

BELOW-FORM TOWN SCRAPED HOME

Desperate Charlton Put Them Out Of Their Stride

By CHILTERN

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CHARLTON ATHLETIC 0, LUTON TOWN 1

POPULARLY, it is said, that the proof of the pudding is in the eating, but the ingredients that went to make up this Town victory at the Valley were not all that palatable.

Indeed, with a high degree of confidence, I would predict that, several times this season, the Town will play a good deal better away from home and meet with defeat.

However, football is a game in which teams have to accept what the gods offer and the result of this match will go down in the record books and, in a few weeks' time, it will count as another away win, with the memory of how it was achieved faded away.

At the moment, though, to try to raise any enthusiasm about it is difficult and, to those of us who saw the mid-week match at Middlesbrough when the Town achieved a high standard of football, their display came not only as a disappointment, but a sharp shock.

Gone was all the smoothness of movement and intelligent use of the open spaces which caused Middlesbrough's defence so much trouble. In its place, we had a shambling forward line, apparently devoid of ideas, with the exception of TURNER, who was the only member of it to promise anything.

Appropriately, he scored the all-important goal after 61 minutes but, I fancy, he will not be particularly proud at recalling it because there is no doubt that Duff should have saved his shot from point-blank range.

In one of the few cohesive movements achieved by the Town, Groves pushed the ball through to the centre-forward whose shot was straight at Duff. However, the goalkeeper allowed the ball to elude him, so that it spun behind him and was over the line before Sewell managed to hook it away.

Protests by Charlton were useless because the nearest linesman and the referee made up their minds immediately and that scrappy effort was worth two points to the Town.

Charlton were handicapped by an early injury to Leary who was off the field for 23 minutes and returned to be quite effective at outside-right.

LUCK NOT OUT OF PLACE

Fortunate the Town certainly were but, remembering the Swansea affair, a slice of luck for the Town on tour is not out of place.

Probably, the answer to the whole thing was that the forwards were thrown out of their stride by the desperation of Charlton, who were still looking for their first home win and their hard-tackling, robust approach was not conducive to good football.

Their desperation showed itself only too plainly in their finishing because, with a little bit of calmness in front of goal, they could have seen to it that the Town defence did not leave with a clean sheet.

That no goal was conceded was in itself a matter for congratulation, but I would not describe the display of the defence as masterly.

Rather was it an uneasy, muddling sort of battle against an attack that had much dash and enthusiasm, but not a great deal of constructive idea.

Never did the Town hold the all-important grip in midfield and Cope was constantly worried by Edwards, a centre-forward of considerable merit.

Like Morton and Groves and, to a certain extent, Bramwell, Cope came through creditably because he kept battling on, but the defence never looked to be in control.

The one who was nearest to it was McNally who mastered Kinsey, and Baynham, sometimes living dangerously, put up a gallant, effective show in goal.

Turner apart, the front line just did not function. Repeatedly, Walden put his passes to the opposition and Fleming constantly ran into trouble, most of which was of his own making.

The experience and tough approach of Hewie was too much for McKechnie, who gave only brief glimpses of his exceptional promise and Ashworth covered a tremendous amount of ground without having much to show for his endeavours.

CHARLTON ATHLETIC. — Duff; Sewell, Townsend; Hewie, Hinton, Lucas; Lawrie, Leary, Edwards, White, Kinsey.

LUTON TOWN. — Baynham; McNally, Bramwell; Morton, Cope, Groves; Walden, Ashworth, Turner, McKechnie, Fleming.

Referee.—R. E. Smith, Newport. Attendance: 10,176.

WHAT THE OTHER CRITICS SAID

"Even allowing the goal, Charlton should still have won easily against a below normal Luton who never looked a menace once they tried to move up from midfield."—"The People".

"Ninety per cent of the play was in the Luton half. But Ron Baynham, dealing skilfully with the cross ball, was always in command of the penalty area, and apart from one fumble 20 minutes from the end played impeccably. Willie Duff could not be compared with Baynham because he had almost nothing to do."—"Sunday Express".

"Defensively Luton were rugged and lacked ideas and the big kick up field was their only way of driving Charlton back. They were equally without an efficient forward.

"The Luton attack had just about four clear cut shots at the Charlton goal whereas the Londoners brought out the best of Baynham who was in excellent form."—"The Sunday Telegraph".

"For four-fifths of this robust game, Charlton pounded away at the Luton goal with only 10 fit men—inside-right Stuart Leary was off the field for 25 minutes of the first-half with an injured knee and was little more than a passenger when he returned. But Luton snatched two fantastically lucky points with a disputed goal."—"News of the World".

"The persistent Charlton attack was thwarted time and again by goalkeeper Baynham. Even with half-back Hewie joining their line, the Charlton forwards failed in their desperate attempts at an equaliser."—"Sunday Pictorial".