it would have been but for that late blow.

Several thought of Hawkes in

his anguish and gave him a sympathetic pat on the back and Dunne ran quickly from the trainer's bench to put an arm around him and walk with him off the field.

There Is No Future In Thinking Of Past

IN the dressing room there was a great deal of sympathy for Hawkes and he was told by officials that he must forget what happened and write it off as one of those unlucky things that happens to most players during the course of their careers.

That, of course, was absolutely right, because it is no use crying over spilt milk.

The same goes for the whole team, who will, undoubtedly, have forgotten their disappointment by Wednesday and will be in the right frame of mind for the replay.

There certainly is no future in thinking back on what happened in the past, no matter how recent it may be.

Bingham's Goal Seemed To Be Winner

WHEN Bingham obtained the Town's goal six minutes from the end, it definitely looked as if that was the end of the Cup favourites and, of course, it should have been.

Bingham ran into the middle to go low to head in a return pass from Morton.

Farm seemed to misjudge the ball, as did Hauser, who was also on the goal-line and, finally, it looked as if the ball went in off the right-half's leg.

That brought tremendous scenes of enthusiasm from the Luton contingent and seemed to take the steam out of Blackpool, so that there seemed to be no particular danger of a late equaliser.

Town Played The Better Football

HAD the Town got through by the only goal, they would have deserved their success because they were much the better side all through the first half.

Their midfield football was clever and cultured, in marked contrast to the methods adopted by Blackpool.

Whereas the Town worked the ball from defence and always tried to be constructive, Blackpool's chief tactics were to give the ball a good, hard thump and follow up as quickly as possible.

This failed to even dent the Town defence in the first half, when Brown twice went close to giving them the lead.

Brown Out Of Luck With Great Drive

THE first time was after only two minutes, when he ran on to a beautifully-timed pass by Cummins and, from an angle,

beat the diving Farm and, also, unfortunately, the far post as well.

Brown was out of luck, too, when he made a brilliant first-time shot on the turn, and I have the word of Baynham, who was dead in line with the ball, that it missed the post by only a couple of inches.

By half-time, with the score-sheet still blank and having demonstrated their superiority, the Town were completely confident of their ability to advance another stage.

Defence Weathered A Blackpool Storm

EARLY in the second half there was little in it, with neither goalkeeper seriously trouble, and then Blackpool began to improve and had a rousing spell, during which they forced the Town right back on the defensive.

During this, Baynham earned his bonus with a brilliant diving save from Charnley, twice Pacey stepped in to block shots, and Durie missed a good chance.

However, the Town weathered this storm, which lasted quite a long time, and when the forwards came back into the game a splendid chance fell to Gregory in front of goal.

He swung away at the ball from the region of the penalty spot and, to the Town supporters' chagrin, sent it too high.

Town Defence Gave Rocklike Display

AGAIN, Gregory got clear of the defence, but this time was penalised for offside, though there could have been very little in it.

On then to the tense, sensational finish and there were many Blackpool fans who had given up hope who did not see the equaliser.

Full marks goes to the Town's defence for a rocklike display and the tragedy from Hawkes's point of view is that he had a great match against Matthews.

Time and time again he dispossessed the old maestro, he showed good positional sense and played Matthews fairly and squarely.

Both The Full-backs Were Splendid

THIS display by Hawkes and that of McNally, who had the measure of Perry, removed the doubts we had felt before the match about the full-back positions.

Both were splendid and McNally carried on as gallantly as ever after receiving a painful ankle injury.

Tower of strength to his side

was Owen, who throughout the match never put a foot wrong, despite the fact that Charnley was always a potential danger.

It was an immaculate centre-half display by this great player, who so much deserves to make a semi-final appearance.

Inside Men Put Out Of The Game

SO, too, do Groves and Pacey for their tenacious displays, which enabled them to put the Blackpool inside men out of the game.

Of the two, I made Pacey just the better because he was slightly more forthright than Groves who, however, was always in the thick of things and his tackling was hard and fearless.

There was not a great deal for Baynham to do, because the path was so often barred to the home forwards, but he always gave an impression of complete confidence when he was brought into action.

Cummins Was The Arch-schemer

FROM the forwards there was some brilliant football in the first half, with Cummins the arch-schemer.

Often his use of the ball was almost uncannily accurate and he sprayed passes in all directions.

On this showing the Eire International is among the best inside-forwards in the game.

However, the line as a whole had to contend with a Blackpool defence that lived up to its reputation of being the hardest to break down in the First Division.

Their covering was excellent, and Gratrix was a great stumbling block down the middle.

Bingham Was The Most Dangerous Winger

MORTON did his best to take him out of the middle—that was how the goal came, but few clear-cut chances fell to the centre-forward, despite the hard way in which he worked.

Brown had a splendid first half, but the line as a whole fell away for a spell in the second half, when Blackpool managed to get on top.

As for Bingham, he was the most dangerous winger on the field, and the Town will have noted for use on Wednesday the mastery he obtained over Garrett.

Gregory did a good job when he came back to harass Matthews, as he had been told to do, but, at times, he showed a lack of positional sense.

Yet he got himself into a position from which he could miss a chance, and there is always the chance that he will score.