

Own goal rattles the Town

By ERIC PUGH

AN OWN GOAL by Alan Slough in the 53rd minute suddenly gave this hard-fought game a new lease of life. Within a minute the Town had wiped out the arrears when Collins took a difficult ball and rammed it home.

The first half was memorable only for some unpleasant incidents after some harsh Shrewsbury tackling, which resulted in one of their players being booked by the referee.

For the third consecutive match, the Town fielded the same team, and Shrewsbury having struck some sort of form at Bournemouth on Wednesday, were also unchanged.

It was a beautiful sunny afternoon, the pitch, freshly cut and rolled, looked a picture, and everything seemed set for good entertainment.

Harry Haslam, the club's entertainments officer, tells me that all seats on the chartered train to Sheffield on Tuesday have been booked and tickets should be collected by Monday.

DEFENCE

The Town were set to defend the Kenilworth Road end and could well have been in trouble in almost the first minute when Hawkins, who had previously been caught off-side, beat the trap and left Slough trailing behind. However his finish was weak.

Then there was a stoppage when a linesman called the attention of the referee who spoke to Moore and MacDonald.

There was a heavy Town raid in which Tees flashed the ball across the face of the goal but MacDonald's attempt to turn quickly and crack in the ball at the same moment was frustrated.

In the first five minutes, there had been two instances of undue complacency among the Town defence which could have proved fatal had Shrewsbury shown more accuracy in their finishing.

Bridgwood made a frightful hash of a chance that came his way, but even so it looked as if the Town would have to tighten up.

COVERED

There was a close call for Shrewsbury when Allen suddenly headed the ball across

and it looked certain to reach Tees until Wood covered up and conceded a corner.

Slowly the Town were settling down and they had claims for a penalty turned down as Tees, shaping to meet a centre from Collins, was bowled over by Moore.

Collins playing as a more orthodox winger was beginning to centre with accuracy, and Allen beat Phillips to one of them but sent the ball too high.

With the Town maintaining their improvement, a splendid combination between Collins and French on the left wing brought a corner, but Shrewsbury with a marked emphasis on defence, and quick, hard tackling were leaving few gaps.

This was discovered by MacDonald as he turned into goal on the blind side and was brought down heavily.

In fact, some of the Shrewsbury defensive tactics were distinctly obstructive and MacDonald suffered again from a foul by Wood.

The referee had a word with Gregory after a foul on French and the free-kick brought more activity in the Shrewsbury penalty area, with Nicholl going up to try to force home the kick.

SCUFFLE

Then a scuffle developed between Tees and Wood, which lasted only momentarily, but the first quarter of an hour had given some indication of this becoming a bad tempered affair.

So far as skill was concerned the Town were by far the better and they were right out of luck in the 19th minute when Allen hit the bar with a fine header from a corner by French.

Immediately, Shrewsbury's defence was at panic stations with Phillips running right out of the penalty

area to try to stop Tees, and eventually the ball was scrambled out of play.

Wood next received a talking to from the referee for another foul, and the time was fast approaching for more drastic action. In fact, it came in the next minute when the referee took Wood's name for a foul on Tees.

BUGBEAR

Offside was becoming a bugbear to the Town with MacDonald tending to be caught in the trap.

After a somewhat sticky patch, the Town came again and Collins forced Phillips to a full-length save after MacDonald had headed the ball back to him. French's corner was not well placed but it won another one. This time he swung it high and Phillips was lucky to escape after having dropped the ball.

Certainly the Town were having far more of the play without really looking penetrative.

French then placed a corner to perfection, MacDonald met it squarely with his head, and undoubtedly it would have been a spectacular goal had Wood not intervened to head the ball high over the top.

Shrewsbury continued to be on the receiving end of a good deal of pressure, and when Phillips came out, missed a corner from French, Tees met the ball with his head and again there was a goal-line clearance, this time by Fellows.

The Town's pressure was relentless now, but it was bringing no more than near misses.

Certainly the Town were having no luck at all and Collins saw a shot ricochet off the legs of Phillips from a pass by French.

By contrast with Phillips who had been kept busy,

TEAMS

LUTON TOWN: Davie; Dougan, Bannister; Keen, Nicholl, Slough; Collins, MacDonald, Tees, Allen, French. Substitute: Sheffield.

SHREWSBURY TOWN: Phillips; Gregory, Fellows; Moore, Wood, Pountney; Roberts, Bridgwood, Harkin, Hawkins, Meredith. Substitute: Moir.

Referee: R. A. Paine, Hounslow.

Davie had not had a direct shot to save so far.

Measure of the Town's superiority was shown by the fact that as the 40th minute approached they had had nine corners and Shrewsbury none.

And the foul count was 12 by Shrewsbury and four by the Town.

BELATED

Still the pressure continued and had Slough really been in his best shooting form he would have obtained the belated goal. However, his first-time drive was pulled and Allen failed to make contact by sliding at it.

First corner to Shrewsbury came after 41 minutes and was immediately followed by another when French failed to control the ball.

Then Bannister came right up into attack to try to show the forwards how it should be done, and was unlucky to see his drive rise just too high.

With the Town crowding on the pressure again, Wood pulled over Tees ruthlessly, only inches outside the penalty area.

It would have served him and Shrewsbury right had it been a penalty kick. As it was, the free-kick only led to a corner and Tees's header flew straight into the hands of Phillips.

Then MacDonald had a go from just outside the penalty area after turning cleverly away from his shadow, but he was much too high. Half-time:

LUTON 0
SHREWSBURY 0

It had been a frustrating first half for the Town who certainly should have gone ahead—even allowing for the Shrewsbury defensive tactics.

However, possibly through over anxiety things were just not going right at close quarters. This was emphasised just after the start of the second half when Nicholl went up to head on a corner to Allen, who stretching almost to his full extent turned the ball wide of a near open goal.

When Shrewsbury gained one of their rare corners, Meredith got a shot through

a crowd of players but it was straight at Davie.

Tees was getting a fair percentage of balls in the air, but not enjoying the best of fortune as when his effort from a centre by French went too high with Phillips beaten.

Then came a break to the deadlock with two goals in a minute, one to each side.

UNDESERVED

First Shrewsbury took a totally unexpected and just as undeserved lead when a centre from Roberts was deflected into his own net by SLOUGH, and the ball crossed the line before Harkin following up needed to apply the finishing touch.

That was after 53 minutes and a minute later the Town as if they had been thoroughly roused, as almost certainly they were, hit back to equalise through COLLINS.

It was a well taken chance because Collins veered into the middle following an awkwardly placed ball and pushed it low into the net as Phillips came out.

Then there were two injuries first to MacDonald as the Town made another rush in search of the goal to put them ahead, at the end of which French shot high over when it looked at least as easy to score.

Then Harkin came off with a cut over his eye and Shrewsbury brought on Moir as substitute.

Davie had what was certainly his hardest task when he raced out to snatch the ball away from the feet of Hawkins.

Then a brilliant move begun by Allen sent away French



Alan Slough — scored an own goal.

from whose centre MacDonald headed the ball inches wide.

However, there was no let up in their pressure, nor for that matter in the toughness of the Shrewsbury tackling.

Again Wood was penalised, this time for a foul on MacDonald, and the free-kick brought yet another corner.

PRESSURE

A spell of pressure by Shrewsbury followed and the Town were again indebted to the vigilance of Bannister, who headed a shot by Pountney from under the bar, with Davie beaten.

This escape seemed to act as a spur to the Town, who broke away again and this time MacDonald, after much perseverance, shot wide when perhaps it might have been better had he left the ball for Collins.

There was another scare at the Town end when Shrewsbury gained a corner from which Moir hit the bar with a great header that had Davie reaching in vain.

Again there was an immediate reaction by the Town

How the goals came

SLOUGH (own goal) for Shrewsbury after 53 minutes
COLLINS for Luton after 54 minutes
ROBERTS for Shrewsbury after 77 minutes
SLOUGH for Luton after 85 mins.

and Tees was only prevented from giving them the lead by a superlative save by Phillips to keep out his header.

There were hopeful claims by the Town for a penalty when Allen measured his length when challenged by Pountney, but the referee would have none of it.

During Shrewsbury's next foray there were more injuries, with Moir stretched out in the penalty area, and attention was also needed by Nicholl and Hawkins.

SHOCKED

Then came the big shock, after 77 minutes, when Shrewsbury took the lead for the second time.

In my opinion it was a goal that should not have been allowed because the Town should have had a free-kick at its outset.

That was when Wood pushed Tees off the ball, inside the Shrewsbury half. From this Meredith pushed it forward, to ROBERTS who raced through an ugly gaping hole down the Town's left flank to beat Davie completely with a drive into the roof of the net.

Then it happened. In the 85th minute, SLOUGH came racing up at top speed to head through a ball that was bobbing about after Collins had crossed it.

French had had a hand in it, or rather a head because it was he who turned it goalwards and Slough was there to do the rest.

Still the Town kept hammering away, for the winner, but time ran out for them.