

McBAIN'S INJURY

THEIR ONLY ALIBI

"Worst display from a Luton team" — Manager

By CHILTERN

64/65

AFTER seeing his team humiliated to the tune of 7-2 by Shrewsbury Town on Wednesday evening, the dressing room comments of manager George Martin were short and to the point.

"I do not want to see any of you tomorrow. Go and forget about it. You cannot play any worse than that," he said to the players.

To me, he said, "That's the worst display I have ever seen from a Luton team. There was no life and no initiative and there seems to be no confidence at all."

QUITE rightly, I feel, the manager is blaming the lack of confidence that has crept in during the bad run of recent weeks for much of the present trouble and he said, "They just cannot be as bad as they looked."

Indeed, it would be difficult for that to be, because Shrewsbury, well as they played, were made to look like world-beaters through slovenly work all round by the Town.

Wearing all blue, Shrewsbury reminded me, especially in the first half, of Chelsea when they were beginning their bid to regain their place in the First Division.

Made to look as if standing still

THERE was the same eager approach, ceaseless running after the ball and tremendously effective use of the open spaces.

At times, the Town defence was made to look as if it were standing still by the speed at which the visiting attacks were mounted.

A good deal of the trouble was sparked off by the fact that right-half Hemsley had just about all the room in the world, and it was his constant coming through with the ball and, to a lesser extent, that by the other wing-half, Brodie, that caused much of the damage.

McBain pulled a back muscle

ONLY alibi that could be put forward by the Town was that McBain was injured mid-way through the first half when Shrewsbury were leading through a goal after 13 minutes by Ross.

At the time, the mishap did not look serious but, at half-time, it was discovered that McBain had pulled a muscle in his back and he re-appeared at outside-left, with Gibson dropping to right-back and McKechnie switching to right-half.

I doubt very much whether

this affected the ultimate result, though, possibly, the margin would not have been so great had McBain remained fit.

Spectator's advice to Boswell

EVEN before he was hurt, tearaway Shrewsbury could have been three goals up and, in fact, they reached that happy position by the time that half an hour had passed through a couple of snap goals by Boardman.

At this stage, the slow hand-clap broke out to add clearly to the advice given earlier by a supporter to Boswell, the Shrewsbury goalkeeper, "You might as well get changed, goalie."

Indeed, his only employment was from a not very difficult shot by Gibson before O'Rourke brought some hope in the 33rd minute by turning in a centre by Pleat.

Three goals came in five minutes

FOR a few minutes, the Town looked less of a shambles and more of a team, but Shrewsbury were still the more dangerous and they were unlucky when Brodie hit a post.

Between the 54th and 58th minutes, three goals came, the first to Scott from a shrewd Broadbent pass, followed three minutes later by a successful Phillips header from Pleat's centre.

However, the score remained at 4-2 only for a minute before Scott, a reserve brought in because of an injury to Meredith, scored again, with the defence all at sea.

Centre-half problem before the match

THAT was virtually the end because there was no prospect of the Town rescuing themselves from this dreadful position and Board-

man rubbed it in during the last 10 minutes with two more goals to further expose the weakness in the Town defence.

Even before the match, the manager had his problems because he had confidently named Caleb as centre-half and then found that a calf injury would keep him out.

Then, he turned to Fincham whose knee, damaged recently, was not 100 per cent recovered and so he was ruled out.

Down-the-middle gap was exploited

NEXT on the list was Pacey, who had been having some stomach trouble, but the manager considered him to be the fittest of the three.

In the event, Pacey never measured up to the task, and there was a tell-tale gap down the middle which was thoroughly exploited.

Not that Pacey should be made the scapegoat for this debacle which was a team failure, in which scarcely a single player measured up to a tithe of his known form and in much of what was done, particularly in defence, there was ample evidence of over-anxiety.

No grip was taken in midfield

THIS was underlined by the number of clearances which were badly sliced, something that should not happen so often when a team is in confident frame of mind.

Neither Gibson nor Reid got a grip on things in midfield, so that the Shrewsbury inside men received far too much freedom and, even before his injury, McBain was struggling, as was Jardine.

Nor was Tinsley blameless, but one had to have a measure of sympathy for him because any goalkeeper would have found it difficult to look confident in the face of what was happening in front of him.

Attack suffered by comparison

FORWARD, the Town compared unfavourably with their opponents, especially in regard

to the speed at which attacks were mounted and such movements as were produced tended to be too deliberate.

Phillips did not make a memorable home debut, nor will he, I feel, make much impression until more material is served up for him to give him a chance to fill the role for which he was signed—that of goal snatcher.

Except for the odd occasion, O'Rourke was well held, Riddick scarcely got into the game and McKechnie certainly did not look the part at outside-left.

Grave doubts now about an escape

WHICH left Pleat as the player nearest to being a success, and both goals came from his centres, but he must endeavour to get the ball across more promptly and so make better use of Phillips's height.

While the defeat in itself is not fatal, it does raise grave doubts about the Town's ability to extricate themselves from the bottom four.

Now, Barnsley, the most likely team of the five to escape, are virtually three points ahead because the Town's goal average took such a bad knock, and have a match in hand.