

TOWN MIGHT WELL HAVE WON

EVEN though the Town could be well satisfied with the point they gained at Torquay last night, they could at the same time reflect that they were unlucky not to give their promotion bid the maximum boost by collecting both.

Had they done so, there could have been no complaint from the Devon team, who were distinctly second best for rather more than two-thirds of the time.

In fact, the only real threat to the Town's run of consecutive matches without defeat, now numbering 13, came during a ten-minute spell following the Torquay equaliser early in the second half.

This success followed a wholesale reshuffle ordered by manager Allan Brown, but the Town absorbed the shock, contained the new fighting spirit of their opponents, and regained the grip they had held for nearly all the first half.

There is no doubt that the turning point of the whole match came in the minutes immediately after the interval when Lewis had a shot deflected on to the top of the bar by Donnelly, and it rolled tantalisingly along the woodwork before finally going behind.

Shortly afterwards Torquay had another escape through the combined efforts of Lewis and Allen, and I am certain that there would have been no comeback from the home team had a goal come then.

In fact, manager Alec Stock said afterwards: "If we could have got that second goal, then I think we really would have gone to town."

At the same time, he was pleased with the highly professional performance turned on by the team as a whole, and it was a display well ahead of the one they gave at Bristol on Monday.

Then, they always gave the impression of hanging on grimly, whereas last night they were assured and confident. No doubt they were helped considerably by the tonic effect of an early goal, which came from a somewhat unlikely quarter.

Billy McDermont, included as a late replacement for French, not for his marksmanship but for his mid-field industry and willingness to give 90 minutes of hard work, got it with a looping header after nine minutes.

This encouraged the Town to be more ambitious than perhaps they had envisaged they might be in the early stages.

Their tightness in defence remained, but at the same time they broke out frequently into dangerous attacks and their accuracy and speed in mid-field—well above anything Torquay could muster—made them much the more threatening.

That they were able to do more attacking than they did at Bristol I traced to the fact that the front runners, Lewis and Rioch, held the ball to good effect, which gave the men at the back time in which to support them.

Apart from his tendency to be caught offside, which was marked after the interval, Lewis looked altogether sharper, and was unlucky not to score.

Unfortunately, he damaged an ankle in the closing stages, and it was badly swollen afterwards.

After treatment with ice compressions last night, it was reported better this morning, but although Lewis told me: "I shall play on Monday," there must be some doubt about it.

GREEN CN

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Yet this player has shrugged off the effects of injuries previously, when it looked certain that he would be out.

With Sheffield unfit, the recall of Ian Buxton could come about if Lewis is ruled out tomorrow morning, when all the players are reporting at Kenilworth Road.

Whether French will be fit for the trip to Mansfield seems to be a matter of some doubt, and in the circumstances there was certainly interest in Mike Harrison's re-appearance for the Reserves today.

As for last night's performance, it was again a fine team effort, with the defence hingeing around Slough, who is doing a great job at centre-half.

Keen, I thought, had his best game since he joined the club, and can obviously play a valuable role in the vital games to come.

Feature of the Town team these days is their 100-per-cent appetite for the job in hand, their willingness to work, and the adept way in which they are filling any discernible gap in mid-field.

The way they played last night called for a tremendous amount of up-and-down running, and none did more in this respect than Allen.

There was just one thought about the tactical plan. I wondered whether with orthodox wingers the Town could have pressed home the advantage they gained.

But, on the other hand, the question is whether they would have got on top in the first place had their tactics been different, so it can be only a matter of conjecture.

Attendance: 11,260.

STOCK TAKES IT TO 13

By JOHN DAVIES: Torquay 1 Luton Town 1



LUTON took their unbeaten run to 13 games with a hard-fought draw at Torquay last night. For two-thirds of the game, after they had taken a ninth-minute lead through Billy McDermont, Luton looked to be clearly heading for the win that would have taken them above Swindon in the table.

They surprised everyone by tossing away safety—first tactics and worried Torquay with a series of swift, attacking thrusts.

It was quite a revelation for the large contingent of Luton fans because manager Alec Stock, through illness and injuries had to field McDermont and Fred Jardine, normally defenders, in the wing positions.

Torquay goalkeeper Andy Donnelly was mainly at fault for that early Luton goal. He was badly positioned when Mike Keen drove a free kick from 14 yards and the ball spun away as McDermont flicked it with his head.

Luton were the better side again for a spell after the interval.

But the pattern changed when right winger Mick Cave slashed in a 60th minute equaliser from outside the penalty area.

Luton lived dangerously for the next 10 minutes but they regained their composure.

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LUTON ROB RIVALS OF BUBBLY

LUTON retained their second place in the Third Division promotion race—and robbed Torquay of a magnum of champagne—by collecting a vital away point last night.

Torquay manager Allan Brown had promised his side the bubbly if they beat his old club.

But the game that pulled in a crowd of 11,260 ended in a 1-1 draw—after Billy McDermont had headed Luton in front in nine minutes.

Torquay reshuffled their line-up ten minutes after half-time, and in another four were level with a goal by Mick Cave.