

SAME STUFF AFTER THE CUP TENSION

Depleted Town Held The Handicapped Chelsea

By CHILTERN

CHELSEA 3, LUTON TOWN 3

AFTER the tension of the mid-week Cup replay with Blackpool, this was rather tame stuff. Not only were the Town without four of their regulars, but Chelsea were badly handicapped by losing their goalkeeper, Matthews, after only 12 minutes with concussion.

Only thing that really lifted this match out of the rut was an exciting spell at the start of the second half when three goals came in seven minutes.

That, as things turned out, was the end of the scoring and there was a lot of scrappiness after that, with the Town holding on to a point.

When, a minute after half-time, they found themselves 3-1 down, prospects of a tonic result before the Cup-tie seemed grim indeed.

However, they roused themselves from the lethargy that had marked much of their first-half play, to rally and draw level.

Crossing over 2-1 down, Chelsea were hammered further into the lead by BLUNSTONE and then the Town hit back. McGUFFIE followed on to a through pass from Morton to harass the deputy goalkeeper, Tindall, into a mistake and reduce the arrears after 47 minutes.

Five minutes later, TURNER headed the Town level after some bright work by Morton and Bingham.

McGUFFIE UNLUCKY

Soon afterwards, McGuffie was dead out of luck with a drive that crashed against the bar with Tindall well beaten.

There was plenty of evidence early on that the minds of several of the Town players were firmly fixed on the following Saturday, and who could blame them for that?

In seven minutes they found themselves a goal down when a header by BRABROOK from a Greaves centre crept into the net off the inside of the post.

Five minutes later came the tragic happening when Bingham, running strongly on to a pass by Morton, collided with the oncoming Matthews, who stayed down in obvious pain.

It was a pure accident, but it cost Chelsea a goal because the ball ran loose to TURNER, who had the easiest of tasks to put it into the back of the net.

Reduced to 10 men, Chelsea still showed plenty of fight, but it was something of a surprise when they managed to regain the lead after 28 minutes through NICHOLAS.

Collier went down to, but could not hold, a hard drive from Greaves and Nicholas was on hand to hit the rebound home.

For the Town this was a difficult occasion from more than one point of view. Not only were they without key-men but they had the thought of the semi-final and possible injuries very much in mind.

TOOK THEIR CHANCES

For Collier, there was an unexpected chance to make his League debut and one which, on the whole, he took very well. Naturally enough, he showed signs of nerves in the first half, but throughout the second, he showed complete confidence and made some excellent saves.

At the eleventh hour, McGuffie was pressed into service not only for the first time in the senior side this season, but for his first game ever at inside-right.

And he came through it successfully because he linked up well with Morton and his strong forays suggested that he could well settle down in this position.

Best of the forwards in the first

half, particularly, was Morton, but he was only marginally ahead of Bingham, who gave Whittaker a real run-around.

There were times when Turner showed flashes of his old form and his two goals were evidence that his opportunistic powers are returning.

Major disappointment was the form of Gregory, who was not much in the game, almost certainly because he aggravated a thigh muscle injury.

Strength was shown once again in the half-back line where both Groves and Pacey were effective in defence and attack and Kelly put up a competent show in the middle.

Although both McNally and Hawkes were bothered at times by the speed and cleverness of the Chelsea wingers, they stuck grimly to their task and neither will ever be beaten for lack of courage, or want of trying.

CHELSEA. — Matthews; Sillett (P), Whittaker; Mortimore, Scott, Crowther; Brabrook, Greaves, Tindall, Nicholas, Blunstone.

LUTON TOWN. — Collier; McNally, Hawkes; Groves, Kelly, Pacey; Bingham, McGuffie, Morton, Turner, Gregory.

Referee.—K. Collinge, Sale.

Attendance.—29,172.

WHAT THE OTHER CRITICS SAID

Luton's "shadow squad" should have won after Chelsea lost goalkeeper Reg Matthews, say the critics. But who could blame the Luton men for playing at three-quarter pace with the semi-final tie only seven days away? Full marks to Chelsea for such a brave fight against the odds.

"Chelsea centre-forward Ron Tindall went into goal and did well, but I think a regular goalkeeper would have saved at least one of Luton's two goals. Even without four of their regulars, and playing with next Saturday's F.A. Cup semi-final very much in mind, Luton should have taken over but they didn't" — "The Pictorial."

"Chelsea can look back on this game with much satisfaction. They lost brilliant goalkeeper Reg Matthews after 12 minutes and fought like tigers to hold F.A. Cup semi-finalists Luton to a draw."

"If Norwich City boss Archie Macaulay had hoped to spot a few tactical pointers for next Saturday's semi-final from Luton's display he must have been very disappointed. He must have been confused, too, for Luton meandered through this meaningless match." — "Sunday Graphic."

"I got the impression that the seven Luton regulars playing were thinking more about Saturday's Cup semi-final against Norwich than of two League points." — "Daily Mirror."

"True Luton Town were without king - pin inside - forwards George Cummins and Allan Brown, goalkeeper Ron Baynham and centre-half, manager - elect, Sid Owen. This, to the layman, made it almost comparable to watching the Crazy Gang minus Messrs. Flanagan, Naughton, Nervo and Knox." — "News Chronicle."

"The visitors, no doubt with thoughts on their F.A. Cup semi-final with Norwich, rarely played at more than three-quarter speed, Bingham excepted." — "Daily Telegraph."