

TOWN LET THE CHANCES SLIP

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LUTON started off as if they were going to win this vital game easily, but after a Barnsley equaliser early in the second half they did everything except get the ball in the net again.

Macdonald ended his goal famine by putting Town ahead after six minutes, and he had enough opportunities to complete a hat-trick with time to spare.

There were ideal conditions for this afternoon's top-of-the-table encounter between the Town, who were second before the start today, and Barnsley, who were third.

The sun was shining, there was a blue sky and the ground looked in perfect condition. Add to this a big crowd and you had all the ingredients for a first-class occasion.

Terry Branstion, last season's skipper, came in at centre-half in place of Chris Nicholl, who pulled a muscle in training yesterday. Before the start Town manager Alec Stock said: "It's good to have somebody of Terry's experience to fall back on in a position like this. He has got one heck of a reputation, too."

And it was a big day, too, for Mike Harrison. He came in for his first senior match of the season on the left wing. It is a chance that Harrison has been waiting for all season. Graham French moved over to the right wing and John Collins was named as substitute.

Barnsley were without their regular centre-half, Eric Winstanley is ill and was replaced by Jimmy Robson, normally a forward.

At least a dozen coaches had travelled down from Yorkshire and before the match started the two rival factions were singing taunts at each other.

Opportunities

And an early hint of trouble came when it was learned that one of the Luton programme writers had been knocked about a bit outside the ground and had his table overturned.

Luton lost the toss and kicked off facing the Kenilworth Road end. Twice in the first minute Luton were given the opportunity of heading for goal, but twice French fluffed his cross and Barnsley cleared easily.

Harrison was obviously anxious to get into the game and impress. He showed his strong running ability twice in the fifth minute when he charged down mistakes by Bettany.

From the first he headed for goal, but was just beaten by Arblaster and from the second he sent Macdonald away with a good overhead pass. But the ball went out of play.

Barnsley wingers Earnshaw and Hamstead, who always seemed to play well against Luton, began to come more into the game, and after Earnshaw had dribbled on to the edge of the Luton box he found his opposite number with a neat pass. But Hamstead's strong shot was well stopped by Davie.

First goal

And there was more excitement, this time at the other end, when Macdonald and Tees chased up a mistake by Booth. But Arblaster gathered bravely.

Twice more Harrison burst on to the scene like an express train, sped past Murphy and put in good centres. The first was mispassed, but MACDONALD swept the second into the net for Luton's goal in the sixth minute.

Harrison's cross was near perfect. It was low, and went round the back on the retreating defence. All Macdonald had to do was pull back his left foot and sweep the ball into the net.

A couple of minutes later Tees was injured while trying to score a second. A cross from French was lobbed into the middle, and the Luton centre forward met the ball with his right foot at the same time as a

LUTON 1
BARNSLEY 1

By Roger
Duckworth

Barnsley defender. Tees came worse off.

There was some trouble in the crowd in the Bobbers' stand after the goal. Policemen climbed over the fence and took up positions among the Barnsley supporters. An object, which looked to me like a bag of sand, was thrown onto the pitch and it was handed to the referee by Tees.

Immaculate

For a team placed so highly in the league, the Barnsley defence looked very shaky. A cross by Ryan found them running in all directions, and they all missed it.

While things were running well for Luton, Keen was playing an important part in the midfield proceedings. His passing of the ball was immaculate and with Branstion and Slough working well behind, he drove the Town forward.

The Barnsley attack was producing little, but in the 16th minute they presented themselves with an opportunity when Bettany and Earnshaw sent Boardman away. But his shot went over the top, and it was hit from far too far out to cause Davie any bother.

A foul on Harrison by Murphy gave the Luton winger a free kick, which he hit hard into the goalmouth. Howard just beat Allen in the air and cleared the danger.

A couple of weak clearances from Branstion and Ryan exposed Luton at the back, but French dropped back to sort out the situation.

Suddenly it was Luton's turn to look shaky. With defenders rather carelessly leaving clearances to each other, Hamstead was allowed to put across a centre which would normally have contained no threat.

But nobody went for it, and Earnshaw was left with a clear view of the goal. He placed his shot well, and it took a flying save from Davie to turn the ball over the crossbar.

Injured

Back came Luton. A free kick by Keen, following a foul on Macdonald, was challenged for by the Luton forwards, and Tees appealed for a penalty, claiming he had been bowled over in the skirmish.

Howard was penalised for the third time for pushing Tees in the back, and Harrison's free kick produced a challenge from French. It went wide and French had to have treatment for a head injury.

French had to leave the field holding a sponge to his head, and was treated on the touchline by trainer Reg Game.

French came back sporting a belaster over his right eyebrow.

There was plenty of entertainment. Macdonald flashed a left-footer just wide of the post, and at the other end Boardman broke through and did the same past Davie's goal.

A free kick, taken by



Determined Matt Tees sees Arblaster in a brave mood to save this one.

Harrison for hands just outside the area, was cleverly chipped over the heads of the Barnsley defence, and Macdonald fought unsuccessfully for possession in the air.

French and Allen had a good understanding, and the Town winger sold Booth two dum-dums before winning a corner. But this was cleared.

Enthusiasm

Branstion was doing some good work in the air, and Bannister was doing some useful work against the nippy Earnshaw. The enthusiasm of Macdonald was shown up when he chased a ball to the by-line, which he really had no right to expect to catch, and he got a good pass back towards Tees, who was racing in. But the centre forward could not quite reach it before Robson.

There was further excitement when French curled another good one over and Tees jumped high and Arblaster, who did well to catch the ball.

Earnshaw popped up with a chance in the 41st minute, and Davie had to dart out quickly to take the ball off his toe.

Free kick

Just before half time the Town were awarded a free kick for a foul on Keen by Boardman. It produced a corner on the right for French, and the half-time whistle went as Allen headed wide.

HT Luton 1, Barnsley 0

Slough and Branstion sorted out a dangerous move early in the second half between Earnshaw and Loyden, and when the pressure was eased, French broke away with a good run up the middle. He found Harrison, who won a corner off Earnshaw.

By way of a change it was taken by Allen, and caused the Barnsley defence some problems.

Then Allen got the ball again out on the left and put over a good centre, which was just diverted from Macdonald's head.

A strong run by Macdonald nearly brought the Luton inside forward his second goal. He beat Robson as he headed at full flight for goal, and was forced to shoot from a narrow angle over from the left. He got the ball past Arblaster,

but it went an inch or so outside the far post.

How Macdonald must have wished that his effort had gone in, for a minute later Barnsley equalised.

It started off harmlessly enough with a handling offence just outside the Town penalty area. The Luton wall lined up, and Howard took the free kick. He hit it hard and straight at goal, and Davie, who was unsighted, didn't have a chance.

What I would like to know is where the gap was, and who caused it, as the ball whipped passed the wall.

Macdonald had another hard shot saved when he came from the right, and Tees was disappointed when he followed up hoping for a rebound off the goalkeeper.

There was a great deal of activity in the Barnsley goalmouth after a good-looking shot by Macdonald was

TEAMS

LUTON TOWN: Davie; Ryan, Bannister; Keen, Branstion, Slough; French, Macdonald, Tees, Allen, Harrison. Sub: Collins.

BARNSELEY: Arblaster; Murphy, Booth; Bettany, Robson, Howard; Earnshaw, Boardman, Loyden, Evans, Hamstead. Sub: Graham.

Referee: Mr J. K. Taylor (Wolverhampton).

GOALS

MACDONALD (Luton) 6 min

HOWARD (Barnsley) 49min

Attendance: 17,422

deflected for a corner. This was scrambled away, and then a long throw-in from the other side of the field by Keen caused havoc.

Macdonald again went close after Allen had beaten Arblaster in the air. Macdonald and a Barnsley defender both had to have treatment for injuries received in the hectic scuffle which ensued.

And less than a minute later Macdonald was in the wars again when he was tackled by Booth, who received a long talking to by referee Taylor.

The pattern of the game began to change. Their goal had given Barnsley more confidence and they began moving with an air of determination.

Over the top

In the 61st minute Luton should have gone ahead again. Sent away by French, Ryan put a good low centre across the face of the goal. Macdonald should have put it in first time, but again he missed. The ball was scrambled away to Allen, who appeared to steady himself before shooting. But the ball curled away past the right-hand angle of the crossbar.

Luton were getting desperate. Allen brought the ball back into the goalmouth and

both he and Macdonald had efforts scrambled away by the panicking Barnsley defence.

And then, at the end of the same move, French got the ball across and Macdonald, again in a marvellous position, hammered the ball over the top.

You can't afford to miss chances like this and still hope to win. Macdonald should have had at least a hat-trick. Instead, Luton found themselves on equal terms with 25 minutes to go.

The Town were producing some sweet-looking football with Allen and Tees being given help by French. At times they looked to be running Barnsley off their feet. But they were getting nowhere.

Then Harrison joined in again. He had been a bit quieter in the second half, but he showed a turn of pace when he embarked on a strong run down the left and flashed across a good centre. Macdonald tried to volley the ball in but he was high and wide.

Barnsley's chances were few and far between, but in the 65th minute Hamstead nipped round French and got in a good centre which Loyden met, somewhere about the penalty spot and half-volleyed a hard rising shot over the crossbar.

Tees and French set off the next Luton move, and a good centre from the latter again caused trouble to Barnsley. But it was headed away as Macdonald and Harrison charged in.

Careless

Luton were having so much of the play that one felt they must score another sooner or later. There was a hint of desperation about Barnsley's defending, and a lot of the time they were making wild clearances and kicks for touch.

Luton had a chance again when French was tripped but Keen hit the free kick straight at the defensive wall.

And Barnsley were getting more of the fair share of luck, too. Another effort between Tees and Macdonald saw the ball bouncing between two red-shirted defenders on the penalty spot. Neither got the ball, French nipped in, fell over, and the ball was again scrambled out to the touchline.

From the throw in, lobbed into the defence by Keen, Allen again headed over the hands of the Barnsley goalkeeper, and Macdonald, Tees and Slough all had shots bundled away before Slough put one wide.

With only a couple of minutes to go Macdonald was a bit slow in running on to Tees pass following Ryan's free kick. It won the Town another corner, but this time Arblaster caught the ball cleanly in a frantic scrimmage.

The measure of the Town's superiority came in the corner count. This one was Luton's 15th; Barnsley had had three.