

YOUNGSTER PLAYED LIKE A VETERAN

Town Nearly Snatched A Win At Birmingham

By CHILTERN

BIRMINGHAM CITY 1, LUTON TOWN 1

BEFORE this vital match at St. Andrew's, Manager Sid Owen called upon his players for the sort of effort they gave in Cup games last season and the response brought about an improvement that might very well have led to the Town gaining two precious points.

However, they had to be satisfied with one in the end, mainly because there is still not enough power from the forwards in front of goal.

From the purely football point of view, this meeting was far from being a classic—there was too much tension and too much at stake for that—and a lot of action fizzled out into nothing.

From the Town viewpoint, there could be a lot of satisfaction about the display of the defence in which a new star emerged in the 19-years-old Daniel, playing in only his third League match.

Whatever misgivings the manager might have had about him facing the mercurial Hooper were quickly banished because Daniel showed no sign of nerves at all and put the winger out of the game so effectively that Birmingham officials were amazed.

Polish and coolness were combined with strength in the tackle and he scarcely wasted a ball throughout.

Certainly, the Town have a find here and his promotion, combined with the move of Brown into the half-back line has had a stiffening effect on the defence as a whole.

WING-HALVES DID FINE JOB

Although he was not so outstanding as in the previous match Brown switched to left-half after volunteering to do so to accommodate Groves, did a great job and his strength and that of Groves, who regained his best form, both in defence and attack, had much to do with the Birmingham attack being so much under a cloud.

From Kelly and Dunne there came useful performances and with Baynham in brilliant form and making three astonishing saves, there could be little complaint about the defence.

So far as the forwards were concerned, it was a different story because there were still shortcomings there, the remedy to which is proving difficult to find.

As is usually the case, Bingham was the most effective forward and, obviously, his colleagues thought that he was their trump-card because they constantly tried to send him away.

BINGHAM gave the Town the advantage of an early lead when, with seven minutes gone, he took a pass from Groves and made a deceptive half-shot, half-centre, that beat Schofield, and the ball went in off the inside of a post.

Then was the Town's best chance of winning this match, and could they only have obtained another goal, Birmingham would not have had the spirit to fight back.

However, success eluded them, though some chances were missed and they went on to half-time still holding their slender lead.

ATONED FOR A MISS

Early Birmingham pressure had to be sustained after half-time and BARRETT missed a gift chance, but atoned in the next minute, the 52nd, by beating Baynham from close range.

From then on, it was anyone's game, but the Town came nearest to winning it because, with only minutes left, Pacey lobbed the ball over the head of Schofield, who had advanced to near the

edge of the penalty area, and then watched it scrape the outside of a post and pass wide.

Most of the Town's scheming came from Cummins, who used the ball without wasting time and there was more freedom of movement as a result.

In fact, the best football in this match came from the Town and it was mostly inspired by Cummins.

Kilgannon is a whole-hearted trier, who covered a tremendous amount of ground, but he is inclined to react too slowly to the needs of a situation, as a result that he caused movements to break down. With experience, this will be eliminated but, of course, the Town's need is urgent.

Another trier was Pacey, who fought hard against Smith, but he will not be the answer to the centre-forward problem until he does more shooting, and that is a general need.

Had Gregory been at all accurate in his finishing, which he was not, he could have been a success because he clearly had the beating of Farmer, only to use the ball badly at the end of his run.

BIRMINGHAM CITY: Schofield; Farmer, Allen; Watts, Smith, Neal; Hooper, Gordon, Orritt, Barrett, Taylor.

LUTON TOWN: Baynham; Dunne, Daniel; Groves, Kelly, Brown; Bingham, Kilgannon, Pacey, Cummins, Gregory.

Referee: D. W. Smith, Stonehouse. Attendance: 19,007.

WHAT THE OTHER CRITICS SAID

"Bingham was easily the most outstanding player on the field, and Luton brightened up when he had the ball." — "News of the World."



"It would have been an injustice if Birmingham had lost—Luton plainly demonstrated why they have only scored 12 goals this season." — "Sunday Express."



"There were one or two snatches of real football, mainly from Luton, yet Birmingham had the chances to have won by a wide margin." — "Sunday Dispatch."



"Let's be fair to manager Owen. What little football there was came from Luton—with wee Billy Bingham ripping holes in the paper-thin Birmingham defence." — "The People."



"It can safely be said that here was a match that lived up to expectations. Bottom-of-the-table teams and bottom-of-the-table Soccer. Nor can the point gained bring much consolation to Luton . . . not if this is the best they can do against such a flat-footed defence as Birmingham's." — "News Chronicle."



"On this showing, Luton seem to have a better chance than Birmingham of escaping relegation to the Second Division. That chance, however, is not rated very high." — "Daily Telegraph."



"Luton fielded seven of their Cup Final team, but only Ron Baynham, John Groves, Allan Brown, George Cummins and Billy Bingham now have the First Division look." — "Daily Mail."