

Point saved in dramatic fight

LUTON TOWN 3, CARLISLE UNITED 3

IF ever a team demonstrated the strength of its morale and its complete determination not to accept an apparently inevitable defeat, the Town did in this humdinger of a match at Kenilworth Road on Saturday.

With the last quarter-of-an-hour looming dangerously close, they seemed to be in a hopeless position, three goals down, and a stalwart Carlisle defence not giving them much encouragement that they would be able to improve matters.

More than that, it had long seemed fairly certain that this was not the Town's day for goals, because they had passed up several easy chances.

"With the chances that came our way we could have had five goals in the first half," said coach Jimmy Andrews afterwards, but he put some of the blame on the heavily waterlogged turf at the Oak Road end, which the Town were attacking during the first 45 minutes.

"I think it hindered us because the ball was sticking at that end. Had it been running normally I think Malcolm MacDonald would have had a first half hat-trick," he added.

Difference

Certainly, on balance, Luton had the more scoring opportunities than Carlisle, but the main difference until the high drama of the closing stages was that Carlisle made the most of theirs.

Andrews admitted to not being very happy about the way in which the goals came, and certainly there is a grave doubt in my mind about the first, which came after 12 minutes.

Making an unexpected excursion upfield, HEMSTEAD accepted a pass from Barton to make a high shot from over 20 yards that passed above the head of Read, who, in my opinion, was caught napping in being too far out of his goal.

That was a shock, because it was the Town who had made the early running. They had been prevented from taking an early lead only by Ross, whose dive had pushed a shot by MacDonald on to the inside of the post.

Two down

Five minutes later they were two goals down, this time as the result of a free kick for a foul by Nicholl on Hatton, and again the ball

hit the back of the net from over 20 yards.

This time Read could scarcely be blamed, because there is no doubt that someone in the defensive wall moved, leaving an unexpected gap through which BALDERSTONE'S drive went.

To their credit, the Town hit back furiously and might well have drawn level quickly because Givens had a couple of chances. Certainly he should have scored from the first because he shot wide of the far post after being sent through by MacDonald.

Again it was MacDonald who made an opening, and



Jimmy Ryan scored his first goal for the Town and started their fight-back.

this time Givens, shooting as he was tackled, sent the ball straight at Ross.

On the treacherous surface which became worse as the heavy rain showed no sign of ceasing, Carlisle's defence was often at full stretch, and MacDonald, after shooting high and wide, had an attempt cleared off the goal-line by Davis.

In view of the number of openings that had been created, the half time position was serious but not all that desperate, especially as the forwards had the better going on which to operate.

However, their hopes took another steep dive when

Carlisle secured a third goal 10 minutes after half time.

Probably, had a corner taken on the right by Balderstone, come across unhindered, the danger would not have accrued, but Hatton intervened to head the ball down to MARTIN, who quickly had it in the net.

The fat was really in the fire now, so far as the Town were concerned, but they threw more weight into attack, with Court appearing upfield much more frequently.

Town's first

However, the vital first goal did not come until the 73rd minute, when Nicholl came up for a corner taken by Court and headed against the bar.

From the rebound MacDonald's effort was again stopped on the line by Davis, and it was JIMMY RYAN who ended the exciting melee by driving the ball through. It was his first goal since joining the club.

Before Carlisle really had time to settle down again, SLOUGH came up from deep defence, to run on to a pass by Keen and slam the ball past the startled Ross for his fourth goal of the season—no bad record for a full-back.

After that, Moore was injured for the second time, was helped off, and Busby came on to join the muddy fray and the frantic efforts to save a point.

Carlisle were under a good deal of pressure, as was shown when Martin was "booked" for time-wasting—kicking the ball away after the whistle had gone for a free-kick.

Pandemonium

Then, the Town pulled themselves together for a last, desperate effort and it succeeded with a minute to go in a movement in which Busby had a decisive hand, and which enabled MacDonald to end his frustration by slamming the ball high into the net.

Pandemonium broke out, and with excitement still at

its peak, MacDonald went very close to snatching a winner and making the turn-about all the more remarkable.

With Givens not quite so dangerous as usual and Jimmy Ryan managing to weave fewer of his clever patterns, it was the driving force of MacDonald which Carlisle had to fear most and, even though Ternent was on hand to help the capable Winstanley, they never really tamed the menace of the Town leader.

Town certainly did not have the mid-field domination we saw at Hull the previous week, and Hoy, in particular, had not a great deal to show for much effort and hard running.

With water almost standing on the surface in places, this was not the happiest of occasions for defenders. They found it difficult to turn quickly, but Nicholl came along with another efficient display, aided by Moore, and there was some solid play by Slough.

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

CARLISLE UNITED: Ross; Hemstead, Davis; Ternent, Winstanley, Sutton; Martin, Barton, Hatton, Owen, Balderstone. Substitute: Gorman.

Referee: H. Williams, Sheffield.
Attendance: 14,837.