Town lead

By ERIC PUGH

HAVING included former captain Terry Branston in the party of 13 which travelled to Barrow, it was something of a surprise that manager Alec Stock should nominate him as no more than substitute.

Popular opinion was that Branston was due for recall in order to bring some extra power in defence, but three hours before kick-off time Stock said: "We will start with our usual team." and that meant that the odd man out in the 13 was John

As for yesterday's events, the Town will remember Friday the 13th because they were nearly three hours late in arriving at Windermere where they stayed overnight.

This was caused by a failure in the railway's overhead electric power cables near

As some consolation, there has been no snow in this part of the world. In fact, apart from a cold wind, it could be a

There has been brilliant sunshine all morning, continuing up to kick-off time, and the pitch was in better condition than expected.

MANAGER

Barrow, who had a change of manager suddenly this week, fielded the side that drew at Torquay.

New chief is Don McEvoy, from Southport, who of course, is no stranger here. Not only did he serve a spell as a player, but he was also manager when they gained promotion from Division IV.

Keen lost the toss, but the Town came away from the start with French and MacDonald combining, and it needed a quick intervention by Arrowsmith to save the

Again French led a Town attack which brought a corner, to be followed by a free-kick out on the left that French placed well, and Arrowsmith got up just above Tees to head

Certainly in the opening few minutes it had been a confident start by the Town, who could quite feasibly have snatched a sensational

Then it was seen that Tees | Wide. was hurt, but he was up and about again without needing attention, though he was hobbling a litle.

SAVED

Then suddenly Barrow swung into the game with Ryan beaten in a challenge for the ball, which came across sharply to Garbett, who swung at it first time to produce a low drive that Davie only just reached at full-length.

For a time there was nothing of much consequence from either team, though Barrow were showing signs of trying to unsettle the Town with long kicks and hard following

There was some hint that the speedy Garbett might cause trouble as Bannister did well to push the ball back to Davie under some pressure.

Then the Town swung into action again with MacDonald, Collins and Tees interpassing, only for the attack to break down when Ryan, following up, smacked the ball against a defender.

FOULS

A foul by Bannister on Garbett enabled Barrow to make some ground, and was followed by one by French on Hartland.

This was much closer to the Town goal, but Allen safely cleared Garbett's not very well judged cross.

Stoppages, mainly for minor offences were frequent, and preventing a smooth pattern

of play emerging. In fact, there was some hard

BARROW: Heyes; Dean, Cooper; Noble, Arrowsmith, Hartland; Garbett, Morris, Ledger, Mulvaney, Ellison. Substitute: Knox.

LUTON TOWN: Davie; Ryan, Bannister; Keen, Nicholl, Mac-Slough; Donald, Collins, Tees, Allen, French. Substitute: Collins, Branston.

Referee: V. James, York.

tackling going on, by both teams, and to try to hold the ball was to invite a measure of intimidation.

SCRAPPY

Another foul, this time against Nicholl gave Barrow a free-kick out on the left that Nicholl headed away safely. So far play had been distinctly scrappy.

In mid-field skill there was no doubt that the Town held sway, but since the opening minutes they had not threatened with their finishing.



There was always danger that the earnest endeavour of Barrow might create them a chance, but so far at any rate, the Town defence had been in unyielding mood.

were in some trouble when French made a centre that eluded Heyes so that Cooper had to head behind hurriedly, and from the corner Ryan, following up, sent a longish shot skidding

HEADER

Barrow, the Town gained a corner on the left which clear. French placed well and Keen came racing up to head the ball firmly, but just over the

A foul by Arrowsmith on Tees kept the Town on the attack, and MacDonald all but

Achieved a lot

It has to be accepted that finance is the key sustained success in football, and many managers are therefore operating under a permanent handicap.

Where public support is limited, their horizons also of Oxford United, is a manager in this position, but he has achieved a great deal in his first season in defences being broken. charge of the Second Division club.

Clubs with background and tradition are in a much worse position in Division II at present than Oxford, and Manager Summers must take credit for the attractive football now being played by his

Oxford finished with only two clubs below them on the Second Division chart last season, but this term they have a fair chance of finishing in the top half of the table.

caught the home defence napping as he closed in quickly on Bannister's free-kick.

Another corner on the left was headed out to Slough who returned the ball into the penalty area, where Keen was beaten to it by Hartland.

There could have been trouble for the Town when Hartland came through, and his pass rebounded off the legs of Bannister, straight to Garbett.

The winger closed in only for Bannister to recover smartly and concede a corner, which was a minor detail considering the way circumstances had developed.

However, Barrow seemed to gain confidence and determined work by Garbett gave Ledger the chance to make a shot from outside the penalty area which Davie had covered all the way.

At this point, with 27 minutes gone, manager Stock left the directors' box to go to sit on the trainer's bench.

A possible chance of giving the Town the vital lead eluded MacDonald because of his failure to control the ball, and the next excitement came when Keen collided with the referee and sent him sprawling, without ill effect to either party.

GOALWARD

Ellison was now spending a deal of his time on the right wing. There he gained a freekick when Slough fouled him, and from it there was very nearly disaster, because Mulvaney nipped in to turn the ball goalwards, and it was somewhat sketchily pushed for a corner by Davie.

This was never cleared properly, and from it some slack covering enabled Garbett to get in a shot which Davie saved at full stretch.

Things had swung the way of Barrow who were playing with plenty of enthusiasm without suggesting real finishing power.

Yet, under pressure by Ledger, Nicholl had to give away a corner that Garbett went over to take on the left, not very successfully, because the ball landed outside the After a short burst by penalty area, and it was Tees, back in defence, who headed

PUNCHING

Davie was in action again punching away two handed this time a long free-kick by Dean after another foul by Slough.

There was a close call for Barrow following a throw-in by MacDonald at fell loose in front of goal, and Tees threw himself full-length to head the bouncing ball inches wide of the post with Heyes really struggling.

OFF-SIDES

The Towns' offside tactics were a problem for Barrow, and they were caught several times.

Then Collins, after trying to do too much, conceded a are limited. Gerry Summers, free-kick for a foul which was cleared speedily, and there was no real sign of the stalemate imposed by two rigid

> Almost on the stroke of half-time there came a free kick to Barrow when Slough fouled Mulvaney some eight yards outside the penalty

The kick had to be retaken and the second attempt rebounded to safety off a forest of legs and when the ball was returned, Barrow were caught off-side again.

There had been only one stoppage for a slight injury, lyet we were already two

minutes into injury time, during which Ledger made a cross shot that went wide of the far post. Half-time:

BARROW 0 LUTON TOWN 0

As the second half began there was a close call for the Town when Garbett beat the off-side trap to give himself a clear run for goal, following a through ball by Dean, but Davie came out bravely and quickly to smother his pointblank shot.

It was certainly as good a chance as this somewhat grim struggle had produced, and at



Town winger Graham French, who scored a much-needed goal at Barrow this afternoon.

the moment Barrow were threatening to hustle and bustle the Town out of their defensive composure.

In fact for a few minutes they looked anything but confident, but slowly re-grouped their forces and began to make some ground.

There was no doubt that Barrow were on top at this stage, and again Davie saved the Town with a full-length save from Ledger after Ellison had crossed.

SCORED

Then in the 54th minute the Town in what really amounted to their first dangerous raid of the second half, took the lead.

Initially it was the endeavour of MacDonald that led up to it, and his hard running took him just inside the penalty area in a highly dangerous position.

Heyes came out to push away his shot, and the ball went to FRENCH. Coolly the winger weighed up the situation, and with Heyes stranded some 12 yards out of his goal lobbed the ball just under the bar, and the desperate efforts of two de-

fenders to head away

failed.

Certainly this was a timely success for the Town who badly needed something to restore their confidence in the face of Barrow's determination. The referee over-ruled some

flag waving by a linesman for a free-kick for hands against

How the goals came

FRENCH for Luton after 54 minutes.

MULVANEY for Barrow after 68 minutes. MORRIN for Barrow after 71 minutes.

Bannister, who slipping on the hard patch of turf on the far side of the ground, threw himself to prevent the ball running through.

The goal had certainly quietened down Barrow to some extent and they were not so dangerous as they had been.

ADVANTAGE

A free-kick against Keen when it would have been to Barrow's advantage to exercise the advantage rule as Garbett was clear, did not endear the referee to the crowd, and my view was that the linesmen were trying to assume too much control.

Barrow, however, still had plenty of fight, and they drew level after 68 minutes through MULVANEY.

It was a replica of two or three raids that had so nearly yielded a goal previously, that is a pass down the middle for one of the strikers to run onto.

NIPPED

This time it was Hartland who pushed the ball through. Again Davie came out quickly, but not quite quickly enough because Mulvaney nipped in first, got a foot to the ball, as both players collided, and it rolled into the net with the goalkeeper utterly unable to do anything about it.

This brought a quite violent reaction from the Town, who stormed to the attack, but were driven off by some hard tackling.

Certainly the equaliser had had the effect of livening up the play considerably, and

what it really needed now was for someone to calm things down.

Then came a desperate turn of events for the Town with Barrow taking a completely unexpected lead in the 71st minute.

Again a through pass was the forerunner of the goal, with Mulvaney picking up the ball near the deadline.

There was evidence of lack of cover, and the inside-left showed good judgment in not crossing the ball square, but pulling it back.

This gave MORRIN the chance to take a run at it, and he crashed in a rising shot that went wide of Davie's desperate leap to his left.

So two goals in three minutes had completely changed the whole complexion of the game, and it was now the Town who were struggling to save something.

Having gained their narrow advantage, Barrow were certainly in no mood to give it away, and there was no sign that the Town could snatch an equaliser.

With nine minutes left Branston removed his track suit and prepared to join the fray. At first it was not clear whom he was to replace, but the problem seemed to have solved itself when Tees stayed down after a hard tackle.

SUBSTITUTE

However, the centreforward made a quick recovery, and then it was seen that it was Allen being withdrawn for the second consecutive match.

Branston took up a position in the back four with Slough and Collins moving forward in a desperate bid to save a match that had slipped out of the Town's grasp.

Immediate effect was that they gained a corner on the left, followed immediately by a free-kick, but Barrow had filled their penalty area to

overflowing and there was no immediate way through. Before that Garbett had gone near to increasing the Barrow lead, and Davie quite comfortably saved

Ledger.

FORLORN

Now so far as the Town were concerned, it was looking a forlorn hope, but with more men in attack than I have seen in an away match for much of this season, they persevered.

Not that anything got through, such was the terrier like tackling and covering of the Barrow defence, and then the home team used up precious seconds with a raid at the other end that brought only a goal-kick.