COSTLY ERRORS

By CHILTERN

68/69

BARNSLEY 3, LUTON TOWN 1

FOURTEEN minutes from the end of this fast, fiercely contested game at Oakwell on Tuesday, the Town were in with a real chance of gaining a point.

With the score only 2-1, they were throwing in attack after attack and the Barnsley lead was looking anything but sufficient.

Then, came the mortal blow when two bad defensive mistakes in quick succession enabled Barnsley to secure the third goal that meant the end of the Town's hopes.

There seemed no possible hint of danger when Dougan, midway in his own half got hold of a loose ball, but then lost it to Robson. Quickly the centre-forward pushed it through to HAMSTEAD and even then there was no smell of peril.

Hamstead seemed too severely angled to score and, in addition, Taylor had the shot covered at the near post. Then, to the chagrin of everyone connected with Luton, the ball went under his body as he dived and rolled into the net.

Thus, the Town went down to their third consecutive away League defeat, and their only consolation is that they played more effectively than they did at either Brighton or Watford.

What happened in the first half, after Barnsley had weathered a brisk start by the Town in which Buxton was prominent, merely served to confirm the suspicion of many people that Barnsley are a much better side than they have been given credit for.

They began to move in fluid fashion and the influence of Bettany, restored to the team for this match, was to be considerable.

Finding room for himself, he sparked off the first goal after 15 minutes when he sent away Robson down the right and, from his centre, EVANS, on the edge of the penalty area, hit the ball first time and it sped like a rocket past the diving Taylor.

HARRISON OFF

Hereabouts, the Town ran into some injury trouble, first Rioch receiving a kick on a bone in a leg and, worse, Harrison pulled a muscle in the 24th minute and, after attempting to resume, limped off for good three minutes later.

McDerment came on in the unaccustomed position of outside-left and immediately Sheffield forced Ironside to a full-length save with a fine header.

This was the start of a Town rally during which Barnsley were in trouble for a few minutes, but it ended seven minutes from half-time when the second goal came.

SECOND BLOW

Again Bettany figured largely in the movement by chipping the ball to Evans, who headed it down to EARNSHAW and although Taylor came out desperately, the winger found the far corner of the net.

Twice after that, Taylor had to make good saves from Hamstead and Bradbury and, at half-time, the signs were anything but propitious.

For the second half, there was a re-arrangement of the Town's formation, with McDerment taking on a midfield role and Rioch going to the left wing.

QUICK REPLY

This paid off almost immediately because the Town got the goal they so badly needed after only three minutes. With Branston racing up at top speed and perhaps distracting the defence, Rioch swung a free kick into the goalmouth and SHEFFIELD was there to head a neat goal.

There could have been another quickly because Rioch, put onside by a deflection, closed in for goal on an angle, but his crashing drive was smothered by Ironside's dive.

An even spell followed, and the Town had begun to turn on the heat again with some prospect of an equaliser when the final blow fell. After that, there were just a couple of shots by Rioch to give them any encouragement at all.

BALANCE UPSET

Of course, the balance of the Town team was upset to a certain extent by Harrison's injury and Rioch was often limping. All the same, I felt that the latter should have done more in the first half about picking up Bettany, who caused so much damage.

Certainly when the tighter marking McDerment took over the role, there was not the same trouble. Buxton was the best of the forwards, showing clever footwork and using the ball well, but even so, the thrust of Lewis was missed and there was not sufficient penetration in front of goal.

SHEFFIELD A TRIER

Sheffield tried desperately hard and always had the home defence on tenterhooks, but the support was not of the best and Ryan was again irritating by the way in which he held up movements by trying to beat too many opponents.

On the other side of the coin, too many simple goals are being conceded, and it was unfortunate that Taylor should blunder after his long absence from the team. Both Allen and Slough got through a tremendous amount of work, and Branston was largely the master of Robson.

However, this is not a match that Dougan will remember with much pleasure, and Jardine had a harassing first half, mainly through the latitude allowed to Bettany, which meant that he was often left facing too many opponents.

BARNSLEY. — Ironside; Murphy, Brookes; Bettany, Winstanley, Howard; Earnshaw, Evans, Robson, Bradbury, Hamstead. Substitute: Booth.

LUTON TOWN. — Taylor; Dougan, Jardine; Allen, Branston, Slough; Ryan, Buxton, Sheffield, Rioch, Harrison (McDerment).

Referee. — P. Baldwin, Thornton-in-Cleveland.

Attendance.—12,815.