

A point —and credit to defence

HULL CITY 0, LUTON TOWN 0

THERE are times when the end justifies the means and this, I suppose, was one of them, in that the result will go down to posterity as a good one for the Town, as is any hard-earned point away from home.

On the other hand, this proved to be a goalless draw of the duller variety, and it was only seldom that either team promised to achieve the domination that would have led to victory.

For the Town, there was some justification in that they were deprived by injury of two of their strikers, Busby and Anderson, who had to be content with seats in the stand.

That left them a little on the thin side up front, and perhaps induced from them a little more exaggeration on defence than would have been the case otherwise.

Even so, Jimmy Ryan who came in as replacement for Anderson after so long on the sidelines, emerged with most credit among the front-runners.

Great worker

On either wing, and even in the middle, he did a prodigious amount of work, showing good control and ability to beat a man but, even so, the thrust that Anderson has been showing lately was missed.

It followed, too, that the close support that has been provided for Halom was not there this time and he was overshadowed by Paddy Greenwood, who did an effective job of marking him.

For once in a way, Wainwright, who has done well so far, seemed unable to make much impact on the game, and the net result was little fire power up front.

Yet a completely different pattern could have emerged had Givens in the second minute been a split second earlier in his arrival on the scene when Jimmy Ryan, sent away by Halom, made a beautiful low centre.

With the Hull defence caught flat-footed with surprise, the ball passed invitingly close to the far post as Givens closed in, but even a desperate dive did not quite enable him to make the touch, which was all that was needed.

Blame the ref

For much of the scrappiness produced in the first half, I feel that the referee must bear the responsibility. Even to the extent of largely ignoring the advantage rule, about which most officials I have seen this season have been very sensible, he did not allow the play to flow and there were frequent stoppages in the first half induced by 12 fouls against Hull and five the other way.

By ERIC PUGH

broke out, as it did on occasion, it was difficult to decide whether the home fans were deriding the efforts of their own team or expressing their opinion of the handling of the game.

Of the memorable features, there were two fine full-length saves by Barber from O'Riley and there could have been consolation for Givens for his earlier near-miss, had his shot from getting on for 30 yards been

League run to eight, the defence again emerged with major honours.

As I have indicated, Nicholl and Moore formed the backbone of it, but no-one should under-estimate the part played by the unflappable Shanks and John Ryan who, with Slough pushing further forward, is really being called upon to play an anchoring role, which curbs his spirit of adventure.

Free rein

Amid the preponderance of draws, the Town have shown signs of attacking intent by the changing of the midfield plan in which Slough and Givens are being given free rein to break through.

Both did well within the limits which this dour game allowed, and Keen, who, like Ryan, has also been called upon to play more defensively, linked up adequately with the remainder of the defence.

So, once again, the Town have shown a fine ability to fight and to play to a set plan. Maybe, the game will soon be forgotten, but the benefit of the point they gained cannot be other than lasting.

LINE-UP

HULL CITY: McKechnie; Banks, Beardsley; Greenwood (P), Neill, Knighton (Greenwood R); Lord, Simpkin, O'Riley, Houghton, Butler.

LUTON TOWN: Barber; John Ryan, Shanks; Slough, Nicholl, Moore; Wainwright, Keen, Halom, Givens, Jimmy Ryan (Court).

Referee: A. Morrissey, Bramhall, Cheshire. Attendance: 13,904.

a foot nearer the target because McKechnie was definitely struggling.

Perhaps the outstanding feature of Barber's play, apart from the certainty of his handling, is the acuteness of his reflexes, and to this could be traced a brilliant point-blank range save from a header by Butler in the tenth minute of the second half.

Lone battle

Such attacks as the Town made were usually sparked by Jimmy Ryan, fighting much of a lone battle, and there was a chance made by him from which Halom had a shot pushed out by McKechnie, and Slough, following up, saw his effort from a sharp angle, deflected for a corner.

Unfortunately, with 12 minutes left, Ryan fell heavily on his shoulder when tackled and went off with an arm in a sling, having dislocated his collar-bone.

That brought on Court, who, like Ryan, has been much in the background lately, and the ex-Arsenal man made his contribution by holding the ball intelligently in the closing stages when the Town clearly had a point well within their sights.

Hull, too, had to use their substitute with five minutes of normal time left, plus what proved to be four minutes of injury time. Knighton was hurt, and Roy Greenwood replaced him.

A goal needed

What this game needed more than anything to liven it up was a goal, which could have had the effect of push-