

Last-kick goal saves Blackpool

By HARRY PETERSON

BLACKPOOL 1 LUTON TOWN 1

WHAT a finish! What a dramatic finale to a grim struggle as Luton, a goal ahead and the last seconds of injury time ticking away, struggled to hold on to their lead.

So let's recall that final added minute when all seemed over except the victory celebration . . . when Blackpool were fighting hard for an equaliser, yet rarely making much impression on the strong Luton defence.

It was the Blackpool Tower to a Luton hat that Town were booked for the semi-finals as Matthews wandered into the middle, collected the ball from Durie, and tried to find Charnley with a through pass.

. . . Just inside the post.

The Luton supporters breathed again as Hawkes intercepted, but their hearts sank as the full-back, instead of clearing upfield, turned and attempted a back-pass to goalkeeper Baynham.

For Town fans even worse was to follow, for Charnley anticipated the move, nipped in smartly and got his right foot to the ball as Baynham dashed out of goal.

Slowly the ball rolled goalwards . . . gently it trickled into the net just inside a post . . . and Blackpool were saved just 20 seconds—according to the referee's watch—from the final whistle.

There wasn't even time to kick the ball upfield to start the game. It couldn't have been closer, but it was tough on Luton, who had the edge for most of the game—particularly in attack.

But though Town were on top, rarely did they create clear-cut openings. And the game seemed to be petering out to a goalless draw when, six minutes from the end, Bingham found Morton on the right wing.

The winger moved into the middle, met the centre-forward's inch-perfect cross and head goalwards. Farm had the ball covered, but a slight deflection by team-mate Hauser saw the header spin away under the keeper's body into the net.

Lucky for sure, yet Blackpool couldn't have complained had they not grabbed that last-minute equaliser. They rarely matched Luton's craft, ball control and precision passing.

No weakness

There wasn't a weak link in the Town side. Baynham was safe, full-backs McNally and Hawkes tackled well, Owen was a tower of strength at centre-half, and wing-halves Groves—the man of the match—and Pacey never let Mudie or Durie escape their tenacious grip.

In attack Bingham was the star, with Morton and Cummins close behind. Brown and Gregory also had their bright moments, but faded in the second half when the latter had the miss of the match, blazing high and wide with only Farm to beat.

In Blackpool's one purple patch Charnley, Mudie and Durie went close, but the forwards never functioned as a line.

But though the front line never looked the part there was little wrong with the defence. Armfield, Hauser and Gratrix were great, and it was chiefly due to this trio that Blackpool lived to fight another day.

FORM REPORT

BLACKPOOL: Farm 8; Armfield 8; Garrett 6; *HAUSER 9; Gratrix 8; Kelly H. 7; Matthews 8; Mudie 6; Charnley 7; Durie 5; Perry 6.

LUTON: Baynham 8; McNally 8; Hawkes 7; *GROVES 9; Owen 8; Pacey 8; Bingham 8; Brown 6; Morton 7; Cummins 7.



So near—yet so far. It's nearly a goal for Luton as Blackpool's goalkeeper, Farm, leaps to tip a Bingham shot over the bar.