

ALLEN NODS TOWN AHEAD THE SECOND HALF

Chances galore but they slip away

By CHILTERN

LUTON TOWN were well on top in their important home game against Chester this afternoon, but once again their first-half finishing did not match their approach work.

Two minutes after half-time, Keith Allen headed them into the lead with his second goal in his first two appearances since he arrived from Stockport.

Conditions at Kenilworth Road this afternoon for the visit of Chester, fellow strugglers with the Town in the re-election zone, were pretty much on a par with those of last Saturday.

Once again, the pitch was dry and there was a strong, blustery wind, mainly blowing down the pitch from the Oak Road end.

After the sudden move of Gordon Riddick to Gillingham, there had to be something of a reshuffle in the Town team. Alan Rivers came in at centre-half for the first time since early September, and Max Dougan, who has been continually in the middle since he arrived here from Leicester in December, moved to right-half.

With David Pleat swelling the injured list, there also had to be a change at centre-forward, where Tony Read appeared for only the second time this season. That necessitated a change in the pattern of the Town's attacking plan, because Keith Allen was designated for the link-man role.

CHESTER'S TEAM CHANGES

Not until shortly before the kick-off were Chester able to finalise their team, and it was found then that Evans was unfit, but that Ryden, about whom there had been some doubt, was able to play.

To cover the vacancy at left-half, Metcalf was switched from inside-right, where Jones took over.

Chester wore a colourful strip of tangerine shirts with white facings, and lightish blue shorts with a white stripe down the side. Tangerine stockings completed the ensemble.

*MOST A GOAL FIRST MINUTE

Jardine lost the toss so that the Town faced the wind, but they were prominent immediately. Allen headed the ball on to French, who was obstructed by Bennett. The free-kick might have brought a sensational first-minute goal for the Town, because the ball came across, Dougan missed it with his head, and it went on to Tony Read, who possibly was unsighted, but he missed it too.

Town kept up their pressure and Carling had to cut out another cross by French.

Control of the lively ball

but the referee waved them aside.

Dougan was particularly prominent in attack, and he sparked off another Town raid which brought another appeal for a penalty for hands, unsuccessfully. The ball ran on to Whittaker, who looked a certain scorer until Butler ran desperately across the ball's flight. It struck him and went over.

Town were now showing up better. Allen sent French away for the winger to win a corner, which was headed clear by Bennett.

French was again prominent with some clever footwork, but unhappily his finish was inaccurate.

DOUGAN TESTS CARLING

Dougan was joining the attack persistently, and he ran on to a through pass from Whittaker to close in and make a centre intended for Tony Read that Carling just managed to intercept by diving full-length.

A bad clearance kick by Swan had the effect of putting Chester on the attack again, but their finishing was not very threatening, and no problems occurred.

Two corners, both conceded by Rivers under pressure, followed, but neither proved profitable to the visitors.

A free kick for hands just outside the Chester penalty area looked dangerous, and then the Town were brought back to full strength by the return of King after an absence of 12 minutes.

Immediately, the Town attacked in force, and Tony Read headed inches over from a centre by French.

PLAY IS CHIEFLY VERY SCRAPPY

With Dougan again prominent, the Town pressed, and Allen, streaming towards goal for the pass, was unlucky enough to find the ball striking him on a heel, after which Whittaker put weakly behind from a good position.

Generally speaking, play was pretty scrappy, largely due to the conditions, and there was only a limited amount of excitement.

On balance, the Town were having the better of matters, but so far had not impressed in front of goal.

Even so, French was unlucky to find Bennett deflecting a centre from Whittaker just as he had set himself to meet it first time.

Under pressure, Chester were taking no chances, not hesitating to concede corners,



KEITH ALLEN headed Town into the lead two minutes after half-time.

as Bennett did when Carling was seemingly caught in two minds.

This was beautifully placed by French, and Carling had to punch over hurriedly as the ball threatened to swing under the bar.

THIRD CORNER KICK FOR TOWN

Then, there was a narrow escape from Whittaker's corner kick, first when Carling threw himself at the feet of King, and then when Tony Read, seeking to apply the finishing touch, saw his effort deflected wide for the third corner in rapid succession.

From this Dougan made a great effort to reach the ball with his head, failed to do so, and Tony Read, who was behind him, put outside.

Carling was certainly being kept much busier than Swan, though most of his work comprised his racing from his goal to cut out through-passes that had just gone astray.

Direct shooting by either side was not frequent.

CHESTER STRICTLY ON DEFENCE

Whittaker tried to improve matters by evading a heavy tackle by Butler, but the Chester defence was covering up well, and Singleton cut off his centre.

King was the next to earn a corner, but again it brought nothing, though the Town kept on the attack and Chester were now withdrawn to strictly defensive positions.

There was never much threat from Chester, but, on the other hand, a goal to the Town did not seem particularly imminent.

Towards half-time, there was a burst of pressure by Chester which brought them a corner that Allen, back in defence, headed clear. Half-time:

LUTON TOWN ... 0
CHESTER 0

With the wind in their favour, better things were expected this half from the Town, and sure enough they took the lead after only two minutes through ALLEN.

It followed a corner by Whittaker that carried rather too far, but it was returned into the goalmouth by French, and Allen, showing considerable presence of mind, bent low to head the awkwardly bouncing ball past Carling.

TOWN NEARLY GET ANOTHER

A brief spurt by Chester was driven back, and then the Town had a free kick when Whittaker was pushed off the ball by Butler.

This should have brought a second goal, because Whittaker placed the ball well, but Tony Read, running in, missed it completely.

On it ran to French, who tried to screw it into the far corner from a severe angle, but succeeded only in sending it across goal with no-one near enough to apply the finishing touch. Finally, a centre from Whittaker was cut off.

A chance fell to Chester when Humes was allowed to

go on from an apparently off-side position. Certainly, he should have scored, but his shot was near enough for Swan to make a despairing dive and save.

After a quiet spell, Jardine tried to set the Town alight again with a determined run, but his attempt to find King down the middle was intercepted by Singleton.

MORRIS INJURED AND GOES OFF

Morris was injured when he could not prevent himself running into the railings behind the goal, and he remained outside the touchline for treatment.

As was the case with the Town earlier, Chester did not immediately bring on a substitute, but carried on a man short.

The injury was obviously more serious than seemed at the time, because he was helped to the dressing room, and Berry came on as substitute. This happened after exactly an hour.

This caused some re-casting of the Chester forward line, with Humes moving to outside-left and Berry, normally a half-back, going to centre-forward.

A strong raid by the Town brought a shot by King that might well have been troublesome had not Singleton been in the way to add to the mounting toll of corners for the Town. It nearly brought a second goal, because Tony Read nodded the ball on to Allen, whose header was only inches too high.

TOWN KEEP PEGGING AWAY

King at least was having a crack at goal, and another shot from him was deflected by a defender. Whittaker's corner kick was headed in by Read, but the ball struck a defender and went over.

The next corner kick, from Whittaker, was fisted out by Carling to French, who quickly returned the ball, but it went just too high for King's head.

The referee had a word with French and also, I think, with Bennett, after a clash between the two, and the free kick went against the Luton player.

Then Bennett had his name taken for bringing down French just inside the Cester half.

When the free-kick was taken, Thomson booted it high into the goalmouth, but that sort of pass was not availing the Town much against the tall Singleton.

Swan, groping, failed to get hold of a centre from David Read, and when Humes recrossed the ball dangerously, Moore wisely headed behind. From the corner, Humes met the ball on the volley and sent it yards too high.

FIGHT FOR AN EQUALISER

Chester began a fight for an equaliser. Dougan gave away a corner but David Read placed it badly.

There was very little for the crowd to enthuse about, but Tony Read gained a corner which French placed accurately. Allen beat Carling in the jump for the ball, and Read should have done better than half-hit the ball to send it wide.

Failure to control the ball cost King a chance.

Chester had a remarkable escape when Bennett passed back after Carling had already

How the goals came

ALLEN for Luton after 47 minutes.

made his advance. The ball rolled towards the empty net and struck the outside of a post to roll behind.

At the Luton end, Swan saved after a mistake by Rivers. Result:

LUTON TOWN ... 1
CHESTER 0