

Epic thriller the Town should have won

LUTON TOWN 3, NOTTINGHAM FOREST 4

BEFORE this exhilarating Cup-tie began, manager Alec Stock, with the memory of the happenings of the meeting with QPR fresh in his mind, told me, "We are looking to be more aggressive and more hungry for goals. We have become a bit hesitant, and we intend to go out and put it across the Forest."

Why things did not work out exactly that way, most of the crowd of 23,483 will never truly know, but Forest's assistant manager, Bill Anderson, who for so

By ERIC PUGH

long performed near-miracles as Lincoln City's chief, probably came near to the truth.

He said: "Of course, Luton should have won, but the fact was that they did not get the breaks."

"Had we been 3-1 down at half-time we could not have grumbled, but when one of our defenders headed the ball on to his own bar and we escaped, it was then I began to think in terms of a victory for us."

"No-one can win a cup-tie of this nature without luck, and Luton certainly did not enjoy their share tonight."

Untypical gift goals

It was also true that the Town contributed to their own downfall—and so miss a lucrative home cup-tie with Orient—by "gifting" goals in completely untypical style.

Coach Jimmy Andrews, who regards the concession of a goal by his defence much in the same light as a miser searching for missing pieces of gold, told me: "The secret of our success has been in not giving goals away."

"From one point of view, it was a good job it happened in a cup-tie and not a vital league match." He thus demonstrated how much he is dedicated to securing promotion again.

To a marked extent, the goals were conceded because, in pursuance of their attacking policy, unaccustomed gaps appeared in defence, and it was these that the Forest utilised to the full in this thriller.

In their tearaway start, the Town could have been two up in the first quarter of an hour. A terrific drive by Hoy struck Barron as he fell, Jimmy Ryan missed a good chance from the rebound, and MacDonald just failed to connect with a centre from Court.

When Forest took the lead in the 17th minute, it was so unexpected as to be near-sensational, and it came in their first serious raid after their defence had been subjected to all-out pressure.

Neatly accepted

A free-kick against John Ryan led to it, and with Read failing to cut it out, CORMACK neatly accepted his chance in the crowded goalmouth.

Two minutes later, and the Town were on terms. John Ryan went streaming through on the right wing, Barron missed his centre completely, and there was MacDonald to accept the sort of chance he rarely misses.

After that, the goals, but not the excitement dried up, with the Town still carrying the fight to their opponents and being desperately unlucky not to go ahead.

Barron made a fantastic save from Court, Givens was twice just over the target with headers, Bannister dropped the ball on top of the far corner of the net, and Chapman all but put through his own goal as the Town's relentless pressure continued.

Nor did the pattern change in the early part of the



MAC'S PENALTY

Malcolm MacDonald starts Town's great fight-back from 3-1 down by scoring this penalty goal after 66 minutes.

second half, when Hoy was inches too high with a rousing drive from 30 yards, Jackson dropped the ball on to his own bar and Keen missed a great chance by heading too high from near the six-yard line.

Never in front

A goal then, and I am confident that the Town would have been home and dried but, throughout, they never held the advantage of being in front.

There can have been few more dramatic substitutions than that which occurred in the 62nd minute when Forest sent on COLLIER for McIntosh.

Within a minute he had put his side ahead when the ball went over the line off some part of his body as he bent low to meet a centre from Cormack.

There was some suspicion of offside about this, but before the Town really had time to dwell upon it, the ball was in their net again two minutes later.

This time, it was LYONS who went through a gaping hole with a pass from Cormack, to slide the ball past Read, whom I thought should have come out more decisively.

That looked to be curtains for the Town, but their fighting spirit came to their rescue and two minutes later, they were back in with a chance, when Jimmy Ryan was pulled down by Chapman.

Practised ease

MacDONALD beat Barron with practised ease from the spot, and the hunt was really on for an equaliser which the centre-forward might have achieved, but he shot wide from a good position.

However, with eight minutes left, amid tremendous scenes of enthusiasm, the Town were level again with MacDONALD completing a fine hat-trick.

He squeezed the ball in from an angle after a scramble

in front of goal, following a shot by Jimmy Ryan which came back off the bar.

By now, the crowd were anticipating extra-time, and the possibility of another chapter of the saga at Villa Park, Birmingham, but it was not to be.

The fatal gap

With just four minutes left, Forest found that fatal gap down the middle again, with Richardson sending REES racing through and, this time, Read had absolutely no chance.

Afterwards, the Town players were claiming with some justice, judging by all the evidence that the goal should not have counted because of offside, but there was no indication of it from the officials.

So ended a struggle which qualifies to be described as an epic and which will be remembered by thousands for years to come.

Of course, it would have been more memorable had the Town won, as they so richly deserved to do.

Theirs was a gallant failure and one which must have won them many friends.

In placing so much emphasis on attack, they took a calculated risk, but could not have taken into account that Forest's goal would be attended by such good luck or that their finishing would so often lack final accuracy.

Rein in attack

In throwing more men into attack more strain was placed on the rearguard, in which Nicholl was less assured than usual without the constant support of Slough, who was allowed a freer rein in attack than usual.

Both Hoy and Court were continually pushing forward, too, along with Keen and, had the goals come, as they should have done, there would have been a glorious success to record.

Then, there would have been a sufficient margin to enable them to bolster their defence and contain the opposition.

LUTON TOWN: Read; John Ryan, Bannister; Hoy, Nicholl, Slough; Jimmy Ryan, Court, MacDonald, Keen, Givens. Substitute: Busby.

NOTTINGHAM FOREST: Barron; Hindley, Winfield; Chapman, O'Kane, Jackson; McIntosh (Collier), Lyons, Cormack, Richardson, Rees.

Referee: H. G. New, Bristol.