

By ERIC PUGH

BY COINCIDENCE, both Luton and Barnsley, companions in the promotion hunt, were without their centre-halves this afternoon. After the team had been announced yesterday morning, Manager Alec Stock was forced to decide that a pulled muscle would mean Chris Nicholl missing his first match since he joined the club from Halifax Town.

Out, too, was the Barnsley pivot, Eric Winstanley, with an attack of gastric 'flu.

In for Nicholl was Terry Branston, and Winstanley's deputy was Jimmy Robson, who usually operates as a winger but who has had considerable experience in the middle.

As far as the Town were concerned, there was a change of tactical plan in that Mike Harrison was called upon for his first outing of the season, with French switching to the right wing.

Barnsley brought a big following, and there was an isolated pocket of trouble about an hour before the kick-off when a band of their fans pushed over a programme stall just outside the club's main office, and made off with some programmes.

Although Branston was back, Mike Keen retained the captaincy and he lost the toss, which meant that the Town defended the Oak Road end.

ANXIOUS

In a brisk start, both teams looked tense and over anxious, with the Town producing some good work in approach, but being driven off before they could provide the finish.

At first it was difficult to decide whom the wind was favouring, but it soon became evident from the length of Davie's goal-kicks that it was more with the Town.

A couple of snap chances came in Barnsley's quick raids, with Evans missing the easier of the two, and then a mistake by Robson let in Tees, whose quick drive was smothered by Arblaster.

However, the Town were ahead in eight minutes when Harrison, who had made two or three promising runs, suddenly turned on a burst of speed to pull the ball across for MacDONALD to end a scoring blank, and hook the ball into the net from close in. It was a quickfire, well-taken goal.

Barnsley were showing some hesitation under pressure—Robson making a couple of indecisive clearances, and they escaped when a shot by Tees was deflected for a corner.

The corner was taken by Harrison and Allen very nearly popped in for one of his headed goals.

SUSPECT

The Barnsley defence was definitely suspect and MacDonald looked like adding to the lead, but pulled the ball wide.

Not a great deal was seen of the Barnsley attack but they gained a free-kick when Branston fouled Loyden which ended with Branston having to concede a corner.

Barnsley's best attempt came from Earnshaw with a power drive that Davie saved brilliantly. First Branston and then Ryan had failed to cut out the danger from the left.

When the Town swung back again there were appeals for a penalty for a foul on Tees when he was seeking to reach a centre by French.

BRIGHT

More bright work by Harrison, who was showing a good turn of speed, brought a centre that French headed rather tamely into the side netting.

In doing so French apparently struck his forehead on the back of Hamstead's head, and was led to the



Mike Harrison created the opening for MacDonald to score after eight minutes.

touchline for repairs by the trainer.

While first aid went on, MacDonald made a typical burst for goal only to be forestalled by Arblaster's quick emergence.

Again Harrison struck with a swinging centre which Arblaster punched off the head of MacDonald, who nearly had his revenge in the next minute with a great left-footed drive that only just missed the far post.

French had returned and then came a reminder that Barnsley were still very much in touch with this game when Boardman made use of a space down the middle to produce a shot that Davie could not reach but which went just wide.

Then there should have been another goal from MacDonald, when Harrison again opened up the Barnsley right flank before setting the ball up for the inside-right, who seemed to snatch at his shot and sky the ball over.

Certainly the Town had had the chances, albeit some of them had been no more than half opportunities, to have had this game fairly well sewn up by now.

Barnsley were not settling down enough to exert much pressure, and the danger continued to come from the Town, with Harrison a constant threat. From one of his corners French shot narrowly wide of the near post, and Barnsley could quite easily have been in far greater trouble by this stage.

Then a passing duet by French and Allen took the Town racing to the attack again. However, they had to be content with a corner, which just eluded Tees's head.

With about five minutes to go to half-time, the Town were really in full cry for another goal and French was beginning to cause trouble on the other flank. From his centre, Tees crashed into Arblaster, who retained his hold on the ball. The referee then had a word with Howard for another foul on Tees.

Just on the interval Howard stepped in between MacDonald and Tees to clear an extremely delicate situation. Half-time:

LUTON 1
BARNSELEY 0

Kicking into their favourite Oak Road goal the Town advanced from the start of the second-half and MacDonald was right out of luck with a cross shot that rolled inches wide of the far post, with Arblaster well beaten.

When Barnsley replied, Keen pushed Boardman off

the ball and the free-kick brought the equaliser from HOWARD. It happened in the 50th minute. The left-half took the free-kick, and somehow the ball got right through the defensive wall, beating Davie, who was probably unsighted.

After this shock, the Town came back with renewed vigour, but Tees shot wide.

Then MacDonald, in the forefront of the attack, crashed in a tremendous drive, straight at Arblaster, who held on at the second attempt.

DESPERATE

There were several desperate situations in front of the Barnsley goal after this, including a shot from MacDonald which was deflected just too high, and a rush that brought Arblaster yards out of his goal and resulted in MacDonald and Bettany being injured.

Another casualty came when MacDonald was again in the wars, and was laid out by a foul tackle by Booth, which earned him a ticking off from the referee.

The Town were trying just about everything in the book to get back into the lead again, and when Ryan and French started another raid, MacDonald pushed the ball on to Allen, whose left-footed drive swung away wide of the post.

Barnsley were having tremendous luck at the moment. This was illustrated when the ball crossed and re-crossed their goal, and was finally breasted off the line by Robson, from MacDonald with Arblaster beaten again. MacDonald, if he had steadied himself would have been a certain scorer, a minute later but he shot too quickly, and too high from no more than 10 yards.

Things were certainly not going right for MacDonald in front of goal, and he was too high when he met a centre from Harrison on the volley as he fell. Arblaster was being kept in constant action, whereas Davie at the other end was almost a spectator.

TEAMS

LUTON T. — Davie; Ryan, Bannister; Keen, Branston, Slough; French, MacDonald, Tees, Allen, Harrison. Sub.: Collins.

BARNSELEY. — Arblaster; Murphy, Booth; Bettany, Robson, Howard; Earnshaw, Boardman, Loyden, Evans, Hamstead. Sub.: Graham. Referee: J. K. Taylor, Wolverhampton.

A similar chance came in a breakaway at the other end, and it fell to Loyden, who stabbed at the ball first time, to send it soaring over.

Some of the force went out of the Town attack as the half neared the halfway stage, and Barnsley had something of a look-in.

Then the Town got moving again, with Tees sending away French and again there was something approaching panic in the Barnsley defence until a shot by Allen went through, went wide, and MacDonald was offside.

Next incident was a cross by Harrison, which Tees looked certain to meet with his head, but Robson got in

How the goals came 69/70

MacDONALD for Luton after 8 minutes.

HOWARD for Barnsley after 50 minutes.

first to make the merest flick, which meant that it was a corner instead of a goal, and from it the luckless MacDonald headed just wide.

PULLED

It was still the Town, and French was pulled down five or six yards outside the penalty area. The free-kick went to waste because Keen played it straight to the feet of Robson, and from the clearance Barnsley made some ground.

There was a half chance for French following a mistake by Barnsley, who had not been so prone to errors since half-time. However French was caught as he shaped to shoot, and the corner brought another narrow escape for Barnsley, with Slough this time missing by inches.

Barnsley were constantly in danger of losing equality and they escaped again when Arblaster only just managed to push over a header from Branston following a corner.

From this the ball was pushed out to Harrison, whose shot looked booked for the net until Murphy got in the way.

There was what looked to be an obvious case of handling inside the penalty area by Booth when no particular danger threatened, but the referee waved aside the Town's claims.

In what almost had to be the final fling, Harrison shot too high.