

CRUCIAL MISSED CHANCE

WITHIN INCHES OF BEING TWO UP

Then came the fight back by the City

By CHILTERN

BRADFORD CITY 2, LUTON TOWN 1

FOR over half an hour at Valley Parade, Bradford, on Wednesday evening, I thought that the Town had at last broken through the barrier that has proved insurmountable to them in away matches for so long, and that they were on the way to victory.

For once, they had the undeniable advantage of an early goal and also the chance to build up the lead to what might have been a conclusive 2-0 before the City really found their stride and got themselves back into the game.

In a lively start, the Town might easily have had a goal in the opening minutes when Rioch just failed to reach a cross by Conboy, who then laid on the chance for the goal after 12 minutes.

Picking up a pass from Thomson in midfield, he made ground quickly, pushed the ball on the outside of the challenging Cooper, collected it again and then made an accurate centre which PLEAT headed downwards into the net from the inside-left position, which was probably the reason for Rioch being credited with the goal in the national newspapers.

Even though the Town were moving much better in attack than in most previous away games, the City certainly were not idle in this respect. There were a couple of most timely clearances by Thomson and a quite fantastic save by Read from a header by McAnearney, after which Ingle shot wide from close in.

At this stage, the Town operated a 4-3-3 system which was not so rigid as some they have tried, in that both Riddick and Conboy, of the middle line, came through from behind quite often and effectively.

THIS WAS THE TURNING POINT

Without much doubt the turning point came in the 29th minute when Rioch sent through Pleat with a brilliant pass. The winger cut in, pulled his shot so that it was going wide of the far post, but there was Riddick racing up to make contact, and stretching, putting the ball too high.

A goal at that stage, and there should have been one on

two counts would have made all the difference. Instead, the City equalised after 35 minutes following a free-kick for a foul by Jardine on Hall out near the touchline.

The ball came across high, was not cut out by Read as it should have been, and there was LEEK in an open space, almost able to pick his spot to head into the far corner.

There was pressure on the Town goal immediately after the interval and one melee in which Read, Thomson and Moore between them finally got rid of the danger.

Even so, the Town were still dangerous in their sharp raids and another chance was allowed to slip from a corner from Pleat which Thear missed with his head and possibly unsighted Riddick, who did not reach the ball either, with the net yawning invitingly.

HALL'S DRIVE HIT THE BAR

One other opportunity of the clear-cut variety fell to Pleat from a pass by Rioch, to whom a return of the ball would probably have been beneficial, but Pleat chose to shoot and was wide.

Meanwhile, the Town had a slice of luck when Hall hammered the ball against the underpart of their bar and Read made several brilliant saves.

Then, with a quarter of an hour to go and a point apparently within the grasp of the Town, a snap break down the middle brought the City what proved to be the winner.

Moore failed in his challenge for a pass to INGLE, who pushed the ball in as Read came out and that was virtually that, despite the fact

that the Town afterwards reverted to a five forwards formation and tried desperately for an equaliser.

In the event, the chances fell to the City and there was further opportunity for Read to prove his worth.

While the fact that another defeat for the Town was a disappointment and served to underline the fact that the big need is still for a strong, striking forward, it is true that they were probably nearer winning this game than most others they have tackled away.

STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

At least chances were created, there were distinct signs of increased confidence and there was plenty of fight and determination all of which is certainly a step in the right direction.

In view of the fact that this was among his most brilliant displays, and that in the end, he saved the team from a heavier defeat, it was unfortunate that Read could be faulted for the goals.

Apart from the fact that Jardine found great difficulty in keeping tabs on Hall, the defence was staunch, with the close-marking Thomson probably the outstanding member of it.

Not that there was much fault to find with the middle line in which Moore was mostly in command in the middle, Slough did his dour job of marking and Conboy, allowed freer rein, was prominent, though he did tend to lose Ingle in the second half.

As distinct from his spear-head role of last Saturday, Thear was allotted a mainly defensive job in midfield in which he did not look happy. Riddick ran himself into the ground in his efforts in defence and attack and the same applied to Rioch who, however, was badly in need of support because, often, he was left completely on his own.

There was a rather more impressive showing from Pleat, who contrived to get himself into dangerous positions, while Whittaker, given a roving commission, kept popping up without being so threatening as he can be.

BRADFORD CITY.—Butler; Smith, Cooper; Stowell, Hallett, Leek; Hall, McAnearney, Stokes, Ingle, Cuthbertson. Substitute: Bannister.

LUTON TOWN.—Read; Thomson, Jardine; Conboy, Moore, Slough; Pleat, Thear, Riddick, Rioch, Whittaker. Substitute: Yardley.

Referee.—R. Darlington, Runcorn. Attendance, 3,097.