

No luck for Town

BARNSELEY 2, LUTON TOWN 1

AS this keenly competitive fast game ended its final phase at Oakwell, on Tuesday, both teams could have settled honourably for a draw. Instead things began to happen at quite bewildering speed.

With five minutes left, the Town missed the chance of a victory that might have clinched promotion for them.

Then when an opportunity came the way of Barnsley, with just two minutes left, they made no mistake, and the Town were left somewhat bewildered and definitely unlucky losers.

The chance for the Town to snatch the winner fell to Busby, who had shown good anticipation in intercepting a bad back pass by Boardman. He was on to the ball quickly, but he had to shoot equally quickly as Sherratt came racing out of his goal to throw himself at the centre-forward's feet.

The ball seemed booked for the corner of the net, but tantalising and despairingly it went the wrong side of the post — and with it possibly went the Town's hope of Second Division football next season.

Split second

I would not blame Busby unduly, because it all happened in a split second, and on this occasion his luck was out.

For his part in that near-fiasco for Barnsley — and another misjudged pass immediately afterwards — Boardman was booed by the crowd.

Yet, in the unpredictable way things happen in football, it was he who produced the slide-rule pass that sealed the Town's fate.

Branston could not reach a pass which went through to Dean, whose cross Star-

ling conceivably should have cut out.

However, perhaps because of the greasiness of the ball, he could only push it to HAMSTEAD, who drove it in from close range, with Ryan, covering on the line, making an unavailing attempt to stop it.

Irony

Ironically, the players were saying afterwards, that had Starling left the ball

completely, Ryan was in a position to clear.

However, in the heat of the moment, there is no time for details like that to be considered. Naturally, the reverse deflated the Town, who had had almost complete charge of the second half, with a stiff wind behind them.

So much had this been so, no danger seemed to threaten from Barnsley, who had been so busy earlier. Yet, they had the ball in the net again before the end, almost in the last second, from a header by Dean which was disallowed for pushing.

Barnsley's first goal came in the 36th minute, when Loyden lured Branston out on the right, beat him, and centred. There was evidence that the Town's covering was not all it might have been, and DEAN met the ball first time. Starling got a hand to it, but could not keep it out.

Six minutes before that

happened, Keen had a goal disallowed, either for being offside, or pushing — it was not clear which — when he headed home a cross by Collins. To me, there did not seem much wrong with the goal.

Even against the wind, the Town were not afraid to come out to attack, and Sherratt was forced to make brave saves from MacDonald and Collins as they went out for an equaliser before the interval.

There was never any doubt that the Town were the more dangerous in the

Town in midfield, but Slough's marking was somewhat adrift at times.

By and large, there was not much wrong with the Town's back four, and they were unfortunate to be concerned in the late tragedy that befell them.

Certainly, I have seen the Town play a good deal worse away from home this season, and yet gain some reward.

BARNSELEY: Sherratt; Murphy, Raggett; Bettany, Winstanley, Howard; Dean, Hamstead, Loyden, Boardman, Barrowclough. Substitute: Booth.

LUTON TOWN: Starling; Ryan, Bannister; Slough, Branston, Moore; Collins, Busby, MacDonald, Keen, Harrison. Substitute: Allen.

Referee: D. A. Corbett of Wolverhampton.

Attendance: 9,760.

By ERIC PUGH

second half, and after MacDonald had headed just wide, Slough forced Sherratt full-length, as did Busby in a sharp burst.

The equaliser came deservedly in the 59th minute, when Busby made an accurate centre, and KEEN headed the ball down. Sherratt went full-length, but could only help it into the corner of the net.

Unlucky

The Town were genuinely unlucky, there can be no doubt. Certainly, no one could fault their work-rate, for they fought tremendously hard from start to finish.

Barnsley, of course, are one of the more useful Third Division teams, but taking the game through, the Town more than matched them, without being able to cash in on the half-chances.

For one thing, with Winstanley and Howard providing an effective barrier, MacDonald did not receive the freedom he had against Reading, and found difficulty in getting a clear run to goal.

Cast in a more orthodox right-wing role than usual, I thought Collins had one of his most effective games, and certainly was more dangerous than Harrison, who got into the game only spasmodically.

Busby again proved his capacity for hard work, and showed a good deal of promise. No-one did more than Keen to inspire the