

TOWN CAUGHT IN GOALS AVALANCHE

Dramatic Change Came About At Sunderland

By CHILTERN

SUNDERLAND 7, LUTON TOWN 1

EVEN in the darkest days of last season when relegation clouds were hanging darkly over Kenilworth-road, the Town did not suffer the ignominious fate of having seven goals scored against them, as happened to them at Roker Park on Saturday.

In fact, that sort of chastening experience has happened to the Town only rarely in the last decade and I can recall only one previous instance of as many goals being conceded and that also occurred in the north-east when Newcastle beat the Town 7-2 during Easter, 1947.

For that, there was a considerable measure of excuse because, handicapped by injuries at Manchester the previous day, the Town had centre-forward Hughie Billington at centre-half.

To no such unorthodoxy, nor to the lowering effect of injuries, could the Town blame Saturday's setback but, all the same, they could deem themselves unfortunate because there was never that sort of margin between the teams.

Indeed, at one time, early in the second half, the Town seemed to be holding a very good chance of earning one of their rare away points, but that was before the Sunderland avalanche began.

The first half was a fast, hard-fought affair that provided plenty of excitement for the holiday crowd and, if the Town did not exert so much consistent pressure as did the home team, they at least made for themselves three, maybe four, of the sort of scoring chances that must be accepted if they are to be fancied as away winners.

Lack of real decision in front of goal cost them these opportunities but, although Overfield was unlucky with a shot that struck a post, the lively Sunderland forwards were contained inside the penalty area until five minutes from half-time.

Then came a corner on the right for which Hurley inevitably came up, and it was his head that steered Davison's kick across the goal, where LAWTHER jumped to head through and put Sunderland ahead.

Although things could have been better, the Town must have felt that they were reasonably placed at half-time, and a fillip was given to that trend of thought with the second half only three minutes old.

DEADLY TURNER

Then, Fleming brilliantly beat Nelson near the dead-line before suddenly and brilliantly switching the ball back to TURNER, who drove it low into the corner of the net in deadly fashion.

At that stage the game was evenly poised, and even when, after 51 minutes, DAVISON scored a fine individual goal, the Town had the chance to get level again, but Turner sliced his shot this time and Brown, to whom the ball went, had his shot cleared off the line—by means of handling, so the Town players said.

Three minutes later came the goal that was the forerunner of the town's later troubles, when HURLEY went right up into the penalty area to head through after an indirect free-kick.

After that Sunderland's half-backs, and Anderson in particular, took complete command of the midfield situation to find gaping holes in the Town defence, and between the 67th and 89th minutes further goals came from MCPHEAT, LAWTHER (2) and McNAB.

Although limitations were exposed in the Town defence, their task was made a great deal more difficult by the weakness at inside-forward, which enabled Anderson, in particular, and McNab to devote so much of their time to attack during the second half.

UNENVIABLE POSITION

Often the defenders found themselves in the unenviable position of facing two opponents and, as a result, were often overrun. At the same time there was, on occasion, a rather distressing lack of cover, and the way down the middle was more open to the concentrated drive of the Sunderland attack than should have been the case.

In a situation of this sort, Groves, at centre-half, is scarcely strong enough or forceful enough to cope adequately, as Lawther's three goals bore witness.

Nor could Pacey and McGuffie stem the tide of Sunderland progress, which reached its peak in the last 20 minutes, when the home forwards played with all the unbounded confidence for which the situation was made.

All fought hard to throw them back, none more than Bramwell, who was the most reliable member of the defence, and McNally made things difficult for himself by giving Overfield too much room and then mostly not getting in a successful tackle.

For Standen there were marks

for some grand saves of the spectacular variety, but he did not show the best of judgment in dealing with high crosses, and this, combined with the fact that the defenders were mostly out-headed, brought a deal of danger.

From the forwards there was some neat work in approach, but it did not carry the same sense of urgency as that which showed in Sunderland's work.

Fleming had it and was the Town's best forward, but Tracey did not get himself into the game so much as he might, even allowing for the fact that the support that came his way was sketchy.

Always, Turner needed careful watching, but he found Hurley, surely the most improved centre-half in the game, a tremendous stumbling block.

SUNDERLAND: Wakeham; Nelson, Ashurst; Anderson, Hurley, McNab; Davison, Fogarty, Lawther, McPheat, Overfield.

LUTON TOWN: Standen; McNally, Bramwell; Pacey, Groves, McGuffie; Tracey, Ashworth, Turner, Brown, Fleming.

Referee: T. H. P. Hackney. Barnsley. Attendance: 28,695.

WHAT THE OTHER CRITICS SAID

"When centre-forward Gordon Turner equalised for Luton in the 49th minute after Lawther had headed Sunderland into the lead five minutes before the interval, the result was still wide open. But two snap goals in two minutes by Sunderland was a blow from which the visitors never recovered." — "News of the World."

"Luton rallied strongly and for a time Sunderland mounted a nine-man defence to hold their lead. Then, for no apparent reason, Luton folded up under storming Sunderland raids and in 11 minutes McPheat and Lawther (twice) had underlined the home team's superiority." — "Sunday Express."

"When the pressure built up Luton's defence cracked wide open. Instead of tackling they chased—even Groves abandoned his watch over Lawther with disastrous results and the home side ran riot." — "Sunday Dispatch."

"In the first-half the Wearsiders could not fathom a Luton defence which receded in orderly style to form a white-shirted barrier in the penalty area.

"Luton inside men Brown and Ashworth, and wing-halves Pacey and McGuffie dropped out of the game like pricked balloons." — "The People."

"Sunderland took a 40-minute lead through Lawther, but it was wiped out by Gordon Turner eight minutes later. Then the avalanche hit Luton." — "Daily Mail."