

TOWN SUNK BY A SINGLE GOAL

Little punch in the front line

By CHILTERN

DARLINGTON 1, LUTON TOWN 0

SUCH were the conditions and the circumstances that no-one could really have expected a classic from this encounter at Feethams on Saturday.

After the mud through which they have been ploughing these last weeks the teams suddenly found themselves transported to a dry, dusting pitch on which the ball did all manner of tricks and control and accuracy in distribution was a matter of extreme difficulty.

So far as the circumstances were concerned, the issue went far deeper than the mere two points at stake, because victory to either team was an insurance against failure in the promotion hunt and a probable passport to the Division IV title.

That the Town did not make it, was disappointing, but not fatal to their chances, nor was it something for which they should blame themselves unduly.

Where they were beaten was on the score of lack of thrust in their front line and the presence of O'Rourke could have made a world of difference.

Unfortunately, he was not in the line-up and, as a result, the Town laid their plans basically with a draw in mind.

They played a 4-3-3 system with Rivers withdrawn into a defensive position and it paid off very well in the first half during which neither goalkeeper had much about which to worry.

EARLY GOAL IN SECOND HALF

There was a little more cohesion about the home attack, but it was not causing the Town defence undue anxiety and when the interval arrived with the score-sheet still blank, things were reckoned by Town officials to be going well.

However, they had cause for re-adjustment of their belief three minutes after half-time when Darlington took the lead with a scrappy sort of goal that should have been prevented in the early stages.

Three mistakes could be traced before the ball finally went into the net from the head of CUMMINGS following a centre by McGeachie.

Hard though the Town tried, there was never much prospect that they would draw level because the Darlington defence, marshalled as ably by Yeoman as was the Town's by Woods, was in no mood to allow their lack-lustre attack to reach close quarters.

Long before the end, it was quite evident that that lone goal was to be the decider and that the team which drew first blood would be the eventual winners was something on which anyone could have bet confidently right from the start.

DARLINGTON DESERVED IT

Certainly, I had no complaint about the result because Darlington certainly had the pull in attack, though they found the Town defence a considerable stumbling block.

With Woods effectively blocking the middle and Thomson and Slough between them putting out of commission the home left wing, it was left to McGeachie on whom Edwards could not obtain a complete grip to pose most of the second half danger.

Fundamentally, Moore did a good job by the close watch he kept on Hutchinson, but Tinsley looked a little rattled after the interval, probably a legacy of a shaking up he received late in the first half.

Forward, main honours go to Whittaker and Riddick, in that order. Rivers was seldom an orthodox centre-forward, Reid should have been more

attacking minded after Darlington scored and French had a quiet game in consequence of some close marking.

DARLINGTON: Moor; Peverell, Keeble; Yeoman, Jacques, Ratcliffe; McGeachie, Hutchinson, Cummings, Sproates, O'Neill.

LUTON TOWN: Tinsley; Thomson, Edwards; Slough, Woods, Moore; French, Riddick, Rivers, Reid, Whittaker.

Referee: K. Dagnall, Bolton.

Attendance: 11,155.