

BRILLIANT RALLY SHOOK BARNESLEY

Phillips's shooting is paying big dividends

By CHILTERN

64/65

NOT for a very long time have we heard the chant, "We want six," that rang around the Kenilworth Road terraces in the closing stages of the Town's match with Barnsley on Wednesday, which provided them with their fourth consecutive win and two supremely important points to keep alive their hopes of avoiding relegation.

And at the end of their sparkling display after the interval, the crowd of 6,112, their biggest in the League since Boxing Day, cheered the team off the field.

CYNICALLY, perhaps, I could not help contrasting the circumstances with those at the finish of the home match with Shrewsbury only a month before, and also reflect on what a transformation has been brought about in a short space of time.

Talking of transformations, there was one in Wednesday's match, brought about, no doubt, by some pretty powerful medicine in the shape of advice from Manager George Martin during the interval.

Defensive tactics were all wrong

WITH the score 1-1 and Barnsley having given a lively first-half display, the Town's chances at that stage did not look all that bright.

For one thing, their tactics were wrong because, particularly in defence, they were prone to retreat instead of going in to meet the ball and it was this failing that led to Barnsley neutralising the value of the goal scored by Phillips after 14 minutes.

Two minutes later Bettany picked up the ball in midfield and was allowed to approach the edge of the penalty area, without being challenged, before letting go a fine drive that beat Tinsley's dive.

Wingers were given too much scope

BOTH visiting wingers were being given too much scope and O'Hara underlined this before a goal had been scored when he wandered into the inside-right position and was desperately unlucky with a shot that struck a post, with Tinsley well beaten.

In fact, the goalkeeper had plenty of opportunity in the first half of demonstrating what an assured player he has become, and it was not until the interval approached that the Town gave real promise of regaining their advantage.

Interval doubts about victory

THEN the Barnsley goal escaped remarkably, when Pleat beat Williamson and

Murphy headed the ball from under the bar, and when he gained the rebound the winger crashed the ball against a post.

So, during the interval there were grave doubts about the Town's ability to secure the two points they needed so badly, but the second half told a completely different story.

Faults which the Town had shown previously were cut out. They went in to meet the ball, and as a result forced Barnsley back on to the defensive and finally swept them aside.

Three goals in eight minutes spell

ONCE McKechnie had put them ahead again after 53 minutes, the Town were set for victory, and the inside-left squeezed the ball in from a narrow angle after Williamson had gone full length to a shot from Pleat.

Just once after that did Barnsley look as if they might be a menace and that was when Winstanley came up to head in a corner and Tinsley just reached the ball near the foot of a post.

Then came the spell that had the crowd roaring with delight at the sight of three goals to the Town in the space of only eight minutes.

Phillips scored a brilliant goal

McKECHNIE began it by blasting the ball in from close range after Phillips had pulled it back to him, after an attempted clearance by Win-

stanley, and four minutes later came the goal of the match, and one of the best seen on the ground this season.

It was a brilliant individual effort by Phillips who picked up the ball in midfield, beat two opponents and left Williamson helpless with a left-footed drive of high velocity.

To round off the excitement, O'Rourke opened his account from close range during a scramble following a corner by Pleat.

Phillips has given attack fire power

SO was completed what was easily the Town's best victory of the season and it was the first time that they had scored as many as five goals.

Certainly, the attack as present constituted, is a vastly different formation from the one we have seen fumbling away its chances in front of goal so often this season.

There is no room for doubt that much of the improvement has stemmed from the switching into the middle of Phillips who has not only given the front line the fire power that was so sadly lacking previously but has encouraged the others to have a go.

McKechnie now into double figures

HOW refreshing it is to see Phillips bearing down on the opposing goal with the sole idea of blazing away with all his considerable strength.

It is paying off handsomely and Phillips has now scored six goals in seven matches.

The two McKechnie secured raised his total for the season to 10 and should help restore some of the confidence that he has lacked recently.

To bring O'Rourke in at inside-right was a happy decision because he showed the ability to beat an opponent in a narrow space and to distribute the ball accurately.

O'Rourke can make a good inside-right

MANAGER Martin feels that O'Rourke can develop into a first-class inside-forward and he certainly has a valuable role to play in the vital matches that have to come.

There was a marked improvement by Pleat, mainly because he adopted a more direct approach and made better use of the ball and the terrier-like Harber turned in another highly useful display.

Doubtless, the defence will have learned its lesson from the happenings of the first half and it is apt to be fatal to allow opposing forwards to bring the ball to reasonable shooting distance.

Defence tightened up after interval

MORE than that, retreating into the penalty area tends to lessen the chances of the goalkeeper of having a clear sight of the ball.

Both Barton and Jardine tended to give the wingers too much scope before the interval, but tightened up considerably afterwards, and Gibson improved after having had an uncertain first 45 minutes, during which Reid was called upon to do much recovery work.

Fincham was staunch enough in the middle, through which few problems were posed, and Tinsley again earned the applause of the crowd for his excellent goal-keeping.

Barnsley had something of an alibi in that Winstanley received a knock in the second half and switched to centre-forward, but it is doubtful whether it affected the result a great deal. By the time it happened the Town had their problems sorted out.