

TOWN'S NEW SCHEME BLOWN SKY HIGH

Barnsley did not look back after penalty goal

By CHILTERN

BARNSELEY 3, LUTON TOWN 0

NO one appreciates better than myself the splendid job Charlie Watkins has accomplished since, almost overnight, he took over as trainer-coach to the Town.

Since then he has reorganised training methods, the value of which has not been wholly seen on the field, chiefly, I feel, because of the ill-luck he has had with injuries to key players.

In good faith, he introduced a new plan for the vital relegation struggle at Barnsley on Saturday. It failed, as I feel it was doomed to, for varying reasons.

Any plan, however well-conceived and however meritorious, is entirely in the hands of the players once they step on to the arena, and this particular idea, about which I cannot wax enthusiastic, fell down because the Town had not a sufficient number of players who were able to slot into the general scheme of things.

However, let us remember that the Town's days of glory were tied to a policy of attack and I still contend that however badly things may be going, to go on to the field with a plan dedicated basically to defence, is not only retrograde, but negative.

For one thing, the accent on defence means that the margin of error is too slight, as the Town discovered to their cost in the ninth minute when an unnecessary piece of handling by Barton, gave the home side a penalty.

KERR after having been ordered to re-take the kick, following some infringement, made no mistake from the spot and the Town were struggling.

Whether or not their avowed intention of sealing up the middle through which they have been so vulnerable in away games this season, would have paid off but for this unfortunate happening, I would not like to say.

SPEARHEAD OF TWO FORWARDS

But there is no doubt that the loss of an early goal in such circumstances is a dire blow, particularly as the main reliance for retaliation is placed on a spearhead of two forwards, in this case, Rioch and McKechnie.

They had the aid of some spasmodic bursts by the wingers, who were also required to take part in the second line-up of four players in what can best be described as the first defensive layer.

The plan relied on up-and-down work from the wingers, penetration into attack by the full-backs, when possible, and a double centre-half plan, as provided by Pacey and Barton, with the latter given the task of sweeping up behind when anything went wrong.

Result was that the moderate Barnsley team, with no such fanciful idea, had more of the play and generally looked the more dangerous and almost the only worthwhile shot of the first half by the Town came from Rioch, who saw his effort pushed over the bar by Williamson.

SHOULD HAVE HAD A PENALTY

The Town's real slice of bad luck came quite early on when the referee failed to notice a blatant handling offence inside the penalty area by Brookes, and there was no signal from the linesman either.

When SENIOR blasted the ball into the top, far corner of the net seven minutes after half-time, it was patently obvious that the Town's worries about relegation were due to be increased and when GRAHAM, 13 minutes later, found a gap down the middle which, in theory, should not have been there, then the bubble was pricked completely.

Altogether, it was a performance with which no-one connected with the Town will want to remember and my immediate feeling was that it was a pity that they did not try conclusions with Barnsley in a more orthodox way.

Had they done so, I had the impression that a better result would have been obtained.

Of the forwards, I marked an improvement by Rioch, who looked more at home in this class than in any previous match, and the liveliness of

Whittaker was certainly an asset.

McKechnie spent the game in a lone battle that was doomed to failure and Riddick, not only playing in the unaccustomed position of outside-right, but called upon for additional duties, had a depressing time.

Normally at inside-left, Reid played at left-half, and was undoubtedly the Town's most consistent player. Behind him, Jardine was adequate, but Barton's role was not very effective. Pacey did a useful job in a limited sort of way, and it became patent that Caleb is not wing-half material.

McBain is not having a happy time at the moment, but Baynham, despite giving the impression at times of not being totally happy about his leg, certainly could not be blamed for the defeat.

BARNSELEY. — Williamson; Hopper, Brookes; Byrne, Winstanley, Craven; Sheavills, Kerr, Graham, Senior, O'Hara.

LUTON TOWN. — Baynham; McBain, Jardine; Caleb, Pacey, Barton; Riddick, Rioch, McKechnie, Reid, Whittaker.

Referee.—F. M. Nicholson, Manchester. Attendance. — 2,802.