

MISSED PENALTY

BUT OBJECT WAS GAINED

Barrow proved to be spirited opposition

By CHILTERN

65/66

LUTON TOWN 3, BARROW 2

REALLY, the score-line should have read more in the nature of 4-1 at this match at Kenilworth Road on Thursday evening, though I would not say that Barrow, paying their first visit to the ground, deserved such a fate.

However, facts must be faced squarely, and the Town had a wonderful opportunity of making their win more decisive when they were awarded a penalty eight minutes from the end.

This happened two minutes after RIDDICK had relieved much of the tension by heading in a third goal following good work by Harber when O'Rourke was brought down heavily by Arrowsmith.

After the centre-forward's abject failure from the spot in the previous home match, choice for the job fell on French.

In the most nonchalant manner, he strolled up to the ball, had Millard going the wrong way because he took the kick with his left foot and then left the crowd of 10,647 gasping by ballooning the ball over the bar.

That could have had serious consequences because Barrow, who could never be discounted, pulled back a goal to 3-2 two minutes from the end and it would have been nothing short of tragedy for the Town had they managed to achieve what had seemed the near impossible by snatching a point.

PILKINGTON CAUSED THE PANIC

Man who caused the late panic stations was the vastly experienced former International, Brian PILKINGTON who, with Read caught in two minds for the first time in the match, nipped in to score late.

So Barrow began the scoring and also completed it because after the Town had frittered away some very good opportunities, perhaps through over-anxiety, MARSHALL shook the home fans by putting Barrow ahead in the 19th minute at the second attempt after Read had done well to push out his first effort.

Before that, French had missed by inches, Riddick had failed with the sort of opportunity that seemed impossible to do so, and there had been aerial shooting by Harber and Moore.

Once Barrow went ahead, they began to develop their game in midfield and both Worthington and Alston brought the best out of Read at a time when another goal could just about have put paid to the Town's promotion chances.

O'ROURKE LEVELLED THE SCORES

Gradually though, the Town began to hit back and, O'ROURKE levelled the scores after 28 minutes when he ran on to a centre from Harber, hooked the ball over Millard's head and then squeezed it in near the post.

Eight minutes later, things at last began to go the way the crowd had expected when FRENCH, from a pass by

O'Rourke, made a firm drive which might, or might not, have found a billet in the net had it not been deflected by Arrowsmith.

Chances continued to come the way of the Town, but were allowed to slip by, though French was right out of luck with a shot that was just too high after O'Rourke had beaten Millard for possession.

There was quite a lot of good midfield play from this experienced Barrow side in the second half, during which Read was called upon quite frequently and distinguished himself several times by the decisive way in which he dealt with varying situations.

DEPUTIES WERE ADEQUATE

Then came Riddick's goal and the sort of climax to quite an entertaining game that the more nervous Town supporters could have done without.

In view of the fact that this was their fourth match in just over a week and that changes were necessary because of injuries, this was a satisfactory performance by the Town.

Both Gibson and Harber came straight back into the team after weeks on the injured list without the chance of a preliminary test in the Reserves and did an adequate job.

Particularly did I like the enthusiasm and dash of Harber and it was a pity that it was not matched by accuracy in finishing, though two goals came from his work.

Much the same applied to French, who had periods of brilliance and also some of irritating carelessness in his final execution.

It was against the better judgment of Manager George Martin to move Riddick from right-half where he has been playing so brilliantly, but he remembered the fact that Riddick was the danger forward at Barrow and in view of the fact that he secured what proved to be the decisive goal, the move paid off.

IS THE STRAIN BEGINNING TO TELL?

Barely recovered from the injury he received at Halifax on Monday, Rioch was not so effective as he has been, and O'Rourke made the most of some limited material served up in the face of close marking by Arrowsmith.

Maybe the strain is beginning to tell a little on the defence which has had an arduous time recently, but they did well enough in the circumstances, though neither Gibson nor Moore really took a complete grip on the middle of the field.

Woods was as reliable as ever, Slough impresses more and more as he gains in experience and although Thomson was occasionally worried by the wily Pilkington, there is no doubt that his heart is in the right place.

And there is no doubt at all that Read has come to stay as first choice goalkeeper because there were times when he stood between the Town and what could have been disaster.

LUTON TOWN: Read; Thomson, Slough; Gibson, Woods, Moore; French, Riddick, O'Rourke, Rioch, Harber. Substitute: Edwards.

BARROW: Millard; Mallon, Edwards; Worthington, Arrowsmith, Eddy; Marshall, Smith, Mulholland, Alston, Pilkington.

Referee: R. L. Johnson, Lowestoft.