

NOT TOWN'S DAY AT ALL!

CHARLTON ATHLETIC 1, LUTON TOWN 1 70/71

OVER-CONFIDENCE, or maybe it amounted to over-anxiety in the end, undoubtedly caused the Town to lose a point at The Valley, on Saturday, from a game which they had never looked other than likely to win after going ahead in the sixth minute.

Hard fighters though they were, Charlton never seemed to have anything approaching the fire-power up front to suggest they would check the Town's run of consecutive victories.

In all probability they would not have done so, had not the Town, with the game entering its final phase, tried to slow down play in somewhat exaggerated fashion.

Instead of continuing to make progress and going out for the goal that would have settled matters completely, they began to push the ball about to each other in midfield.

They have tried this before this season, notably at Sheffield recently but, on that occasion, they could well afford to do so, because they had four goals in hand.

Mistake

No such margin bolstered them on this occasion, and with this sort of passing reaching epidemic proportions, Slough elected to make a long, back pass to Read when he could have put the ball almost anywhere with complete safety.

As it turned out, the goalkeeper had not the slightest chance of reaching it, because Plumb, quick to size up the situation, intercepted.

Read beat out his first shot, but the centre-forward regained possession, and

By ERIC PUGH

this time, his attempt was stopped by someone on the goal-line, John Ryan, I think.

Out it came again and this time, TREACY made no mistake from point blank range — and that was the end of the Town's dream of registering their sixth consecutive League win, which would have put them on top of the table again, on goal average.

Fine start

Their customary fine start duly arrived after six minutes, when GIVENS, who has developed a veritable hunger for goals recently, came along with another, fine opportunist effort.

With Graham Moore, appearing to be slack in his covering, Givens picked up a through pass, and, without the slightest waste of time, cracked it into the far corner of the net.

Much of what followed was not particularly entertaining, and there were some distinctly shoddy passages, including one in which the Town defence got itself into an untypical tangle, and Plumb missed badly from close in.

Then, I am certain in my own mind, that the Town should have had a penalty when MacDonald was

pulled down by Went and Reeves.

Certainly, the referee stopped play, but then took the painless way out by awarding the Town a free kick for obstruction. I often wonder whether the opportunity to make this sort of award is not being used as an escape route by some referees.

Better

There was a better spell from the Town early in the second half, when MacDonald might have increased the lead when he intercepted a back pass, but his shot was deflected.

Givens too, twice deserved a better fate for his determination to get among the goals again.

Went mostly had a grip on MacDonald, who scarcely looked in the big money class on this occasion. Went however, had his name taken for a foul on the centre-forward, and then came the other penalty controversy.

There was no doubt that Went handled as MacDonald turned the ball goalwards, and the only question affected exactly where it took place.

I had a plain view of the incident, and my impression was that it was clearly inside the area but, again the referee denied the Town their reward by giving a free kick outside the line.

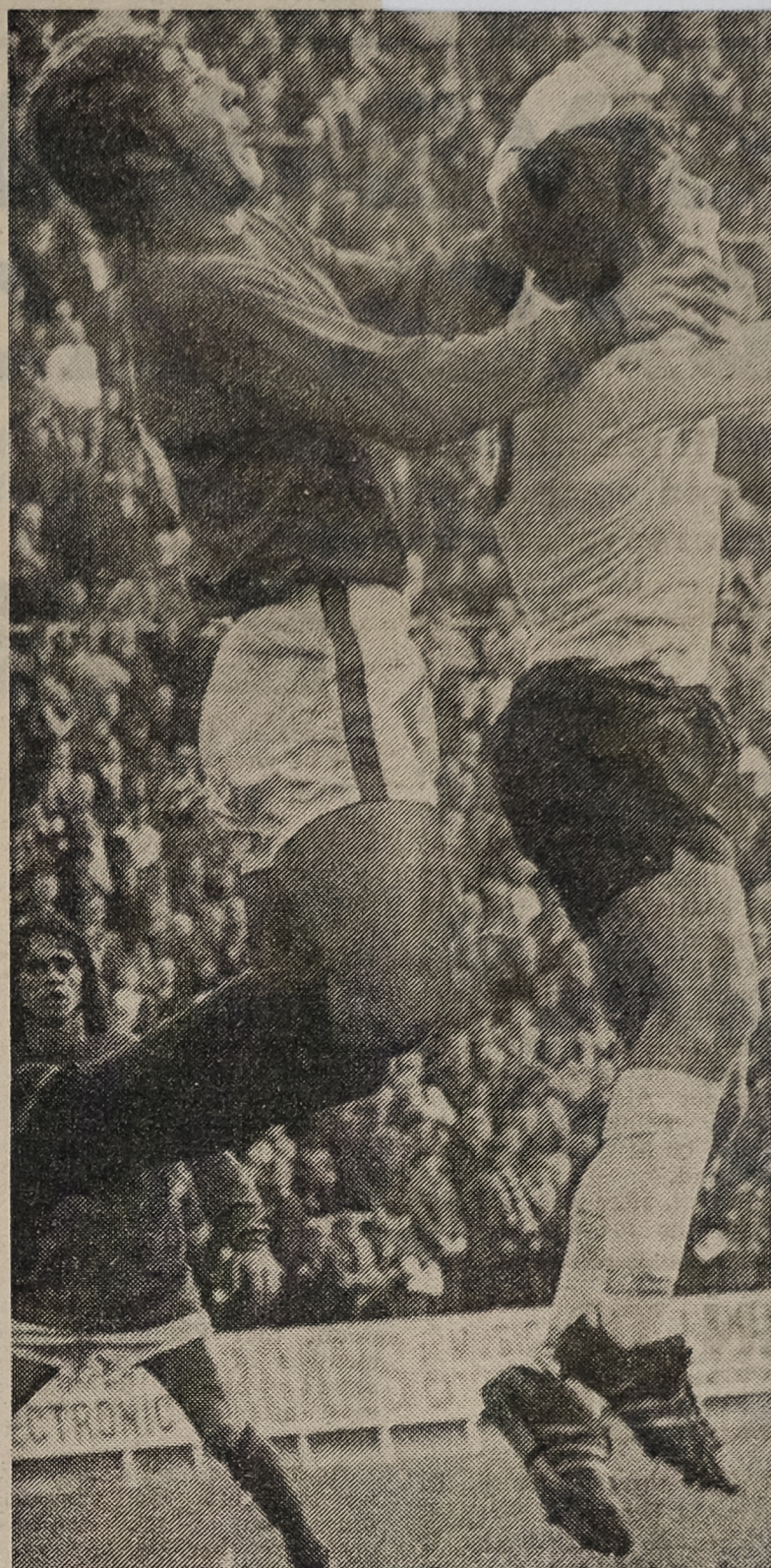
Kinsey on

With 12 minutes left, Charlton brought on Kinsey for Ellis, and four minutes later, there was an enforced substitution by the Town, as Givens limped off with ankle trouble, to be replaced by Busby.

While the Town could certainly point to bad luck in the way in which two vital penalty decisions went against them, this was still a match they should have won with plenty to spare.

However, they were not so sharp in front of goal as usual, and at times suffered from inaccuracies in midfield, where I thought Keen was the best of the trio.

Again, there were strong contributions by Nicholl and his henchman, John Moore.



We said last week that you can't keep a good man down, but a Charlton defender appears to be making a strong bid by putting his hands on the shoulders of Town centre-forward Malcolm MacDonald as they go up for a high ball.

who have developed such a fine understanding, and I could not see much wrong with either John Ryan or Slough, who were not severely tested.

In one or two recent games, Read has looked something less than confident at times, but I am glad to report that he was well on top of the job on this occasion, and showed good anticipation.

CHARLTON ATHLETIC: Wright; Curtis, Bruck; Moore (G), Went, Reeves; Ellis (Kinsey), Treacy, Plumb, Davies, Peacock.

LUTON TOWN: Read; Ryan (John), Slough; Hoy, Nicholl, Moore (J); Ryan (Jimmy), Court, MacDonald, Keen, Givens (Busby).

Referee: E. Jolly, Manchester. Attendance: 12,928.



Town FC directors Eric Morecambe and Tom Hodgson are happy about something. Obviously, it wasn't Charlton's equaliser.