

IT HAD TO HAPPEN OF COURSE . . .

DONCASTER ROVERS 2, LUTON TOWN 0

. . . No team can go on indefinitely without defeat, and, in fact, the Town at Doncaster this afternoon fell at what amounted in racing parlance to the 20th hurdle in League matches — 13 of them this season.

In fact, one has to go back to last Easter Monday, when a disputed penalty beat them at Mansfield for their last reverse.

This afternoon it was more decisive, but Doncaster were really put on their mettle by one of those strange twists of fate that can swing a game so much. It came in the 33rd minute when Slough about whose fitness there was doubt until this morning unluckily put through his own goal.

He went up to try to head clear a ball that always seemed to be beating him, and it glanced off his head too high for Davie who had advanced slightly.

It was one of those unfortunate things in which no blame can fairly be placed on either player, but it did turn in Doncaster's favour a game in which previously the Town seemed to have in hand.

Their other bad luck came three minutes after half-time when a first-time shot by Briggs went in off the inside of a post.

That goal was a particularly bad goal to the Town because a minute earlier they could have been on level terms again when MacDonald had a header which had beaten the goalkeeper cleared off the line. In the event, MacDonald for the second consecutive match, had to be withdrawn to the back four because of injury to another player.

Sheffield was lined up as the second striker with Tees, and he missed the best chance that came the Town's way during the second half. Had he scored then it could well have been that the poise and speed with which this highly useful Doncaster team were playing would have been seriously disturbed.

However, the Town just could not get the goal that would have put them back into the game with a chance, and despite the fact that they never gave up, they could never muster sufficient penetration up front to find a way through a highly capable, hard-tackling defence.

In fact, I doubt whether on this showing any visiting team is going to run riot on this Doncaster ground this season.

Possibly the fact that the Town's play never really flowed stemmed from the fact that they began with a 4-4-2 formation. This as I have pointed out before, throws a heavy responsibility on the two strikers, but the tactics worked well enough for the first half-hour, with soundness in defence and the quick break into attack standing them in good stead.

However, it seemed to me that they could never muster enough attackers to worry the home defence.

French was given more scope in this respect, but even he was mostly in a half-cock position, and seemed to have inordinate difficulty in keeping his feet at times.

Nicholl was not the dominating player he has been, and there were times when the defence tended to wilt under pressure, but there was no lack of fighting spirit, and determination, and Davie made two or three brilliant saves in the second half.

Possibly, Bannister's injury caused a disruption, but on balance I could not grudge Doncaster their success.