

Town miss too many chances

LUTON TOWN 1, CHARLTON ATHLETIC 1

BEARING in mind the difficulties the Town have experienced previously in dealing with teams from the lower reaches of the table, even though they have had ground advantage, this result was less surprising than would appear on the surface, even if it was not exactly predictable.

That it was a game which the Town should have won with something to spare is not helpful in the final reckoning, for they lost a point they could ill-afford.

Manager Alec Stock underlined this afterwards, when he said: "This is the sort of game we have to win, and we had chances all over the place."

On the other side of the coin for the Town, was the fact that nearly all the major decisions made by the referee seemed to go against them, including the negation of at least two well-founded penalty appeals and his disallowing of what appeared to be the late winning goal.

On this subject, Stock was heard to muse afterwards, more in sorrow than in anger: "I cannot understand referees, although I try very hard. I am very friendly disposed towards them, but if I fail to understand, how can players and spectators be expected to do so?"

Too late

Not that he was trying to excuse a below-par performance, because he added: "We were not sharp enough in the first half, and we did not liven up until the last 25 minutes, when Busby came on."

Despite his appearance being limited to exactly 22 minutes, in fact, Busby made a considerable impact. Lately, he has been only on the fringe of first team reckoning, but with the threat he poses within the penalty area, and with a goal-famine afflicting the Town, he may now become a formidable claimant for a more regular place.

Busby was brought on immediately after Charlton had taken a shock lead when WENT made no mistake from the penalty spot after John Ryan had been penalised for pulling down Peacock.

This was a matter of Ryan being slightly late with his

tackle, and the offence looked worse than actually it was.

However, after the clear-cut nature of two, perhaps three handling offences with which Charlton had got away, this was rather like heaping coals on an already glowing fire.

Perhaps, the decision that incensed the crowd most, was when Went clearly handled and, in the opinion of most people, it occurred inside the area. Instead, the referee placed the ball on the very edge of the area, and the free-kick came to nothing.

Too soon

Immediately he came on, Busby was in the picture, just failing to connect with a fine centre by Anderson when a touch must have meant a goal. However, in this instance, he had arrived on the spot a fraction too soon and was left with a task more difficult than it appeared.

However, if atonement were necessary, it came in the 73rd minute, when BUSBY made no mistake with a close-range header during a stirring raid in which the final cross came from Keen.

Busby had been given the role of second striker with Givens dropping back to fill Hoy's midfield place and he forced Wright to a fine point-blank save. He followed with a brilliant, weaving run into the penalty area which, unfortunately, ended with his shot being beaten down.

As the game neared its end, Charlton had to withstand terrific pressure by the Town. Busby did slide the ball through a crowd of players into the net, but the referee disallowed a goal because he said MacDonald had pushed a defender.

Strangely, a game that produced little in the way of viciousness, brought three

bookings. This was the second time this season that Hoy's name had gone into a referee's book, the other instance being at Blackburn in January, and it was altogether an unfortunate game for the wing-half.

In the 14th minute, in a clash with Endean, he was accidentally gashed on the nose, an injury that caused his removal for seven min-

LINE-UP

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

CHARLTON ATHLETIC: Wright; Curtis, Bruck; Reeves, Went, Shipperley; Bond, Treacy, Davies, Endean, Peacock. Substitute: Warman.

Referee: C. Thomas, Treorchy. Attendance: 15,262.

utes, while two stitches were inserted.

In addition, his nostrils were plugged, but continued to bleed for some time, necessitating continual dabbing with gauze. Eventually, he was called off to make way for Busby.

Two Charlton players had their names noted—Wright for showing dissent after being penalised for carrying the ball too far, and Bruck for kicking the ball away after being pulled.

Once again, there could be no cause for complaint about the soundness of the

strongest part of the Town team—their back four.

Nicholl and Moore between them firmly buttoned up the middle of the field, and not much scope was allowed down the wings by John Ryan and Slough.

Naturally, Hoy's effectiveness was reduced by his injury, which might have had some effect on the Town's rhythm, but Keen kept going strongly, and was always trying to drive things on.

Both wingers, Jimmy Ryan and Anderson were ever willing to come back to work, rendering valuable service in this respect, but when attacking, both were inclined to hang on to the ball too long and Ryan found the experienced Bruck difficult to pass.

Watching

During the first half, there was a definite lack of decision by the Town in front of goal, even from MacDonald who, watched by Newcastle United, will not regard this as one of his more productive days.

Of course, the fact that the supply of goals from the centre-forward has dried up has much to do with the Town's present problems.

Naturally, having established a reputation, MacDonald is being closely watched, nor are the clear-cut openings being created for him.

This is a phase that will pass, but meanwhile the Town are being limited to less than a goal a match and that is not promotion form