

HAT-TRICK HALOM THE HERO

LUTON TOWN 3, SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY 1

FOR 75 minutes at Kenilworth Road, on Saturday, the Town seemed to be heading for a home defeat they certainly could not afford, and their indecision and lack of thrust in front of goal had earned them derisive comments from the crowd.

Then, all of a sudden, the whole pattern changed, with Vic Halom, who had been one of those singled out for jeering, wiping out the memory of what had occurred for much of the game.

In the short space of 11 minutes he hit an opportunist hat-trick, the first for the Town since Malcolm Macdonald signalled what was to be his last appearance with a similar feat against Cardiff City.

Certainly, Halom could not have chosen a better occasion to hit the jackpot, because there was no doubt that the Town were facing dire trouble when his first came after 76 minutes.

Main credit for it went to Anderson. His strong drive was saved by Pearson who, however, could not retain possession and HALOM, following up, gleefully smashed the ball into the roof of the net.

This long-delayed success seemed to remove some of the inhibitions from which



● VIC HALOM
Town's hat-trick hero

the Town had suffered in front of goal, and Pearson, a 19-year-old amateur who had done much to enable Wednesday to retain a narrow lead for 65 minutes, was tested twice in quick succession by Anderson.

Left it late

For the first time the Town were entitled to think in terms of victory, but they left it perilously close, because there were only five minutes left when HALOM gave them the lead for the first time when he headed through a corner by Court that was nodded on by Givens.

Then, two minutes later, HALOM completed his purple spell when he came streaming through to take in his stride a beautiful through pass from Busby and leave Pearson helpless with the sort of decisive shot that we have seen so seldom from the Town of late.

What undoubtedly gave the Town striking force,

Sport

By ERIC
PUGH

additional pep and punch in the second half was the pushing forward of Givens as main striker, and detaching Anderson for the fluid midfield role he has performed before.

Givens brought all his native enthusiasm to bear and began to unsettle a Wednesday defence which, despite enforced changes, had been difficult to penetrate.

Legitimate

In addition, they obviously felt the need to provide as much effective cover as possible for their inexperienced goalkeeper who, however, showed that he was able to look after himself, despite being pressurised by the Town.

Of course, this was a legitimate tactic, and Wednesday's manager, Derek Dooley, admitted it afterwards when he said, "I do not blame any team for putting an inexperienced goalkeeper under pressure."

A case could be made out for Wednesday being unlucky, but, as Dooley said: "You get no points for bad luck, but I thought we were home and dried."

So they were until that Halom goal spree. Their defence, combined with the failings of the Town in front of goal, had made their lead look much more formidable than it actually was. It had been given them by JOICEY after 11 minutes, following a mistake by Ryan, probably caused by the difficult ground conditions.

Slough hurt

In point of fact, the pitch had made a remarkable recovery following the soaking it received from a torrential downpour early in the morning, which put the game in some doubt at one time.

The Town began with the side that ended the game at Middlesbrough, which meant that Givens was on the substitutes' bench and that Moore took over in the centre of the middle three.

However, this arrangement lasted for only 31 minutes. Slough was led off bleeding profusely from a blow on his nose and there was some suspicion of a fracture at one time.

However, what ended his part in the game was not that, but a badly bruised thigh muscle, and Givens came on, initially in midfield, with Moore taking over his old back four role.

Sturdy four

For Moore, the holiday has provided an opportunity to re-establish a case for himself as a first team regular and, on this occasion, he lived up to his reputation of being the strongest tackler in the club.

Once again there was no fault to find with the back four, apart from that un-

typical error by Ryan, who tried to stir up things forward by some strong running. Garner continues to play most competently, and already has gone a long way towards erasing the memory of Nicholl's departure to Aston Villa.

Certainly, the Town's troubles, such as they are, do not lie in this department and, as the last line, Barber again showed supreme confidence and much agility.

For one reason or another, there was considerable changing of the middle three, where I thought that Anderson did well after

LINE-UP

LUTON TOWN — Barber; John Ryan, Shanks; Moore, Garner, Slough (Givens); Halom, Court, Anderson, Keen, Busby.

SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY — Pearson; Rodrigues, Clements; Pugh, Thompson, Todd; Sinclair, Craig, Joicey, Sunley, Sissons. Substitute: Burton.

Referee: K. Sweet, Aberdare. Attendance: 9,121.

switching; Court worked hard and adequately, but Keen looked much out of touch and his lack of pace was again demonstrated.

Stirring

Certainly Halom saved the faces of the strikers with his goal feat, until which point he had not been particularly effective, nor, for that matter had Busby, though the service they received and the support that came their way could scarcely be described as the best.

However, it would be more charitable to ignore the previous shortcomings and remember the stirring last quarter-of-an-hour, when the loyal fans at last really had something to cheer about.