

TOWN'S POINTS FROM DEFENSIVE BATTLE

Turner's Goal Got Them Away To Bright Start

By Chiltern

LUTON TOWN 1, WALSALL 0

NOT the greatest opening to the season, maybe, but satisfactory, with some reservations from the Town point of view.

These were two points snatched from a pretty difficult encounter in which Walsall seemed over concerned with defensive measures and used the offside trap often enough to cause irritation among the Town supporters.

Maybe, in the circumstances, the Town's attack did not show up in the best of lights, but they can have the consolation that they are unlikely to meet with many more unprepossessing defences.

Reservations about the attack, I feel, concern mainly the left wing which has been a thorny enough problem for a long time, and Jardine certainly did not look the answer on the wing.

About Salisbury, one must reserve judgment until he has had a chance to settle down, but he obviously has an opportunistic sense which might have brought him two or three goals.

As for the others, they shone

in fits and starts, particularly Walden, who had the beating of Sharples when he chose to go on the outside which he did not do regularly enough, and then did not see a great deal of the ball in the second half.

Walden has so much natural ability that he will find more scope against less experienced full-backs than Sharples and Davies will not always find himself so closely marked and hustled as he did against the battle-hardened McPherson.

In the main, the support for Davies was not of the best, but he did show flashes of the form that has caused so many clubs to seek his signature.

By and large, I suppose, TURNER was as consistent a member of the front line as the Town possessed and to him went the distinction of scoring the team's first goal of the season.

It was not a vintage effort because he seemed to only half-hit the ball when he received it on the edge of the penalty area from Walden but, with White unsighted, it went into the net just inside the post.

In midfield, the Town were slightly the more impressive, but they were not allowed to reach shooting distance with any regularity, due to the blanket covering of the visitors' defence and this never threatened to be a high-scoring game.

OFFSIDE FRUSTRATION

Too many times the Town forwards, particularly Davies in his attempts to find the open spaces, were frustrated by the offside trap and there was also some keen anticipation by the tall White, Walsall's new signing from Grimsby Town.

So the game went on in its dour way without the promise of many goals to liven it up, though Fell nearly upset Luton calculations with a cross shot that beat Baynham and thudded against the far post.

Walsall were unlucky in that Hodgkisson received a leg injury early in the second half and had a spell on the wing and, four minutes from the end, McPherson was carried off with concussion.

While doubts remain about the forward set-up, no one should have much worry about the defence which had the best possible start by keeping a clean sheet.

Fincham's ability to head clear most of the high balls in the penalty area was a great asset and one which the rest of the defence will appreciate increasingly as the season progresses. In the former Plymouth man, the Town appear to have secured the man calculated to mould their defence together.

Both Morton and Pacey used their great experience to the best advantage and Daniel and Bramwell did a fine job in keeping quiet two dangerous wingers who have always been a thorn in the side of the Town, Meek and Fell.

Behind them there was Baynham looking as confident and competent as ever and it was a pretty impressive defensive performance.

LUTON TOWN: Baynham; Daniel, Bramwell; Morton, Fincham, Pacey; Walden, Turner, Davies, Salisbury, Jardine.

WALSALL: White; Palin, Sharples; Dudley, McPherson, Wills; Meek, Hodgkisson, Foster, Newton, Fell.

Referee: S Yates, Bristol.

Attendance: 9,079.