

Town

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69/70

AS HAD been suspected, the Torquay manager, Allan Brown completed the bolstering up of his defence by bringing in full-back John Benson at outside-right in place of the injured Eric Welsh.

This, added to the fact that he included Alan Young for the first time this season to act as a second centre-half to Bill Kitchener, served to emphasise that the object of Brown's mission in this vital match at Kenilworth Road this afternoon was to avoid defeat.

John Rudge, about whom there had been some doubt yesterday, finally passed a fitness test, and of the 13 nominated it was Fred Binney who was the odd man out.

As for the Town, they brought in John Ryan at right back for the injured Freddie Jardine, and had Brian Lewis—who has been in the back-ground for some time—as their substitute.

This was almost the first wintry type of day we had had for football this season, and the pitch had been given a fair soaking by this morning's rain.

ATTACKED

In the first minute the Town attacked and Allen brought Donnelly to his knees. Torquay then broke away but Rudge was held up by a strong tackle from Nicholl.

First real threat to the Town came when Collins was slow in midfield and allowed Scott to gain possession and embark on a run which ended with a centre that just missed the far post.

With five minutes gone, Benson, who had taken over a defensive role, was injured, and there was quite a long stoppage before he resumed, limping, with heavy strapping around his right ankle.

Fundamentally, Torquay were using Cave and Rudge as their strikers, with Scott making excursions into attack—tactics not unlike the Town had been using in away games.

Trouble came when Ryan made a bad clearance, straight to the feet of Scott, whose finishing so far had not matched the promise of his approach work, and Keen cleared comfortably.

COVERING

Some attractive football in midfield was coming from Torquay, who were covering well in defence and Donnelly was not having much trouble in goal.

When Torquay attacked again, a shot by Scott got through a crowd of players to Davie, who saved easily.

The more persistent pressure came from the Town, and with Bannister using the overlap with some success they gained two quick corners, from the first of which MacDonald had a firm header deflected wide.

MacDonald continued to be prominent, particularly with his heading, and he was a little unlucky not to get the ball through to Tees with a well-judged flick.

This attack brought another casualty, again on the Torquay side, with Young the victim, and the referee raised the anger of the crowd by stopping play with the Town firmly in possession, and in all-out attack.

When play was on again, Torquay had a free kick which brought a long centre from Benson, brilliantly cut out by Davie.

Torquay kept breaking out into attack quickly, and Slough dived full-length to head behind a centre by Mitchinson, and this particular

raid ended with Benson, still limping, shooting much too high.

Then in the 22nd minute came a shock when Torquay went ahead through an unfortunate "own goal". There seemed little threat when Mitchinson picked up a loose ball and let drive for goal. RYAN was in the line of flight, and it was not absolutely clear whether he tried to get out of the way or whether he attempted to head clear.

At all events, the effect was devastating because he changed the course of the ball so much that Davie, who had the original shot covered, was left stranded, and his desperate dive failed to get him within touching distance of the ball.

That really set this game up, and gaining confidence, Torquay had the Town defence in a tangle, which

TOWN ON TV

The Town's vital meeting with Torquay will be featured in London Weekend TV's "The Big Match" tomorrow afternoon.

only the coolness of Keen extricated them from. At the same time, the forwards were not making real progress in terms of effecting openings against close marking, and their case was not being helped by the ball being so often in the air, where the tall Torquay defenders had the advantage.

SHAKEN

However, the Town came back strongly and after Keen had centered a strong drive by Collins was headed out by Kitchener, who was visibly shaken by the impact.

This sparked off some desperate attacking play by the Town, with Torquay now withdrawn into deep defensive positions, and there came an anti-climax when French missed his kick well inside the penalty area. At the same time there were half-hearted appeals for a penalty.

The game was being fought at a tremendous pace, but so far the Town could not be said to have gained the control that was expected of them.

There was nothing very consistent about the Town attack, who were finding the middle blocked, and were again operating almost entirely with only one winger, with Collins deployed in midfield.

INJURED

Allen was injured when he fell heavily on his back after being tackled by Young, and from the free-kick quickly taken by Keen, Allen missed a chance when he shot far too hurriedly in an open space and sliced the ball wide.

At the moment Allen seemed to have forsaken his mid-field role, to reinforce the strikers.

There had been peculiarly few shots at goal from Luton, and the best effort for some time came when MacDonald headed inches over from a centre by Collins.

With four minutes left to half-time, Rudge, looking somewhat disgruntled, was pulled off the field by Allan Brown, sitting on the trainer's bench, and Alan Welsh went on in his place.

The Town's most dangerous

TEAMS

LUTON TOWN: Davie; Ryan, Bannister; Keen, Nicholl, Slough; Collins, MacDonald, Tees, Allen, French. Sub.: Lewis.

TORQUAY UTD.: Donnelly; Sandercock, Glozier; Dunne, Kitchener, Young, Benson, Cave, Rudge, Mitchinson, Scott. Substitute: Welsh (A).

Referee: N Graham, Newbiggin-by-the-Sea.

forward was MacDonald, who made a darting run to bring Donnelly full-length to a well-placed drive.

Right on the interval, Torquay missed a great chance of increasing their lead when Scott placed the ball low across the goal and both Welsh and Mitchinson missed it, with the defence all at sea.

Half time:

LUTON 0
TORQUAY 1

What the Town badly needed was an early goal, but Torquay showed no slackening in their cover—though there was one near thing when MacDonald hooked the ball forward by a centre from Ryan and Kitchener, rather fortunately, cleared from Allen.

One of the Town's faults so far had been that they were taking far too long in which to build up their attacks, and giving Torquay ample time to assume defensive positions.

Torquay were still breaking away dangerously, as when Sandercock came down the right flank and it needed a tackle by Slough to stave off the danger.

CUT EYE

In an all-out raid on the Torquay goal Collins was hurt, badly it seemed, judging by signals to the touchline, and eventually he ran off the field with a pad over his right eye, which had obviously been cut.

This was followed by a corner, in which Donnelly did well to keep out a point-blank shot by MacDonald, and immediately after that Lewis came on to replace Collins, which seemed a popular move, judging by the crowd's reaction.

When that happened, the second half was ten minutes old.

The battle could fairly said

to be hotting up now and in the 56th minute the Town drew level through TEES.

The goal was the product of a free-kick for a bad foul by Kitchener on Lewis, and the ball went out deep on the left to Allen, who headed it across the goal. There was a sudden rush and Tees got there just before Donnelly, to nod the ball in from close range.

Now the Town were being seen in a vastly different light as they crowded on the pressure, and they were a bit unlucky not to go ahead when another header by Tees beat Donnelly, but Benson was there to clear off the line.

Now the Town were operating with three strikers, Allen, Tees and Lewis, and the last-named was again pushed roughly off the ball by Kitchener.

There should have been another free kick when MacDonald, who had tended to drop back into the midfield, was bowled over. The tackling had now become tough, and sometimes uninhibited.

Tees was the victim of a rough tackle by Young, which necessitated him receiving attention, and Nicholl, going up for Keen's free-kick, headed too high.

Again Tees was chopped down by Young, and Torquay were now mostly on the defensive.

CORNER

Seventy minutes had gone, before Torquay earned their first corner, which did not

mean that the game had been at all one-sided, though undoubtedly the Town had done more of the attacking.

A snap chance fell to Lewis of the sort he makes a habit of accepting when Dunne made a mistake in front of goal but, shooting hurriedly, the inside-forward sent the ball the wrong side of a post.

Hesitation by Bannister let Torquay through for a quick raid, but the Town were saved from an awkward situation when Welsh was caught offside.

Lewis was certainly being given a rough ride by Kitchener, who was spoken to by the referee for another

How the goals came

RYAN (own goal) for Torquay after 22 minutes.

TEES for Luton after 56 minutes.

foul. I could not help having the feeling that some more drastic action was necessary at this stage.

It was still a hammer-and-tongs battle, with Torquay mainly pushed back on to the defence.

Once or twice the Torquay defence looked on the point of downfall, but no-one was quite able to produce the finishing touch.

Then French, who had had a quiet game, suddenly appeared on the right to earn a corner and Donnelly had extreme difficulty in snatching a bouncing ball away from the head of MacDonald.

With less than ten minutes left the Town began hammering in gaway for the winner, without being offered much encouragement by Torquay's daunting tackling.

Donnelly came out brilliantly to go full-length and snatch the ball away from the feet of Allen. Donnelly was more frequently in action now than at any previous stage, and was hurt when Tees challenged him for a bouncing ball.

Strident appeals for a penalty by the Town when Kitchener appeared to handle a centre by French went unheeded, but the ball remained at the Torquay end, and the Town forced two consecutive corners.

In almost the last minute, MacDonald went close to snatching the winner with a shot that went just wide,