

FINAL MATCH LACKED EXCITEMENT

TOWN PUT ROVERS IN THIRD DIVISION

Goalkeeper's Mistake Sealed Their Fate

By CHILTERN

THE final match of the season at Kenilworth-road before the ground staff with their harrows and seed took over on Sunday, scarcely added to the standard of what has been a mediocre season.

Not many people expected it would, and the gate figures proved that. But what one did expect was a rather more exciting struggle than that which occurred, in view of the fact that Rovers had a do-or-die struggle on their hands.

WILDLY the small band of Bristol loyalists cheered in the first minute when Standen had to throw himself at the feet of Bradford to prevent a sensational goal.

After that they had precious little about which to cheer, because all the Rovers' plans were shattered in the third minute. Then, to the horror of the whole Bristol team, Radford made such a hash of a goal kick by partly stubbing the ground that the ball rolled gently to Turner.

No more than 18 yards out, Turner gathered the ball, and although Davis and Radford both tried to retrieve the blunder, the ball hurtled into the back of the net.

Rovers' Confidence Was Evaporated

WITH that, the early confident look of the Rovers evaporated,

and the Town scented that they might be on a far easier winning bonus than they had expected. Dreadful mistakes, obviously caused by the nervous tension, continued to be committed by the Rovers' defence, who were all at sixes and sevens.

When Ashworth hit a second goal after 18 minutes, meeting first time a low centre by Clarke, hopes that Bristol would still have a Second Division club next season just about plummeted to the depths.

Bristol Luck Was Completely Out

YET something approaching a rally could have been mounted if they had gained a goal, and it so nearly came in the 23rd minute. Jones raced through in strong style to unleash a great drive that beat Standen utterly, and cannoned back into play off the inside of a post.

Just as easily, it could have gone into the back of the net, but on such narrow margins are such important decisions as promotion and relegation decided occasionally. And it is usually the team that needs the luck most that fails to get the rub of the green.

No Real Evidence Of Scoring Power

FOR most of the first half the Town were in command, and although Rovers contrived to have more of the play towards half-time there was no real evidence, apart from that shot of Jones, that they could find scoring power.

When a team simply must have two points, to be two goals down at half-time away from home, is a dispiriting situation, to say the least. Manager Bert Tann must have known that the writing was on the wall, but his half-time instructions were to shoot at every opportunity.

Turner Had A Goal Disallowed

TRY, Rovers did, but there was seldom evidence of sufficient talent in the front line to cause concern to the Town defence. Turner had a goal disallowed for offside, a decision I thought more obvious than the one that went against Jones when he volleyed the ball past Standen.

However, the goal that might have set Rovers alight never came, and the Town never looked like losing their grip on the game. Had the chance Bumpstead missed by firing over from five yards come earlier than the last minute, it would have been another Rovers' tragedy.

Will Have Difficulty In Climbing Back

HOWEVER, by then it was too late to matter, but what an inquest there would have been had it happened ten minutes earlier.

So Rovers stumbled inelegantly into the Third Division, but on this showing they have deserved their fate. Maybe the hard ground was against them, and they showed a distressing lack of stability in defence. Nor were their forwards ever a live force and I fancy that Rovers will find it much more difficult than have Portsmouth in regaining their Second Division place quickly.

Two Points Brought Town Satisfaction

FOR this match to be at all memorable there was far too much aimless passing for which the dry ground was partly responsible. But that could not be blamed for a lot of the pushing and shoving that went on, particularly in the second half.

Then, what we saw could be put in the typically end-of-the-season category and made one pleased that there is at least a break before the next long season descends upon us. What the Town could be pleased about, was the acquisition of two points which put them six points, virtually seven on goal average, clear of the relegation zone, a matter of satisfaction, but not what we hoped for earlier.

'PICTORIAL' WEEK-END SPORTS SPECIAL

in the season, when prospects were brighter than that.

Pacey Could Develop Into Inside Forward

THERE were times after gaining their early lead, when the Town attack moved with more purpose than in some recent matches and I thought Pacey used the ball more effectively than on his previous appearances as an inside-forward.

I suppose that with perseverance Pacey could develop into the type the Town need as an inside-left, though the question then arises of whether the Town can afford to do without him in the half-back line.

At times, Turner looked more dangerous than he has been, but Ashworth was not altogether in touch with things. There were neat touches from Clarke, who does not waste much material and is neat in all he does. Whether he will prove to be the answer to the right-wing problem only time will tell.

Luton Defence Was A Sound Unit

IN some measure the same applies to Fleming, that curious mixture of good and bad. At times he stood out as the most accomplished forward on view, but his finishing was generally so wretched that his clever approach work was forgotten.

Defensively, the Town have few problems with which to wrestle. Since the introduction of Kelly, all have played with new found confidence and the centre-half has turned in a series of competent displays. Against him, Bradford, admittedly far from the player he was, received very little chance and Kelly's heading seems to have improved, too.

Bramwell Completed A Full Season

BY use of spoiling tactics, Groves tamed Sykes, the right-half turned inside-forward whom Chelsea so nearly signed when he wanted to leave Bristol earlier in the season. And Morton, in thoughtful, quiet mood, completed a sound middle line.

There was not sufficient guile from either Jarman or Hooper to worry McNally and Bramwell. Of the two, Hooper looked dangerous, only when he came in on the inside. Otherwise McNally was in command and Bramwell celebrated a season of 100 per cent appearances with a sound display.

And Standen can go off to his cricket with Worcestershire secure in the memory that he has done his part splendidly in the last few matches.