

AWAY FORM MUST IMPROVE QUICKLY

By CHILTERN

68/69

WALSALL 2, LUTON TOWN 0

UNLESS there is a radical and speedy change in the Town's away form, then the vision of Division II football in the foreseeable future—and next season looked a possible feasibility only a few weeks ago—will become merely a pipe-dream.

Once again, they saw their hopes crash on Tuesday against the improving Walsall at Fellows Park which they left smarting under the impact of their fifth consecutive defeat on tour.

Increasingly, I find it difficult to reconcile the vast difference in the Town's form before their own fans and when they play away. At home, they look devastatingly good enough to destroy anybody. Away, they look pale shadows of that.

And, in my view, the situation is unlikely to improve until there is a stepping up of the work rate of some players, a tighter grip is taken of the middle of the field, and greater striking power in front of goal is achieved.

That they should manage to score in only two of eight away games and that three of their four goals collected came on one single occasion, is a ludicrous situation, pointing squarely at where the trouble lies.

Yet, at Walsall, from the way in which they began, I thought the Town were bidding fair to end their famine, with Rioch and Whittaker combining dangerously and Wesson kept busier than his counterpart.

Some tough tackling by Walsall did something to curb the Town attack, but Rioch nearly caught Wesson napping with a drive from 30 yards.

Meanwhile, Walsall had been thrusting to get into the game and Slough somewhat hazardously put the ball over his own bar following a header by Trevis.

In the 19th minute came the

first shock when Wilson flicked a centre from Morris past Davie, but the referee disallowed the goal for offside after consultation with a linesman.

Then, the danger signals should have been flying for the Town, but they were still in it and after Sheffield headed inches wide, Denton suddenly let go a tremendous drive that Wesson, out near his penalty spot, was somewhat fortunate to stop.

However, the decisive happening came in the 35th minute when Walsall took the lead through Murray, following a free kick for obstruction by Bannister, Baker lofted the ball across the goal, Trevis returned it to the right flank and MURRAY nodded it through from close range.

WORKED NON-STOP

Looking back, the Town were never really in with a chance after that against this Walsall team which worked non-stop.

Yet, man for man, the Town looked the more able team, but they seemed to lack urgency and could not turn on the heat midway through the second half when the Walsall defence suddenly developed a slack patch.

What finally settled it was a brilliantly taken second goal 20 minutes from the end through MORRIS who fastened on to a through pass by Baker and left Davie helpless with a drive into the far corner of the net.

For most of this half, the Town gave me the impression of being busy in midfield, but achieving very little for their efforts and the only worthwhile shot came from Rioch, who forced Wesson down in a hurry.

POTTER ON

With sixteen minutes left, Potter came on for Whittaker, whom I would not describe as the least successful of the Town players, but the ploy was for Potter to take over in midfield, with Rioch on the wing, and, at least, the substitute contributed some constructive football.

There was some semblance of a late rally by the Town in which Rioch thudded two drives too high and it was left to McDerment to provide Wesson with his most difficult task.

Until he faded in the second half, Denton was the most dangerous Town forward, so long as he persevered in taking

the ball on the outside of his full-back and he did get it across with some regularity.

Lewis and Sheffield had a completely unproductive time as the strikers, with the latter completely dominated in the air by Jones and the former tightly marked.

Although he looked good in the opening and closing stages, Rioch had some barren spells in between and hard though Allen worked, he could scarcely be said to dominate the middle of the field.

COMPETENT SLOUGH

Even though the generalship of Branston is being missed by the defence, I give full marks to Slough for a highly competent showing at centre-half and Dougan was also impressive.

Bannister looks as if he will need time to really settle to the tempo of this type of football, and he gave the impression of being neat and accurate without being really strong in the tackle.

McDerment was adequate and in Davie, the Town seem to have made a splendid capture because his anticipation was good and he showed much courage.

WALSALL. — Wesson; Harrison, Harris; Trevis, Jones, Atthey; Murray, Baker, Wilson, Bennett, Morris. Substitute: McMorran.

LUTON TOWN. — Davie; Dougan, McDerment; Allen, Slough, Bannister; Denton, Lewis, Sheffield, Rioch, Whittaker (Potter).

Referee. — R. Darlington, Runcorn. Attendance: 5,381.