

CHANGE OF PLAN ON CARDS?

Bid for away point failed

By CHILTERN
BARNSELY 2, LUTON TOWN 1

WHETHER the current 4-3-3 plan in use by the Town is to have an extended life, or whether the team should revert to more orthodox, but what many people feel to be outmoded tactics, may well be the subject of deep thought at Kenilworth Road this week.

Perhaps the plan was exaggerated at Barnsley on Saturday because the Town were badly in need of their first away point and, plainly, they felt that in massed defence they had their best chance of obtaining it.

As a result, few clear-cut scoring openings were created with the Town's three strikers, Pleat, French and Whittaker, well out-numbered by the home defence.

There is no doubt that the shortage of experienced players, particularly those with drive and punch in the front line, has prompted the Town to attempt the modern trend in football.

But for those who wanted to see it, there was arrant waste in this match in having accredited wingers like French and Whittaker, who created so much havoc in their own positions last season, bunched up in the middle, vainly hoping for something in the scoring line to come their way.

Admittedly, the Town's midfield work was more clever than that of Barnsley, but the trouble was that far too many passes were intercepted and that the use of the short pass was very much over-done.

Why, with open spaces yawning out on the wings, the Town should have persisted in trying to break down the home defence in the middle was a mystery and the one forward who was most likely

to supply the missing thrust, Rioch, was over-concerned with defence, apart from short periods.

When Rioch did come up to reinforce the attack at the start of the second half, the Town secured their only goal in which the inside-left had a hand.

MOORE, running into position intelligently, was the scorer after 57 minutes, despite the close attention of two defenders and that levelled the goal obtained for Barnsley after 29 minutes by MURPHY.

Earnshaw, who had come on as substitute for Briscoe, laid on the chance with a hard low cross which Read was unable to cut out and Murphy was able to sweep the ball into the net.

END MIGHT HAVE JUSTIFIED MEANS

Having reached equality, there was certainly a case for the Town attempting to be more ambitious than they had been previously, but they relapsed into their defensive role again, even though it had been pointed out clearly that this home defence was no set of world-beaters.

I am well aware of the fact that had the score remained at 1-1, the end would have justified the means and that much of this criticism over the tactical plan would have been rendered invalid.

However, it did not happen that way, because after 62 minutes, EARNSHAW, whose presence on the field which was so accidental, proved to be such a boon to Barnsley, and slipped in the winner.

Considering the number of players they had at their disposal in the region of the penalty area, the Town's marking was not all that it should have been and certainly it was faulty when the decisive goal arrived.

After that, there was little evidence that the Town could score again because it was only rarely that they reached close range and punch in the middle was entirely lacking.

So much of the play was muddled that it was difficult to

sift the wheat from the chaff, but it does seem that one of the Town's main problems, apart from the urgent necessity of increasing the scoring power, lies at centre-half. A dominant player here makes all the difference to any team and Rivers was far from looking the part and, in fact, needed much cover.

It was only occasionally that Riddick and Moore gave rein to their attacking bent and even Jardine, usually so venturesome, was more in a defensive shell.

Thomson had an adequate game, but one of his problems quite often was to whom to give the ball, so thin were the Town's forces in front of them. Slough, wearing "number 9," was given the job of putting Bettany out of the game, which he accomplished.

I am prepared to believe that every member of the team tried his utmost and I would not put the Barnsley "work-rate," another new tag in football, any higher than theirs.

However, Barnsley were less frilly in their approach work and, in Earnshaw, they found a man who posed problems for the Town defence that they may not have had to tackle had the original formation remained. With 11 minutes left, Whittaker was carried off with a gashed knee and King came on as substitute.

BARNSELY: Woods; Parker, Brookes; Swallow, Winstanley, Addy; Murphy, Bettany, Briscoe (Earnshaw), Hewitt, Hamstead.

LUTON TOWN: Read; Thomson, Jardine; Riddick, Rivers, Moore; Pleat, French, Slough, Rioch, Whittaker (King).

Referee: J. A. Warburton, Manchester. Attendance: 2,041.