

TOWN ON TOP, THEN MILLWALL STRUCK

Goals Away From Home Were Elusive Once More

MILLWALL 3, LUTON TOWN 0

By Chiltern

FOR just over an hour at The Den on Boxing Day, it looked as if the Town were on the point of registering their first away League win of the season.

With the score sheet still blank, they were on top, were banging away shots at goal and only some uncanny saves by Stepney, plus some shots that went astray, prevented them from going ahead.

Had they done so at that period I fancy that two points would have been in the bag because the pattern of this tremendously hard encounter on a muddy pitch was always one of odds on the first team to score.

Then Millwall, who had been shaken by the dangerous way in which the Town had begun the second half, broke away to score.

Forerunner of the goal was a thrown clearance by Tinsley, when a big kick would have been more effective, and eventually the ball came back from Cripps, and TERRY was waiting to bang it in.

That was after 63 minutes and was the first of three goals in a 16-minutes spell during which the Town defence, with Millwall playing with new-found confidence, was shattered.

Seven minutes later there was another close-range goal from JONES after Haverty had laid on the pass and the shot appeared to go underneath the diving Tinsley.

And to round off a disastrous day for the Town, HAVERTY crashed the ball into the roof of the net with terrific force 12 minutes from the end.

Even after that the Town had their chances, because Lownds should have been able to reach a pass from O'Rourke at point blank range, and Fairchild shot weakly wide from a good position.

NARROW ESCAPES

The first half was a story of narrow escapes, with Snowdon twice clearing off the line from Lownds and Jardine. In fact the former seemed certain to score with a header, but the centre-half kicked away inches before the ball would have crossed the line.

At the other end Bramwell did the Town a similar service from Terry and Jones, and Millwall, who were not losing any opportunity to shoot, saw several drives rise just too high.

One of the features of the first half was a wonderful save by Stepney from McGuffie, and the goalkeeper was also brought into action by McKechnie and O'Rourke.

It was in the first quarter of an hour after the interval that Stepney, who was a last-minute choice for Beswick, was seen at his best.

He finger-tipped over brilliantly a drive by McKechnie, hung on to a drive by Pacey, who had come through the inside-right position, and cleared another by McGuffie.

In between, O'Rourke had a chance when Lownds left him clear, but, having to shoot quickly, he sent the ball just over the top.

GOALS STAYED ELUSIVE

However, the goals that have been so elusive to the Town away from home this season, just would not come, and once Mill-

wall took the lead Luton had little hope.

In most away matches this season, the failure to get goals has been mostly through lack of shooting ability. On this occasion this was not the case, and McKechnie and McGuffie in particular, were unfortunate not to get themselves into the scorers' list.

With so many injuries, the Town had to field rather a makeshift front line, and Lownds, pushed in at inside-left, had an unhappy time, with the result that there was little link-up in midfield.

Forward honours were shared by McKechnie, always on the look-out for a shooting opportunity, and the hard-working O'Rourke, who, despite the close attentions of the strong Snowdon, managed to add to the good impression he made in his first match. Often, when the heat was on the Town, O'Rourke was back in defence helping out.

While Jardine had plenty of determination, he showed only too plainly his old fault of running into trouble, and with Fairchild well held, not a great deal came from the wings.

Of the defence, I would pick out Pacey, Bramwell and Fincham as the best and all three did a fine job of covering. McGuffie shone as a marksman, but tended to leave a gap in defence, and Morton had a trying time against the Eire International, Haverty.

Morton's problems were increased by the fact that Haverty tended to hang back waiting for the ball, so that the right-back had a long way to go when the winger secured possession.

Tinsley made several very good saves, but I felt he was groping uncertainly at two or three shots that went just over, and that he could be faulted to some extent for the first two goals.

To be honest, this opinion was not shared by manager Bill Harvey and Tinsley certainly showed a good deal of courage and resource under pressure.

This was one match that the Town certainly did not want to lose and had they really had the run of the ball in front of goal, they would not have done so.

Certainly, there was never anything approaching three goals in it, and that that number was scored came as a pleasant surprise to Millwall officials, who are used to seeing their attack goal-shy at home.

MILLWALL: Stepney; Gilchrist, Cripps; Anderson, Snowdon, Wilson; Finnegan, Townsend, Terry, Jones, Haverty.

LUTON TOWN: Tinsley; Morton, Bramwell; Pacey, Fincham, McGuffie; Fairchild, McKechnie, O'Rourke, Lownds, Jardine.

Referee: J. E. Cooke, Cambridgeshire. Attendance 7,732.