

Town Guilty Of A Series Of Misplaced Passes

By CHILTERN

LUTON 0, MANSFIELD 2

FOR the first day of February, this was a beautiful day, with the sun shining out of a blue sky for the Town's first match since the changes on the Board. Just before the start, there seemed an improvement on recent attendances, not radically so, but all the same encouraging I should think. About 7,000 saw the Town lose the toss and be set to defend Kenilworth-road end.

There had to be a change in last Saturday's winning team because Gordon Turner went down with sciatica, and the vacancy was filled by switching Harry Walden to the right and bringing in Jim Weir at outside-left against his former colleagues. Mansfield, too, contented themselves with two forward changes, both positional, in that Wagstaff and Roy Chapman switched positions. The pitch was soft, though a long way from being anything approaching a quagmire, and conditions were as good as could be expected for this time of year.

ROBBED OF CHANCE

A bad mistake by the referee robbed the Town of a chance of a first-minute goal, because he gave offside against Walden when it was clear that the last player to touch the ball was one of the Mansfield defenders.

A mistake by McBain, remedied finally by Fincham, put Mansfield on the attack, and again the Town were being guilty of misplaced passes, which were holding up their attempts to make progress.

JUST MISSED A POST

Best move so far came when McBain intercepted a long clearance with his head to send the ball to Walden, who was showing sparkle reminiscent of his palmer days last year, and he switched the ball inside to Reid. The inside-left, at that moment in the inside-right position, controlled the ball, moved in and made a hard drive that just missed a post.

In these early stages the Town were looking the more dangerous and Walden was as close to the target as Reid had been following a movement in which McKechnie and Reid had a hand. A poor clearance by Fincham led to Chapman (R) having a chance to put Mansfield ahead, but he finished poorly when there should have been no doubt about the ball being in the back of the net, and Bramwell was able to come across and clear.

COMMENTS FROM CROWD

Twice the Town were caught offside at the end of promising movements, and then came another queer decision by the referee who gave a free-kick against McKechnie when it was perfectly obvious that Gill had handled the ball, which drew a comment from the crowd, "put your glasses on." In the next minute the Town had a free-kick for a foul on McKechnie, and although Weir reached Walden's cross with his head it did not worry Treharne. A header by Reid from a corner by Walden was going wide of Treharne, but Jones kicked off the goal-line.

TOWN WERE THREATENING

When a clearance by Bramwell was intercepted by Hall the Town were in a certain amount of trouble and had to concede a corner which Scanlon placed well, but Wagstaff's header curled gently into the hands of Baynham. Again the Town were threatening when Weir sent through McKechnie, but the Mansfield defence covered up well—as it did again when Walden went through from a pass by Morton, and a free kick was given against him for a reason that was certainly not crystal clear. Offside was beginning to be a bug-bear to the Town forwards as happened all too often when the opposition is so minded.

NO FINAL THRUST

Next nearest approach to a goal came when Weir was sent through and harassed by Jones, could not get in a shot as he bore in from a sharp angle. The upshot was a corner, followed by another when a shot by Walden was deflected over the bar and a scramble developed in front of the Mansfield goal, cleared finally by Scanlon who was right back in his own penalty area. Still the Town kept up the pressure without really showing the final thrust that was necessary to bring goals.

SHOULD HAVE BEEN AHEAD

By this time the Town should have been ahead, because they continued to have the better of the play, and Treharne showed good judgment in coming out to cut off a centre by Walden as

How The Goals Came

WAGSTAFF for Mansfield after 44 minutes
HALL for Mansfield after 59 minutes.

the Town, who were still guilty of a series of misplaced passes. Scanlon tested Baynham with a shot through a crowd of players from the edge of the penalty area, and even this half it had been as well that the goalkeeper was in vigilant mood. A corner to the Town on the left brought a header from Pacey, which, however, was ill-directed since it sent the ball quite a couple of yards wide.

ATTEMPTS FRUSTRATED

Attempts by the Town to retrieve the position were being frustrated by the sheer inaccuracy of their passing, which was being cut off time and time again, and there was still no real evidence of finishing thrust. McKechnie, who was playing something of a lone hand, tried to improve the situation with a solo run, but his finishing was tame and Treharne was able to watch the ball roll harmlessly wide.

Now it looked more a question of whether the Town could limit the Mansfield lead than one of if they could draw level, though a half-chance fell to O'Rourke, a very difficult one admittedly, and, shooting on the turn, he sent the ball high and wide.

CAT AMONG THE PIGEONS

With 59 minutes gone, what I feared might happen occurred, when Mansfield increased their lead through HALL. It began with a pass by Govan, which eluded McBain, to Scanlon, who cracked the ball low across the face of the goal, where it hit somebody and eventually became teed up for Hall. He had not the slightest difficulty in smacking it passed Baynham. That really put the cat among the pigeons, and there came an immediate response in which Morton drove a way through powerfully, to make a drive which unfortunately flew straight at the highly capable Treharne.

SHOULD HAVE DONE BETTER

Weir should certainly have done better, as he should earlier when he met with his head a centre by McKechnie and, instead of keeping the trajectory low, he headed the ball up in the air so that it bounced on top of the bar and went over.

Not surprisingly with this lead behind them Mansfield were now looking the more commanding and decisive side. Almost nothing was coming from the Town to conjure up hopes of a recovery, and indeed, there were some anxious moments at their end, particularly from a corner by Scanlon which was deflected for another on the other flank.

MAKING NO PROGRESS

Now Mansfield had gained control of the middle of the field, so that the Town were making almost no progress at all, and it was Baynham who was next in action, saving cleverly from Govan.

Walden tried to improve matters for the Town with a centre to Reid, who was too slow, and finally found himself confronted with three defenders. Then another mistake by Fincham let in Roy Chapman and should have led to another Mansfield goal, because Wagstaff was left with an excellent chance but his shot skimmed the bar with Baynham helpless. At this stage Mansfield were doing much as

they pleased and generally giving the Town the run around.

DIVED TOO LATE

From nearly 30 yards Scanlon came within inches of putting on number three with a fierce left-foot drive to which Baynham dived, but too late. The ball whipped wide of a post. Mansfield continued to do just as they liked, and Baynham saved from Hall after the defence had yielded like butter before a sharp knife. Bramwell did his best to sound a rallying call with a strong run, at the end of which a corner was forced by McKechnie, who took it himself, but Treharne took the ball as O'Rourke challenged.

BRILLIANT ANTICIPATION

Corners were not availing the Town much in face of the brilliant anticipation of Treharne, who was cutting out everything from the wings with deadly accuracy. Nor that he was being tested in any other way, because direct shots from the Town were mainly non-existent.

On the other hand, Mansfield were popping them in from almost any range, and Scanlon held up his hands in disbelief when one from him from 25 yards clipped the top of the bar and went over. Walden was the one Luton



Only a great save from Treharne prevented O'ROURKE from levelling the scores just after the start of the second half.

LUTON TOWN				
Right				Left
	Baynham			
	McBain		Bramwell	
	Morton		Fincham	
Walden	McKechnie	O'Rourke	Reid	Weir
Referee: Mr. G. W. T. Davies (Romford)				
Scanlon	Chapman (R)	Wagstaff	Govan	Hall (B)
	Morris	Gill	Chapman (S)	
	Humble		Jones	
		Treharne		
Left	MANSFIELD TOWN			Right

forward who looked as if he might provide some salvation, but he was not receiving an adequate service. When he did receive a workable pass he produced a drive that Treharne saved brilliantly at the foot of a post. Fincham was now up in the forward line in an effort to improve matters, but to me they looked well past mending.

Fine work by Bramwell spoiled in the end by over-cleverness gave Wagstaff a chance of increasing the Mansfield lead, but he shot straight at Baynham, Bramwell suffered the penalty by being injured as the result of an awkward fall.

Hope had long since disintegrated so far as the Town were concerned, and they had been reduced to pretty much of a shambles this half. Just nothing worthwhile was coming now, and it was no wonder that there was a general movement homeward by the people on the terraces. A movement between Walden and Reid raised late hopes, but the centre from the former was again pulled down by Treharne.

With barely a minute remaining

Weir missed the chance of the match when left, by a pass from Pacey, with only Treharne to beat. Instead of making certain by crashing the ball in he poked it tamely at the goalkeeper and so put out of court any question of a dramatic last-minute rally.

Result:

LUTON 0
MANSFIELD 2