

HANDICAP TOO MUCH FOR TOWN

LUTON TOWN 0,
GILLINGHAM 2

WITH nine changes, all of them voluntary, except at left-back, for which position Jardine was unfit, the Town showed more fight but found luck running out on them.

In the 55th minute Caleb, restored to the centre-half position after a longish absence from the team, collided with Gibbs, with whom Gillingham had switched Rackstraw without notifying the public, and was taken off suffering from concussion and double vision.

Later, the knock produced bad bruising, so that there was no question of him playing at Walsall on Monday.

Whether the mishap made any difference to the final result, I would not like to hazard a guess, but it certainly did not improve the Town's chances of retrieving the reputation they lost the previous day.

After an untidy, scrappy first half, which produced a crop of free kicks, the majority against Gillingham, nothing looked more on the cards than a goal-less draw.

It had been stalemate all the way around, with neither set of forwards showing much of a spark and, in the main, defences holding the upper hand.

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A shrewd pass by Farrall began the movement, and the ball went to Gibbs, whose shot struck Gibson. Unluckily for the Town, it ran straight to RACKSTRAW, who drove it past Tinsley, whom, I should imagine, was unsighted.

That Rackstraw should be the man to demolish the Town's hopes was sheer irony because, something over a year ago when he was available for transfer from Chesterfield for a fee verging on five figures, they watched him several times before deciding that he was not the player for them.

Soon after the goal came, the injury to Caleb, which was followed by Gibson switching to centre-half and Reid being withdrawn from the forward line.

Just once, Simpson was brought into serious action by the Town's four-men attack, and that was by Harber, but, for the most part, the handicap was too much for them against this physically strong team.

It was perhaps symptomatic of the way the Town's luck was running that in the 71st minute Gibson, running across to challenge Newman, who was not really in a threatening position, was late with his tackle, with the result that the referee pointed to the penalty spot, from which RACKSTRAW made no mistake.

There was no doubt that the changes improved the defensive set-up where McBain, Bramwell and Lownds, all of whom have been overlooked recently, justified their selection.

Until his injury, Caleb was doing a capable job and Gibson, after doing better in his own position than on the previous day, deputised well at centre-half, and, certainly no blame could attach to Tinsley.

In attack, however, the Town seemed to be unable to overcome the spoiling tactics of the opposition and there was little consistent threat. Both Harber and Whittaker made some thrusts, but Reid was not happy and Riddick and Phillips showed only occasional sparkle.

LUTON TOWN. — Tinsley; McBain, Bramwell; Gibson, Caleb, Lownds; Harber, Phillips, Riddick, Reid, Whittaker.

GILLINGHAM. — Simpson;