

VALUABLE POINTS WERE THROWN AWAY

Arsenal Lucky, But Town Squandered Chances

By CHILTERN

LUTON TOWN 0, ARSENAL 1

A GREAT opportunity of re-establishing themselves in the eyes of their supporters was missed by the Town on Monday when 27,055 people, easily the biggest crowd of the season, saw them squander scoring chances in the most prodigal fashion.

For most of the second half, Arsenal were scarcely out of their own penalty area and for long spells, had to resort to desperation tactics in order to keep the Town forwards at bay.

Admittedly, just nothing went right for the Town in front of goal but, although a considerable amount of bad luck was their portion, there was also some dreadfully weak finishing.

It began in the first half when Gregory had the simplest chance laid on for him by a brilliant piece of work by Turner, but his attempt to make doubly certain by "teeing" up the ball gave Standen just that fraction of a second in which to make his anticipation.

Yet, Gregory's recent goals have come mostly from first-time shots and that was what this situation was crying out for.

Not that Gregory was the only culprit because Brown could also have been the match-winner had he shown more decision in front of goal. He had one of those matches he will want to forget and yet he made the best scoring attempt with a well-placed header which Standen saved in miraculous fashion.

Just how he managed to change direction completely and push over a ball that was as good as in the back of the net, no-one could quite fathom, but this remarkable save was typical of the way in which things ran for the Town in front of goal.

OFF THE GOAL-LINE

During the heavy second half pressure, both Wills and Dodgin cleared off the goal-line with Standen beaten and Morton, firing away from point-blank range, had the misfortune to see the ball rebound to safety off Bingham who was spreadeagled on the ground.

But it was not all bad luck that caused the Town to lose these vital points. They never quite judged their tactics correctly to meet the needs of a pitch that really needed freshening up by some heavy rain.

Whereas, at Highbury on Boxing Day, in bad overhead conditions, the ball moved sharply off the greasy turf, it stuck in the treacly mud and there was never the freedom of movement we saw in the previous match.

There was an early attempt to repeat the successful tactics by making use of the extreme wings but Bingham found Evans a very different proposition on this occasion, and he never looked so dangerous as he did in the first match.

Nor was Gregory, apart from a few spasmodic runs and that early miss probably had an effect on his confidence. Badly the Town needed some of the midfield ideas that could have been brought by Cummins who played in neither of the Christmas matches.

He could have provided the link-up that was badly needed and could have split an Arsenal rearguard that was allowed to concentrate on defence in depth.

TOO MANY SQUARE PASSES

So heavy was the Town second half pressure at times, that the Arsenal penalty area was the most populated place on the field and the Town made the fatal mistake of keeping the ball too close and making over-much use of the square pass.

Most dangerous of the forwards was Turner who often streamed down the middle in a good scoring position, waiting vainly for the through pass that never came.

Time after time, the Arsenal defenders made successful interceptions and far too often, that vital final pass went astray.

From Morton there was a good deal of hard work in discouraging conditions, but he is not really happy at inside-forward and it is a pity that his talent should have to be wasted in this way.

Perhaps the most amazing thing about this match was that Groves and Pacey dominated the midfield proceedings so completely and then had nothing to show for it in the end.

Pacey, in particular, was in brilliant form and he nearly saved the situation in the very last minute when he carved out an opening for Gregory who again hesitated but, in any case, had got himself into an offside position.

DECIDING GOAL A SIMPLE AFFAIR

About the defence, there could be no real grounds for complaint. Kelly was adequate, Daniel just about put Nutt out of the game, and although Dunne had a little trouble with Haverty, there was no real weakness.

The deciding goal was a tragedy because when it came there was only a minute to go to half-time, and it was a scrambling affair.

Haverty crossed the ball low and Baynham, who had been badly shaken up twice earlier, could not manage to cut out the

centre. Maybe he was hampered to some extent, but JULIANS was on the spot to poke the ball into the net for a lucky but decisive goal.

Had the Town scored once, they might very easily have gone on to a handsome victory, but the goal that might have done the trick just would not come and the confidence of the re-arranged Arsenal defence increased considerably as they continually threw back the Town's raids.

LUTON TOWN: Baynham; Dunne, Daniel; Groves, Kelly, Pacey; Bingham, Turner, Brown, Morton, Gregory.

ARSENAL: Standen; Magill, Evans; Wills, Dodgin, Barnwell; Nutt, Herd, Julians, Bloomfield, Haverty.

Referee: D. H. Howell, Birmingham.

What The Other Critics Said

"This Arsenal outfit, with so many men playing out of their normal positions, had neither the skill nor the enthusiasm of Luton who, on this showing in a below-standard game, have the will and the power to climb out of the danger spot at the foot of the League table." — "Sunday Dispatch."

"Even Arsenal's list of injuries can't entirely excuse the club. Against Luton, who played football far above the standard expected from a team in the relegation zone, the Highbury boys were almost clueless from the start." — "News of the World."

"They make sure the ball travels—our lot don't," said a disgruntled Arsenal supporter and in those words he summed up the whole position.

Luton moved it in the right direction and their reward was goals by left-winger Tony Gregory—one in each half—and another by Gordon Turner while Arsenal's hopefuls were practising the not so subtle art of misdirection." — "Empire News."

"It was all too easy for Luton Town. On this form they should soon pull clear of trouble.

They were on top from the start. And they stayed there—by the simple process of moving the ball firmly in the mud while Arsenal tried to tip-tap their way through."—"The People."

"Arsenal went wrong tactically against Luton. In conditions against good football, they pursued a course down the centre of the field. Luton played to the wings—to the effervescent Billy Bingham in particular—and that paid dividends."—"Daily Mail."

"Two strong, ever-busy wing-halves in Dave Pacey and Johnny Groves, were the essential difference between these teams—those and right-winger Billy Bingham.

The little Irish International moved easily on the better going of the wing to have a part in all three goals."—"News Chronicle."

The reporters who saw the return match at Kenilworth-road on Monday had this to say in Tuesday's newspapers:—

"One must feel sorry for Luton, whose own wing half-backs David Pacey and John Groves were the game's outstanding figures, but their forwards contributed to their own downfall by making too many short and square passes."—"News Chronicle."

"Arsenal's problems remain but there is hope for them while Dodgin is in such tremendous form. Evans gave a vastly improved display against Bingham, who tried to do too much, and Luton failed to profit from their Highbury experience of Boxing Day when they kept play open and exploited the spaces on the wings."—"Daily Telegraph."

"Pacey and Groves were Luton's best players, but none of the forwards backed up Gordon Turner, who I thought could have won the game for Luton.

So Luton are still struggling. Pity because they are too good a football team to go down."—"Daily Mail."