

A SPLENDID START TO THE HOLIDAY

BARNSELEY 2, LUTON TOWN 2

OAKWELL, Barnsley, has never been a happy hunting ground for the Town.

In fact, more times than I care to remember, it has been the graveyard of their hopes, but they ended a losing sequence on this ground this afternoon by gaining an invaluable point.

This was hard-earned and represented a splendid start to the holiday period, especially as Barnsley are on the fringe of the promotion struggle, and with their unbeaten home record are certainly nobody's pushover.

Yet, at the start the Town turned on the heat with such skill and intensity that it looked as if an easy win might be in store for them.

Maybe it would have worked that way could they have gained an early goal, but the nearest they came to it was when Buxton headed against the bar.

There was a sudden turnabout, because almost in their first serious raid, Barnsley went ahead, against the run of the play, and it took the Town until the stroke of half-time to regain equality. It was achieved with one of the best goals Bruce Rioch has scored for the club.

A minute after the interval, the Town were ahead, when John Ryan opened his account, Barnsley coming back determinedly to level matters only two minutes later.

After that, it was a hammers-and-tongs battle, and a game altogether worthy of two teams highly-placed in the Fourth Division.

In fact, I would go further, and say that it was worthy of a far higher division and of a much bigger crowd than the 8,530 who saw it.

A thriller it was, because it was just impossible to even hazard a guess as to who might gain an eventual winner. Both teams came close to it, and in the end neither did, but such was the quality of the play produced that I feel that no-one worried unduly about that.

In fact, anything but a division of the points would have been rather unfair on two hard-fighting teams who went through this match with scarcely a trace of niggles and the minimum of bad fouls.

I feel that the Town can account this a very good performance indeed.

Perhaps a question mark still hangs over the attack's finishing, though Rioch's power shooting must have impressed Bill Anderson, the assistant manager of Nottingham Forest, who, to my knowledge, was watching him for the third time.

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