

PLEAT LEVELS BARNESLEY IN HARD BATTLE

Town miss too many scoring chances

by CHILTERN

WHEN Barrie Thomas headed a goal for Barnsley after only 11 minutes today, it was the first scored against Luton Town in the last three games at Kenilworth Road.

The Town continued to trail until well into the second half, when eventually David Pleat put them on terms, also with a headed goal. The Town had been on top but had wasted their chances.

Having completed the transfer from Oldham Athletic last night of goalkeeper Ron Swan, the Town pitched him straight into the team. Swan, who is over six feet tall, has had considerable experience with Oldham, but initially he is here on a month's trial period.

If he lives up to his reputation, this will be extended, particularly as the Town have been needing extra cover for the goalkeeping position since the start of the season.

SHOULDERING THE BLAME

This meant that Tony Read missed his first match of the season and is probably shouldering the blame for having let in occasional goals which have been considered preventable. However, he was named as substitute in place of Frank Conboy.

Town made no other change compared with the team beaten at Bristol last Saturday, Alan Slough still being not fit enough to be considered.

Since Town met Barnsley at the start of the season, the Yorkshire side has achieved a striking improvement in their position, both on and off the field. Better performances have brought back the crowds, and they are playing so well now as to be reckoned formidable opposition for anyone.

Midweek doubts about the fitness of Wood, the former England goalkeeper, and inside-forward Evans, were cleared up yesterday and Barnsley fielded the team that drew with Port Vale in the Cup last Saturday. This, doubtless, is the one they hope will represent them in the replay at Burslem on Monday.

PITCH SHOWS SIGNS OF DAMAGE

In recent weeks, because of the abnormal, wet weather, the pitch at Kenilworth Road has taken a hammering, and it bore all the evidence.

Obviously, it was in better condition than for some weeks, but there were obvious

signs from the black patches that existed nearly everywhere that damage has been done to the surface.

Sand had been used liberally, particularly on the main stand side, where frost is slow to disappear, and also in the centre circle and on the edges of the penalty area at the Oak Road end.

The Town defended the Kenilworth Road end and were the first to attack, Kevan raced through after Rioch had been stopped, and Wood saved his half-hit shot.

Dougan broke up Barnsley's first two attempts to make ground, and then the Town came away again through Kevan and Pleat, with the latter disappointingly shooting tamely wide with his left foot.

The ball was tending to stick on the tacky surface and mistakes were frequent.

There was another quite good crowd, probably getting on towards 8,000, and they were seeing the Town look the more promising in attack without quite managing to fulfil it.

BARNESLEY TAKE SHOCK LEAD

After Barnsley had been caught in the offside trap a couple of times, Town swept to the attack again, with Pleat running on to a pass from Whittaker to make a chance for himself. Unfortunately, as he shot from the region of the penalty spot, he was knocked off balance, and the ball went just wide.

Then, in 11 minutes Barnsley took a shock lead. Evans chased a long clearance by Hewitt through a gap in Town's defence before making a centre. Dougan intercepted and seemed to have cleared safely, but the ball struck the onrushing THOMAS on the head, and rebounded from point blank range into the net before Swan could do much about it. In any case, the goalkeeper was hustled by Thomas's follow-through.

The Town might have got an equaliser from Riddick after a corner by Whittaker. His shot left Wood hopelessly

How the goals came

THOMAS for Barnsley
after 11 minutes
PLEAT for Luton after
65 minutes

TEAMS

LUTON TOWN: Swan; Thomson, Jardine; Riddick, Dougan, Moore; French, Kevan, Pleat, Rioch, Whittaker. Substitute, Read.

BARNESLEY: Wood; Parker, Brookes; Bettany, Winstanley, Hewitt; Earnshaw, Evans, Thomas, Barton, Hamstead. Substitute: Howard.

Referee, Mr. D. H. Counsell, of Bristol.

placed but was headed from under the bar by Bettany.

The Town were still promising in attack only to disappoint. More should have accrued from a movement in which Pleat found Whittaker in an open space but the winger's low cross was cut off by Parker.

Certainly this pitch was against fluent football because the ball simply did not move freely.

TOWN SHOULD HAVE DRAWN LEVEL

The Town were awarded a free kick on the edge of the penalty area when French was pulled down by Brookes, but the tall Winstanley comfortably headed away the winger's cross. Moore, however, restored the Town's initiative by penetrating deep into the Barnsley penalty area, only for Pleat to stab his pass wide of a post.

There was persistent pressure from the Town now, and they should have drawn level following a free kick for a foul by Winstanley on Kevan. Riddick went racing into the penalty area to take the ball but missed his kick bang in front of goal.

The Town persisted in their pressure, however, and Kevan charged Wood over the line, to be penalised for a foul.

CROWD BECOMING RESTIVE WITH TOWN

Had Town accepted only half their chances they would not have been struggling a goal behind. In fact, not much was seen of the Barnsley forwards, and Swan's only task was to pick up a header from Barton.

When Barnsley did get away in something like force, Dougan had to concede a corner, from which Swan had his first real opportunity to

demonstrate his ability. He came out splendidly to cut off the cross from Earnshaw.

The crowd was now beginning to become restive over Town's bad finishing, and Rioch did not help matters by pulling the ball wide from 20 yards.

Both Barnsley wing-halves were showing a tendency to come through with the ball, and when Hewitt did so he produced a powerful shot which flew too close to the mark for comfort.

FRENCH CHASES AND GAINS CORNER

Chasing a seemingly forlorn hope, French gained an unexpected corner kick. Riddick headed the ball on, and then Whittaker only half-hit the ball to send it into the ruck of defenders.

The first stoppage for injury came when Barton stayed down after a tackle in the 38th minute, but he was able to carry on after attention.

The Town were calling the tune, but without producing the necessary accuracy in front of goal. In addition they were being met by a pretty rugged defence.

The Town pleaded in vain for a penalty when Rioch fell inside the penalty area as he was tackled by Bettany in trying to cleave a way through.

BOOS FOR THE REFEREE

The referee was then booed when he did not give a free kick after Whittaker had been pulled back but what he did was to exercise the advantage rule.

The referee was also blamed for refusing the Town a free kick when Kevan appeared to be obstructed.

As half-time approached the Town piled on heavy pressure but Barnsley, tackling hard and packing their goal, held out.

However, their lead could well have disappeared from a corner kick taken by Whittaker. Pleat headed over when it might have been better had he allowed the ball to go to Riddick, who was behind him.

On the stroke of half-time there was another Barnsley casualty, Hewitt having to receive attention. Half-time.

LUTON TOWN 0
BARNESLEY 1

From the start of the second half, Barnsley went on to the attack though without causing much trouble.

Town's hope was that their forwards would be able to function more effectively in the better going at the Kenilworth Road end than they had in the first half.

Barnsley were certainly looking livelier in attack, and

it took a sterling tackle by Thomson to spoil an opportunity for Hamstead.

Rioch had now switched to inside-right.

When the Town did get together in a concerted movement Whittaker gained a corner, from which Rioch headed narrowly over.

TOWN APPEALS FOR A GOAL

The equaliser was still proving elusive, although the Town had not yet assumed the command they had had in the first half. Even so, French was able to get through, only to send the ball straight at Wood.

Town appealed strongly for a goal when Kevan turned in a centre by French, but there was no signal from the linesman, who was in the best position to see whether the ball had crossed the line, and the referee allowed play to go on.

Then, Whittaker drove the ball into the roof of the net, but only after Riddick had been penalised for handling.

Certainly, Town were finding it no easy matter to break down this strong Barnsley defence, but, at the same time, the chances had been there and had been missed.

INTENSE PRESSURE NOW

Town's pressure was intense again. Kevan tried hard to force a way through, and then Pleat, with the Barnsley penalty area packed with red shirts, had a strong shot blocked.

This was followed by a corner gained by French.



David Pleat headed an equaliser for the Town after 65 minutes.

Kevan headed the ball goalwards but from too long a range to be effective.

EQUALISER AT LAST

Barnsley were now reinforcing their defence whenever danger threatened.

Then, after 65 minutes, came the long-awaited equaliser through PLEAT. It came from a header that went quite high in the air and completely deceived Wood. He seemed to think it was going too high, but the ball dipped under the bar, and when the goalkeeper realised his mistake it was too late.

The ball reached Pleat via the head of Kevan, who helped it on as it came from the left.

This changed the situation drastically, because the Town must have been beginning to feel that a goal would never come.

They attacked again, strongly, and both Pleat and Rioch raced up on to a centre from French, for one of them to steer the ball the wrong side of the post.

There was a dangerous situation for the Town when Earnshaw made his way through a big gap in defence. Swan committed himself by coming from his goal, and things looked ominous, especially as Earnshaw beat Dougan in the first instance. He had to turn, however, and could not repeat the effort, so that Dougan was able to clear.

Barnsley were back on the attack now, and a free kick on their right was placed dangerously across by Parker. Everybody missed it, and the ball went for a goal-kick.

When the Town pressed again Rioch shot across goal after picking up a bad clearance, and at this stage it was pretty much anybody's game.

Another scoring chance fell to Barnsley as the Town awaited an offside decision. Earnshaw raced through from an inside position before putting the ball to Thomas. Luckily for the Town the centre-forward's shot hit someone and Swan had an easier task than might otherwise have been the case.

There were signs of panic, almost the first time, in the Barnsley defence, when Parker put the ball wildly behind. From the corner kick Kevan's header was stopped on the goal-line.

From another corner by French, Rioch's first-time shot was blocked on the goal-line by Parker.

Barnsley were not yielding an inch inside their own penalty area.

Jardine shot over and then sent a corner-kick across goal to French out on the other wing. French tried a crafty cross that nearly caught Wood napping, the goalkeeper having to move quickly to push the ball over frantically. Result:

LUTON TOWN 1
BARNESLEY 1