

TINSLEY PREVENTED A COMPLETE ROUT

Town's confidence had disappeared completely

By Chiltern

SOUTHEND UNITED 5, LUTON TOWN 0

THAT in the course of three days a team could lose so much of its touch and confidence as the Town did at Roots Hall on Saturday was almost unbelievable.

From the supremely confident outfit they were in the second half against Barnsley on Wednesday, they became a shabby, shambling lot who escaped so lightly only by virtue of another brilliant display by Tinsley, whose agility and general competence alone prevented the home team from approaching double figures.

Yet, beforehand, this match was regarded as more likely to yield points than any previous one away this season because Southend had been in a bad patch while the Town were on the crest of a wave which, it was hoped, would last until the end of the season.

What happened was a sad blow to all connected with the Luton club and came as a nasty shock to those most intimately associated with it.

Not for a single minute could the team be said to be in command of the situation and they seemed to have no answer to the conditions presented by a greasy pitch on which water was standing liberally before the start.

Southend began as if the conditions were made to measure for them and they could have scored twice before they took the lead in fortunate fashion nine minutes after the start.

With the Town back in deep defensive positions, from which they seldom broke out throughout the match, Smillie made a harmless enough looking centre that Reid tried to

hook away, but the ball skidded the wrong way off his boot and landed in the back of the net.

ANOTHER GOAL FOLLOWED QUICKLY

That, of course, did not help matters, but before there was any question of staging a recovery, the Town were two down when M c K I N V E N headed the ball in four minutes later after Tinsley had made a fine save from Gilfillan.

Only for a short period close to half-time, did the Town promise much in attack and there was no improvement after the interval when Southend continued to crowd on the pressure, and it was mainly Tinsley who prevented them adding to their lead.

Somehow or another, the Town held out until 19 minutes from the end when M c K I N V E N sparked off a scoring spree with a great drive into the top corner of the net.

Hereabouts, Barton who had bruised his leg in a tackle just before half-time, changed places with Pleat, but this could not be advanced as an alibi.

A mistake by Jardine presented GILFILLAN with the fourth goal after 74 minutes, and BENTLEY, who had been a source of danger throughout due to the way in which he came through with the ball, rounded things off after 79 minutes with a tremendous drive.

ONLY TINSLEY WAS UP TO FORM

Only Tinsley of the Town team will remember this match as adding to his stature. Barton and Jardine failed signally to cut down the menace from two raiding wingers and neither Gibson nor Reid obtained anything like the grip on the middle of the field that was needed. Fincham battled away bravely enough, but was continually harassed and never in command.

Maybe, there could be some measure of sympathy for the defence because of the poor showing of the forwards. Neither O'Rourke nor McKechnie was in the game and Phillips was a pale shadow of the marauder who worried the Barnsley defence so much and, in any case, was often playing too deep.

Harber scarcely saw the ball from start to finish and the supply of passes that came the way of Pleat was very meagre, too.

SOUTHEND UNITED :
McKechnie (I); Costello, King; Bentley, Watson, Bradbury; Woodley, Smillie, Smith, Gilfillan, McKinven.

LUTON TOWN: Tinsley; Barton, Jardine; Gibson, Fincham, Reid; Pleat, O'Rourke, Phillips, McKechnie (T), Harber.

Referee: J. K. Taylor, Wolverhampton. Attendance: 4,932.