

Town fight to keep

11-10-69
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record

ERIC PUGH reports from Doncaster

TOWN had an uphill battle at Belle Vue this afternoon to maintain their unbeaten record. Rovers started with some useful football and kept it up although their first goal, an own goal by Alan Slough, was very unfortunate for the Town.

Town also had the disadvantage of left-back Jack Bannister being injured early in the match, a match with plenty of fouls, and later being taken off by manager Stock.

There was an early morning test—at 8.15—for Alan Slough this morning on the ankle he damaged against Bournemouth on Tuesday. He came through with flying colours, and John Moore, who was nominated to travel with the party in case of some reaction from Slough's injury, expressed a preference to play with the Reserves. Manager Alec Stock agreed.

So the Town were unchanged, and Laurie Sheffield, who lives and trains at Doncaster, became the substitute. Once more the specially chartered train on which the Town's official party travelled, had a trouble-free journey. It was not full to capacity, but even so getting on for 350 made the trip.

There were also several coachloads of fans, and the total Town following by all routes must have been about 600.

Great interest had been taken locally in what was obviously a vital match, and Doncaster had sold all their stand tickets beforehand.

Fog persisted for most of the morning here, but it cleared just before kick-off time, when the sun emerged.

With Doncaster playing in all white, with red facings and red stockings, the Town turned out in red shirts, black shorts and white stockings.

STRIKERS

Initially the Town settled down into a 4-4-2 formation, with MacDonald and Tees as the strikers, but they were showing a liking for coming through quickly from the back.

However, the first exciting move came from Doncaster when Usher picked up a loose ball, made ground quickly, and his shot, not all that much off target, was carefully watched going the wrong side of a post by Davie.

Allen sparked off a Town raid, which finished disappointingly after Collins and MacDonald had contributed.

It was noticeable that Tees was seeking the open space on the right wing more than usual, with MacDonald remaining in the middle, and being closely marked.

Doncaster were looking a highly useful team, and again there was an effective shot, this time from Briggs, but not effective enough, because it went wide.

Doncaster were the more consistent in pressure and Bannister stayed down in pain after making a strong and brave tackle out near the corner flag from Briggs.

Bannister had to have attention but continued after it, limping somewhat gingerly on his left leg.

Straight from the re-start there was a sharp raid by the Town, sparked off in midfield by Collins, but MacDonald who lost control was caught offside. After this came a clever attempt by Tees, who hooked the ball past Robertson, and it was something of an anti-climax that more didn't come of his shot, but what had to be taken into account was that Ogston advanced almost ten yards to narrow the angle.

Play was swaying up and down in speedy fashion and there was pressure on the Town goal. Nicholl headed over a lob that Davie might have caught.

The corner brought a des-

perate situation, partly because Davie, probably harassed elected to punch. The ball fell loose, Johnson had a shot blocked, and from the rebound Haselden missed the best chance so far by shooting over.

There was trouble for Doncaster when Tees charged Ogston. The ball ran loose but unkindly for MacDonald, who was following up.

There was a hint of a mix-up between Davie and Bannister near the edge of the penalty area, as Biggs threatened, but the goalkeeper dived on the ball at some risk of injury.

Again the Town defence was covering well, but a long shot by Flowers posed problems for Davie, who held it at the second attempt.

A bad decision gave a throw in to Doncaster, when the ball had been deflected by Bannister on to one of the home players.

And, as is the case with errors of this kind, it produced a spell of pressure that could well have led to the Town going into arrears. The effectiveness of the covering prevented a goal, and finally Slough banged the ball out of play.

PENALISED

Usher had now switched to the right-wing, and he produced the next threat to the Town, that finally ended with Briggs being penalised for a foul.

If there were no goals so far, there was certainly plenty of excitement and MacDonald nearly beat Ogston with a cross shot following fine work by Collins. The goalkeeper at full stretch did not gather the ball cleanly at the first attempt, but did so as a sort of reflex action.

So far the referee had given seven free kicks against Doncaster for fouls, and none against the Town, and the crowd were beginning to dislike it. There were catcalls and whistles when one was given in Allen's favour.

In the 33rd minute the Town went into arrears in unlucky fashion. Wilcockson, who had showed a liking for coming through, did so again to float in an awkward centre which put the Town defence in deep trouble. SLOUGH, trying to get them out of it, got his head to the ball, but unfortunately Davie had also had ideas about collecting it, and was some little way out of his goal, and the ball soared in.

CHANCE

Immediately, the Town had a chance of getting on to terms, and possibly Tees, throwing himself full length to meet a cross with his head, should have done better than to steer the ball wide.

Now Doncaster were right on their toes, and the Town

TEAMS

DONCASTER ROVERS: Ogston; Wilcockson, Gray; Flowers, Robertson, Haselden; Watson, Regan, Briggs, Johnson, Usher. Substitute: Rabjohn.

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

Referee: Mr. S. J. Cayley, of Preston.

were facing a difficult five minutes before the interval.

A free-kick against Collins—the first debited to the Town—for a foul—brought another dangerous thrust, at the end of which Briggs headed menacingly, but well wide.

The pressure was on the Town now, with another corner to Doncaster on the right, which glanced off Allen's head and straight into Davie's hands.

Still Doncaster kept on the attack, and Regan with Allen vainly challenging, brought Davie into action, with a hard drive which the goalkeeper clutched safely.

Then Bannister trying the overlap seemed to aggravate the injury he received earlier, and when he got up without having attention, his limp seemed more pronounced.

Half-time:
DONCASTER 1
LUTON TOWN 0

Obviously Bannister's injury was not so bad as it looked before the interval. He was on

for the start of the second half.

In the first minute with MacDonald and Tees harassing determinedly, Robertson conceded a corner which French came over to the right to take left footed, and it could well have brought the equaliser. MacDonald made a tremendous header that was well wide of Ogston, but Gray standing on the line, headed out from under the bar.

Then the Town's hopes received a nasty knock when, in the 48th minute, Doncaster went two up. Watson picked up the ball in midfield, passed Bannister, who seemed a little slow in the tackle, possibly because of his injury, and made a centre.

In raced BRIGGS to get a foot to the ball as the defence closed in, and it went into the net off the inside of the post. Before play could be restarted, Davie, hurt in the scuffle, had to receive attention.

While this was going on, Town Manager, Stock, went to the touchline to speak to a linesman, and it then became obvious that his object was to substitute Sheffield for Bannister, who obviously was less than 100 per cent fit.

Now the Town found themselves with an uphill battle on their plate to maintain their unbeaten record, and with Sheffield bringing in a change of approach and certainly plenty of determination, failure to control the ball by Tees cost a half chance from his pass.

DEFENCE

The advent of Sheffield meant that MacDonald had to be withdrawn into defence.

By no means out of it, the Town came darting back into attack, and French, who had had a quiet time so far, brought Ogston to his knees at the end of a long run. However, Doncaster were busy and hardworking.

Usher, back on the left-wing, was still causing a certain amount of trouble, and from a cross by him, Flowers should have done better than shoot over. Similarly at the other end so should Sheffield, with a much simpler opportunity when a defensive mistake let him through, and he smacked the ball just wide of a post.

Certainly, in their present

predicament, the Town could not afford to squander chances.

Back came the Town, surging forward following a free kick by Keen, who followed up to win a corner on the right, which French again came across to take.

Doncaster, taking no chances and with nine back in their penalty area, were able to clear before anything could develop, and when they broke away the crowd was incensed again when the linesman's flag went up against Regan, as he raced through a wide gap down the middle.

EFFORT

With 20 minutes left, it needed something pretty spectacular for the Town to gain any reward from this match. Not that they were sparing any effort, but they were not creating the openings against tough tackling in defence.

One or two moments looked promising without the final thrust being apparent.

When Doncaster hit back again it needed a superlative flying save by Davie to push over a drive by Usher that was surely booked for a billet under the bar.

Again the goalkeeper was

brilliantly in action, this time from Wilcockson, and again he fingertipped the ball over. From the second corner he was badly fouled, as he went up to cut off the ball, and the free-kick gave much-needed relief to the Town.

With French now on the right-wing they attacked with him coming inside with the ball, but it needed something better than a shot from 25 yards to beat Ogston.

Next, Allen came through to make a centre for which Sheffield and Tees challenged, but Ogston punched clear, but

How the goals came

SLOUGH (own goal) for Doncaster after 33 minutes.

BRIGGS for Doncaster after 48 minutes.

at least for a time we had the view of the Town in full cry in attack.

Chance of a promising break by the Town was frustrated when Robertson pulled down Tees, but Doncaster again marshalled their defence well, and the free kick was cleared.

Trouble came at the Town end when Davie was bundled off the ball by Briggs, and it rolled towards the goal, but rightly the referee gave a free kick.

It looked too late now for the Town to salvage anything. They still had French on the right but after a period in which the ball seldom came his way, he spoiled a reasonable chance by failing to control a free kick from Allen.

Now the Town were gathering themselves together for a last desperate throw, and Allen attempting to back-heel a low cross from Keen managed to do no more than stop the progress of the ball.

In almost the last minute, MacDonald created a difficult situation for Ogston, with a long lob for which Collins challenged, but he managed to deflect the ball to safety.

Result:
DONCASTER 2
LUTON TOWN 0