

VITAL HOME POINTS STILL SLIP FROM TOWN

Midfield Build-Up Is Still Not Good Enough

By CHILTERN

LUTON TOWN 1, PETERBOROUGH UNITED 1

DISAPPOINTING progress of the Town at home continued in this match on Saturday when they failed to beat a moderate-looking Peterborough outfit whose defence, which has been so porous this season, was given extra confidence by the way in which former Aston Villa goalkeeper Nigel Sims made the penalty area his own.

Their one valid excuse was that they had what seemed to be a perfectly good goal by O'Rourke disallowed about 20 minutes from the end, but a division of the spoils was a fairly equable result of a scrappy struggle.

With the scores level, O'Rourke went up to connect squarely with a high lob into the goalmouth and steered the ball expertly well wide of Sims.

His natural jubilation was cut short when the referee awarded Peterborough a free-kick with a gesture that suggested that O'Rourke had used his hand in the process.

So he had, according to the referee, who said afterwards that the centre-forward had levered himself up via Walker's shoulder, but this was an opinion with which neither O'Rourke nor Town officials were disposed to agree.

Early in the second half, O'Rourke showing more of his zip of last season than in any match since his ankle injury, had secured an opportunistic equaliser when he took advantage of hesitation in defence to fasten on to a through pass by Pacey and steer the ball low into the corner of the net.

Certainly, the Town had cause to be aggrieved over the disallowing of a goal, but it has to be borne in mind that they were fortunate not to have lost all interest in this match by half-time.

MOULDEN, who gave Peterborough the lead in 10 minutes when, from close range, he changed the direction of a Deakin shot, should have been the visitors' match-winner.

Twice, from a range at which it was difficult to miss, he sent the ball wide with the Town defence spreadeagled and Baynham unable to do much about the situation.

They were chances that certainly should have been accepted and, in fact, with a more limited share of the play, Peterborough created for themselves the better opportunities.

PENALTY CLAIM TURNED DOWN

Best Town efforts came from Pleat, but they were unlucky not to have a penalty when Rank-

more handled a centre by Whittaker. Other than that, their finishing did not promise a lot of goals and O'Rourke lacked the support that could have turned him into a match-winner.

Basically, what prevented the Town from winning was the inadequacy of their build up in midfield and the inaccuracy of their passing.

While the hard grounds continue the quality of the football will not reach a high level, but there is no excuse for the stream of misplaced passes that was produced.

One of the big offenders was Reid, who is usually more

immaculate than most in this respect, but he had very much of an off day and McKechnie had little to show at the end for a great deal of chasing about.

One thing that is causing some concern at Kenilworth-road at the moment is the lack of sufficient link between inside-forwards and wing-halves and this can be pinpointed as much of the reason for the present unsuccessful spell through which the team is going.

Pacey is in nothing like the form of his halcyon days and, from what we have seen of Knights, his forte is uncompromising defence rather than constructive ability.

There was always potential danger on the Town wings, especially from Pleat, though Whittaker, with rather less of the ball than he receives usually, was pretty much in the grip of Singleton.

Generally speaking, the Town defence was sound enough with Fincham keeping a firm grip on the dangerous Dougan and McBain and Bramwell, both strong in the tackle, usually too much for the visiting wingers.

Baynham did not have the opportunities to shine that were afforded Sims, but he did well enough except that his kicking was too often the means of putting Peterborough on to the attack.

LUTON TOWN—Baynham; McBain, Bramwell; Pacey, Fincham, Knights; Pleat, McKechnie, O'Rourke, Reid, Whittaker.

PETERBOROUGH UNITED—Sims; Singleton, Birks; Crowe, Walker, Rankmore; Barnes, Moulden, Dougan, Deakin, Crawford.

Referee: R. V. Spittles, Great Yarmouth. Attendance: 9,339.

WHAT THE OTHER CRITICS SAID

"Luton were mesmerised by the magic of Nigel Sims, Peterborough's goalkeeper captured from Aston Villa. Luton beat Sims only twice—with a well-placed shot from John O'Rourke and a header by the same player which was disallowed by the referee.

"Neither team produced promotion football, but Peterborough would have won if Tony Moulden had taken advantage of two so-simple chances to add to his 10th minute goal." — "News of the World."

"Luton argue that they won this game 20 minutes before the end when John O'Rourke headed in the ball. He was far from offside, but the goal was disallowed, triggering off loud booing from the crowd.

"Referee Rex Spittles gave me the full story: 'John was definitely on-side and it was a great header. But he climbed up to get it by putting his hand on a defender's shoulder. I just don't know who the defender was.'" — "The People."