

One point, but Town well deserved two

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BRISTOL CITY 0, LUTON TOWN 0

WITHOUT any doubt at all, the Town's second away victory of the season was there for the taking at Ashton Gate, Bristol, on Saturday, but two factors stood between them and the thoroughly well deserved extra point.

One was that their finishing was not so accurate as it should have been, as a result of which two or three acceptable chances were missed, and the other, two brilliant reflex saves made in quick succession by Gibson.

But, after having made due allowance for the fact that the goals did not come, there was a good deal about which to be pleased in the Town's display, which, in general, was one of their best of the season.

So far ahead were they in the skills of the game that one wondered how this City side, playing almost completely without inspiration, came to be in the forefront of the early promotion battle for so long.

Certainly, they could not match the Town in any department except goal, and there, Read, had no opportunity of showing his ability, because virtually his only difficult task came when he had to scamper to collect a back pass by Ryan.

Fluid tactics

Rather than the rigid 4-3-3 to which they have pinned their faith in most away games this season, the Town adopted more fluid tactics, with Anderson and Halom the main strikers, Hindson in an up-and-down role, and Givens in what, in my notes, I described as a "nebulous" position on the right flank.

There were times when Givens was lying entirely unmarked, and Manager Alec Stock said afterwards that the idea of him occupying such a position was to keep a wary eye on Sweeney who, from advance reports, was reputed to be a danger in midfield.

However, Sweeney, like the newcomer from Wolves, Wilson, was scarcely seen, and Givens was able to direct more of his attention to attack.

In fact, the early chances fell to him, and he should have done better than blast the ball high over from a cross by the industrious Anderson, who then provided a centre from which Givens's header rose just too high.

Gow limps off

A goal at that stage might well have caused complete disruption in the City ranks, already thrown into some disarray when Gow, on whom they were leaning heavily in the continued absence of Galley, limped off with an ankle injury after 21 minutes.

That caused some juggling in the ranks, because the substitute was the inexperienced centre-half, Bruton, a

Sport

By **ERIC PUGH**

somewhat unlikely replacement for the clever Gow.

With the Town continually in the picture as an attacking force, Hindson demonstrated that his marksmanship of the previous week was no fluke, with a drive from 25 yards that was only inches wide.

Keen's effort

Then Hindson had to have treatment when he was pulled down for the second time by Wimshurst, and the free-kick brought Gibson his first severe test.

Keen got the ball over the top of the defensive wall and, somehow, the goal-

LINE-UP

BRISTOL CITY: Gibson; Wims-hurst, Drysdale; Wilson, Rooks, Merrick; Tainton, Spiring, Broom-field, Sweeney, Gow (Bruton).

LUTON TOWN: Read; Ryan, Slough; Keen, Nicholl, Moore; Anderson, Court, Halom, Givens, Hindson. Substitute: Wainwright.

Referee: C. I. Robinson, Manchester. Attendance: 12,921.

keeper pushed it over. From the corner, Gibson repeated the feat when Nicholl made a firm header, and either effort would have beaten a goalkeeper in less inspired form.

Some of the refereeing decisions had been fussy and irritating in the extreme, and there seemed no rhyme nor reason for Givens being booked in the 38th minute for a harmless looking tackle on Wimshurst.

No doubt that it was a foul, but worse and more dangerous ones had been perpetrated without being regarded as serious enough for such a drastic step to be taken.

All in all, I thought the control of the game left a great deal to be desired, and there was one particular incident near half-time, when the referee awarded the City a free-kick on the signal of a linesman, even though he himself was some distance nearer to the action.

Nor was this the end of the Town's grounds for complaint about this facet of the game, because six minutes after the interval, Ryan's name went into the book for what was no more than a clumsy tackle on Spiring.

Yet, when shortly afterwards, Bruton pulled down from behind Halom, who was hurt, there was no move to take his name.

In the meantime, the

Town had resumed as they had left off—on the attack — with Nicholl making a downward header that caused Gibson no end of trouble, and Givens again shooting too high after Nicholl, most attack-minded on this occasion, had nodded down a corner from Hindson.

Even though the Town were so much in command, the danger of being so long without a goal, was that desperation by the City to bring improvement, might cause a fatal error.

One clear chance

Happily, that did not occur, though Tainton failed badly when left with almost the only clear-cut opening that came his team's way.

Just how much the Town dominated is shown by the fact that 75 minutes had gone before City gained their first corner. Meanwhile, the Town had seven.

In the last ten minutes, it was not the Town who had settled for a point, as is usually the way of things so far as an away team is concerned, but the City.

They were glad to kick anywhere to get rid of danger at a time when they should reasonably have been expected to be going all out for a winner.

Marksmen Nicholl

Certainly, the Town were the nearer to it, especially when Nicholl, who very nearly qualified for the title of the Town's best marksman, forced Gibson to another goal-line save.

Then, with the game almost over, there was a brilliant bit of work and a centre by Givens that Anderson dived to meet with his head. Unfortunately, he was on the wrong tangent, and the ball went just wide of the far post.

Had the Town won by two or three goals, as they should have done, this would have been hailed as a great feat.

Out of luck

Partly, the absence of goals underlines the fact that a real opportunist among their strikers has not emerged yet, but they could put forward the alibi that this was not exactly their lucky day.

On the other hand, the fact that openings were created must have been a matter of satisfaction, and it may be only a question of time before Anderson, in particular, and Halom, get their names in the scoring list more frequently.

Both were hard working



Vic Halom looks on hopefully for the ball to come his way as Bristol City goalkeeper Gibson tips over from a free-kick by Mike Keen.

and busy, but the best chances fell to Givens who, with a little more steadiness in his finishing, could well have had a memorable day. As it was, for a player whose fitness was in doubt until a comparatively late hour, he did very well indeed.

Best of the forwards again was Hindson, who looks such an assured player when in possession, and he is another who can be expected soon to give the goal-average a more healthy look.

Solid work

Apart from a tendency to try a little too much at times, Court has made the most of his comeback to the side and, along with Keen, he made a solid contribution on this occasion.

Outstanding Town player, though, was Nicholl, supremely confident throughout, and with sound backing by Moore apart from one comparatively sticky patch early on.

Without yet being able to attain last season's form, Ryan was adequate and neither he nor the competent Slough was under sustained pressure at any period.

Ken recovers

Local referee Ken Willis, who was injured in a car accident recently, is making a good recovery, and hopes to be back "in the middle" this weekend.

Ken, who badly bruised his legs in the smash, says, "I miss my game of football, but you can't rush these things."