

TOWN'S DISPUTED GOAL IN DRAMATIC LAST SECONDS

LUTON TOWN 1, PORTSMOUTH 0

By CHILTERN

THERE could scarcely have been a more dramatic finish than that to the Town's first home game last night when, in the dying seconds of the game, they grasped both points with a goal that caused the biggest controversy in years.

Immediately after the match access could not be obtained to the referee to get his version of the affair and I was told that he had no comment to make.

There was no doubt about the blatant handling made by Turner before he scored, but it followed immediately on handling by Snowdon. Manager Sam Bartram told me, "The referee applied the advantage rule, otherwise we must have had a penalty."

For a minute or two there looked likely to be an ugly scene, but order was restored in the end without anything untoward happening.

Had the Town not won it would have been a grave miscarriage of justice, because they just about played this Pompey team into the ground, and there would have been complaints about the finishing of the front line.

From the point of view of pure football ability the Town were streets ahead of this opposition, but they can still use some thrust in front of goal.

LUTON TOWN: Baynham; Dunne, Daniel; Morton, Brown, Pacey; Bingham, Turner, McBride, Groves, Imlach.

PORTSMOUTH: Beattie; Rutter, Dickinson; Howells, Snowdon, Chapman; Cutler, Campbell, Saunders, Harris, Edmunds.

Referee: K. G. Aston, of Ilford.

Gradually the Town settled down to play some very neat, accurate, football in mid-field and although some of it was too close at times it did worry the Pompey defence.

In view of the thin cover there is for the position there were a couple of anxious minutes when Baynham needed attention after being fouled by Saunders but he resumed, apparently none the worse.

IMLACH'S SPEED

Gradually the Town stepped up the pressure and Beattie was tested several times, mainly by Turner, and to whom he went full length, and Groves, who also headed over.

Then Beattie was lucky not to find the ball coming back at him when he punched away somewhat speculatively a centre by Bingham.

There followed a spell in which the Town penned in Pompey, during which Groves and Turner were inches off the target and Imlach, who was again showing speed and resource, saw a point-blank shot cannon off the goalkeeper.

A couple of minutes from half-time the Town goal had a narrow escape when, in a sudden Portsmouth breakaway, Cutler went racing past Daniel to make a shot to which Baynham got a hand, but the ball spun towards the goal.

Dunne, who had fallen back,

scooped the ball off the line, and after a glance at the nearest linesman the referee disallowed Portsmouth's claims for a goal. Half-time:

LUTON TN	0
PORTSMOUTH	0

Superiority of the Town was even more marked after the interval than it had been earlier, and the Portsmouth defence was at action stations almost continuously.

For 20 minutes or more Baynham was virtually a spectator, while his counterpart was showing his considerable ability in saving from nearly all the Town forwards.

Fouls against the Portsmouth defenders were all too frequent and although the Town had a stream of free-kicks there were instances when a stronger line might have been taken.

It really was surprising that a team could be so completely on top and yet not score.

At long last Portsmouth moved (almost for the first time this half) as an attacking force, but it fizzled out tamely and the Town, now more desperate than ever in their quest for a goal, surged to the attack again.

It looked as if they had shot their bolt, however, because their penalty area was thickly populated with blue shirts when there came a dramatic incident in the last minute.

It came in the shape of a hotly disputed goal by TURNER which had the effect of bringing the whole Portsmouth team up to the centre line, and it was some seconds before order was restored.

Even Beattie, the goalkeeper, was up there to join in the protest, and there was a long interruption before we saw finally what the verdict was.

In the event it was a goal, but not for a long time have I seen one on this ground so vehemently protested against.

As I saw the incident a speculative pass was punted down the middle and Snowdon appeared to handle.

Whether he did or not the ball ran on to Turner who certainly, in my opinion, pulled the ball down before thumping it into the net. Portsmouth looked astounded when the referee awarded a goal and there followed the protesting scenes.

Order was restored, the game was re-started, but only just before the final whistle went.

Result:
Attendance 17,514.