

JUST AS WELL THAT THE NEED FOR POINTS WAS NOT URGENT

By CHILTERN

TWO points from three matches, two of which were at home, added up to a disappointing Easter for the Town for whom it was just as well that they were not desperately in need in order to avoid the relegation struggle.

As it was, the two points they gained, by virtue of a penalty and an "own goal" against Swansea on Friday and another penalty on Saturday enabled them to reach the safety target of 34 set by Manager Sam Bart-ram some weeks ago.

This, of course, was regarded as likely to give them a minimum margin in hand, and it was a matter of disappointment to the manager that it was not increased considerably last week-end.

That, in the case of the home matches, was largely due to continued failings in the forward line.

As things turned out, quite the best opportunity of recording a win came on Friday when Swansea, reckoned to be the more formidable of the Easter rivals, were outplayed at times and might have found their long unbeaten record ended by a sound thrashing.

Two main reasons why this did not happen were the brilliance of the former West Ham goalkeeper, Dwyer, and the failure of the Town forwards to make the utmost use of their scoring chances.

The more charitably inclined gave full credit to Dwyer who certainly had all the luck that was going on his side, but there were those who blamed the finishing of the Town forwards to a marked degree and there could be a full measure of support for either point of view.

Suffice it to say that it needed a goal from the penalty spot to put the Town on terms after TODD had accepted a gift chance through an error by Kelly in the fifth minute.

TRAGIC ERRORS BY NURSE

Before half-time, the Town should have had at least one penalty, when TURNER was pulled down by Sanders and his consolation came when he scored from the spot after Nurse had handled.

With eight minutes left, NURSE accomplished what the Town forwards had not been able to do by steering the ball wide of Dwyer from a harmless looking centre by Noake, but two minutes later, HUGHES took some of the look of misery off Nurse's face by seizing on a defensive misunderstanding.

Some disruption of the Swansea plan came after about half an hour when Hughes pulled a muscle and was switched into the forward line, with Davies (R) dropping back, and they should not have been allowed to get away with a point.

Those two fatal defensive mistakes apart, the Town defence was sound enough, though Kelly seemed affected by his early error, but the forwards had sufficient opportunity to give the defence more of a margin of error.

Noake had a poor match, Fleming lost his accuracy after a useful first half, and Cummins always tended to keep the ball too close, which had a stitching-up effect on the play.

Without doubt Turner was the most dangerous tacker, and there were occasions when McGuffie got himself into deadly position, only for the goals not to follow.

FANS WERE FRUSTRATED

If there was disappointment about Friday's game, there was complete frustration for those who were at Kenilworth-road the following day, when the Town and Leeds put up a display that did football no credit at all, and it was difficult to believe that these two teams were in the First Division only 12 months ago.

So low was the standard of play achieved on the hard ground that bouts of slow handclapping broke out around the ground during both halves, and the depths of boredom were reached.

Among the forward lines of either side there was scarcely a single redeeming feature, and even the goal that each team scored did nothing to raise the enthusiasm of the fans.

As had been the case the previous day, the Town literally gave away an early goal, because a tame-looking shot by BREMNER in the seventh minute eluded the not very workmanlike attempt by Baynham to stop it.

Seldom did the Town seem likely to wipe out that bad beginning and, indeed, their equaliser did not come until 13 minutes from the end, and again it was TURNER'S deadliness from the penalty spot that saved them.

CUMMINS FINED £10

This time, Turner was pulled down through the combined efforts of Goodwin and Kilford, and, picking himself up, rammed the ball wide of Carling's left hand.

Before that happened there had been some switching of the forward line, which included the

introduction of Groves from left-half, and there would have been more, earlier, had Cummins moved to outside-left when instructed.

Because he did not carry out the order conveyed to him from the Manager on the touchline, through his captain, he was fined £10 afterwards and dropped from the team for the following match.

Cummins did finish the match, belatedly, on the left wing, and earlier his fiddling tactics had been a source of irritation.

With Cummins not fulfilling the scheming role adequately, neither Noake nor Fleming providing much and McGuffie out of touch, the measure of support for Turner, the one forward who looked capable of lifting this shoddy piece out of the deep shadows, was just about non-existent.

Obviously, Kelly had overcome his uneasiness of the previous day because he dominated the middle, and except that Groves tended to keep the ball too close and Baynham's handling of the ball was sketchy in the extreme, the defence went quite a way towards escaping the general criticism.

INJURIES A HANDICAP

Having fielded an unchanged team in two matches, the Manager took ten members of it to Swansea on Sunday and had to wait until shortly before kick-off time to be in a position to decide his line-up.

Noake, who had a blistered foot, stood down, and there was a first chance in League football for the former schoolboy international, Robin Chandler.

One would have liked to be able to record a fairy-story ending, but after Chandler had made a promising start, he received little in the way of support and, in addition, there were positive signs of his inexperience.

This was the match in which the Town were badly out of luck, because three players suffered injuries that cut down their effectiveness greatly.

McGuffie was never a force to be reckoned with after pulling a thigh muscle in the opening minutes, and Fleming, after combining with Chandler to make a chance for GROVES to put the Town ahead after 11 minutes, was hurt when Saunders fouled him shortly afterwards, and had a pronounced limp afterwards.

Although Swansea always had more of the play, they did not cause a great deal of trouble to the Town defence, who looked likely to enable the team to change over in the lead.

Then, with only four minutes left to half-time, came the first of two body blows when DAVIES (R) was left with a simple task from a free kick by Sanders with which Baynham should have dealt in the first instance.

Three minutes later, Williams split the defence with a through pass on to which WEBSTER ran

FOR THE RECORDS

GOOD FRIDAY

LUTON TOWN 2
Turner (penalty), Nurse (own goal)
SWANSEA TOWN 2
Todd, Hughes
LUTON TOWN: Baynham; McNally, Bramwell; Morton, Kelly, Groves; Noake, McGuffie, Turner, Cummins, Fleming.

SWANSEA TOWN: Dwyer; Sanders, Griffiths; Davies (P), Nurse, Hughes; Jones, Davies (R), Reynolds, Todd, Williams.

Referee: K R Tuck, Chesterfield. Attendance: 14,286.

SATURDAY

LUTON TOWN 1
Turner (penalty)
LEEDS UNITED 1
Bremner

LUTON TOWN: Unchanged.

LEEDS UNITED: Carling; Hair, Kilford; Smith, Goodwin, McConnell; Francis, Bremner, Charlton, McCole, Hawksby.

Referee: J W Dawes, Norwich. Attendance: 11,137.

EASTER MONDAY

SWANSEA TOWN 3
Davies (R), Webster, Jones

LUTON TOWN 1
Groves

SWANSEA TOWN: Dwyer; Sanders, Griffiths; Davies (P), Nurse, Saunders; Jones, Davies (R), Reynolds, Webster, Williams.

LUTON TOWN: Baynham; McNally, Bramwell; Morton, Kelly, Hawkes; R Chandler, McGuffie, Turner, Groves, Fleming.

Referee: W Clements, West Bromwich. Attendance: 14,000.

and was in luck's way in that the direction of the ball was changed when it struck McNally.

Except that the limping McGuffie, with his thigh muscle strapped up and operating from centre-forward, missed a good chance from Turner's pass, the Town never really threatened to rescue a point.

Hope that they might do so virtually came to an end when Bramwell was led off with blood streaming from a cut over his left eye after 61 minutes, and he was absent for 14 minutes for stitching before resuming at outside-left.

Shortly after that JONES scored the best goal of the match with a tremendous, rising drive after Baynham had come out to a corner from the left and never been near enough for there to be hopes of him cutting it out.

Had the Town remained at full strength it is difficult to say what might have happened, but the fact was that Swansea were the faster, more progressive team, moving in quickly to meet the ball and certainly the more dangerous in front of goal.

In fact, as their confidence increased after they had gone ahead, Swansea played some very good football to point out why they have gained 22 points out of the last 24, which has set up a record for them.

Even at the start the Town did not look in the same category, and even Turner could not pull himself out of the ruck on this occasion.

But for those two hammer blows just before half-time, the Town defence might have held on to their narrow lead, as they did at Ipswich, and there was certainly plenty of pluck in a rearguard in which, however, some limitations were exposed.

Best of it were Kelly, Bramwell and Morton, because McNally was led a dance by the nippy, elusive Williams, and Hawkes, hard though he tried, scarcely looked the part at left-half.

Judging by his display in this and the previous match, Baynham has lost some of the great confidence he has been showing lately, though he did effect some very fine saves.