

TOWN IN ONLY-GOAL STRUGGLE AGAIN

Some Chances Were Missed Against Port Vale

By CHILTERN

64/65

PORT VALE 1, LUTON TOWN 0

A SCORE of 1—0 is getting to be a sort of symbolic result for the Town because their last four League matches, two of which were lost, have ended that way.

It points, of course, to a consuming weakness in the forward line, on the one hand, and the considerable improvement since the early weeks of the season which has been achieved by the defence which is now showing great stability.

Rugged defensive work kept the Town in with a chance at Vale Park on Monday night until the end, and it was some finishing that came into the shocking category that deprived them of a point.

Not that they compared with the home team for freedom of movement, use of the open spaces or for accuracy in shooting and much of the forward work was laboured and unimaginative.

Again, there was far too much running with the ball, failure to pinpoint passes and a tendency to go across the field instead of making use of the through ball.

Despite all this, chances cropped up, only to be missed by some poor shooting, much of it from close range.

Early on, the Town had rather more than their share of bad luck because after only two minutes Weir flashed in with his head a centre from Jardine and it seemed to me that, at first, the referee signalled a goal only to disallow it when he saw that the linesman had flag upraised for offside.

About the correctness of the decision, I was in no position to comment, but it must have been a close thing. Vale launched several dangerous raids in one of which Cheesebrough headed just wide from a corner by Smith and then the Town came into the

picture again through the drive of Pacey and Fincham.

First the latter came through completely unexpectedly to make a long, low drive that Hancock kept out at only the last second.

PACEY HIT THE BAR

Then Pacey slammed the ball against the bar following an indirect free-kick, and that was to prove the nearest the Town came to scoring.

When Fincham was beaten in the centre circle, Harkin was left with a fine chance but, after a long run, he was thwarted by the combined efforts of Morton and Baynham.

The goalkeeper made several smart saves during the first half, but there was nothing he could do about preventing the only goal.

That came seconds from half-time and in what Manager Bill Harvey claimed was over-time in view of the fact that there had been no stoppages for injury.

The speed of Rowland, deputising for Billy Bingham, who was resting a strain, forced Bramwell to concede a corner and from this, RAWLINGS went up to meet the ball which squeezed in just inside the angle of the woodwork which it appeared to hit before dropping over the line.

GOAL A BAD BLOW

For the Town, on whom it had looked any odds that they would still be level at half-time, that was a sad blow, especially in view of the prevailing weakness forward.

Although, Vale continued to make better use of the ball in the second half, the Town had their chances and they were missed in turn by McKechnie, Salisbury and Weir.

Opportunities came the way of the Vale, too, and Smith hit a post after Baynham, striving to avoid conceding a corner had lost possession of the ball.

Defensively there was not much about which to complain with Fincham driving off a number of attacks and his headed clearances being more decisive than in the earlier matches. Just twice, he was caught badly out of position, but did not have to pay the full penalty.

Again, Morton turned in an immaculate performance with sound positional play cutting down Smith's advantage of having the extra speed and it was speed that worried Bramwell in dealing with Rowland who, however, finished badly.

If the Town forwards erred through using too short passes, Pacey went to the other extreme by trying those from as far as 40 or 45 yards which were intercepted invariably, but Pacey put a lot of drive into his play.

So, too, but with less success, did Lownds who did not contribute a great deal of a constructive nature.

All three inside forwards showed weakness in finishing, including McKechnie who, otherwise, played with considerable determination.

Neither Salisbury nor Weir showed much drive, Fairchild had an unevitable time and Jardine was again far too liable to be caught in possession.