

72
THREE GOALS, TWO POINTS
AND A DOUBLE!

John Ryan switch peps Town

PORTSMOUTH 0, LUTON TOWN 3

CASHING-IN on the knowledge they gained from the wholesale switch made in the second half of their previous match, the Town tried a similar formation at Fratton Park on Saturday—and came up with their best away win of the season and their first double.

Undoubtedly, the hero of the hour was John Ryan, parading in the number 10 shirt, instead of his usual number 2,

playing well at right-back. As I see it, anyone who replaces him there has to be as good as he is."

That was fair enough comment, but filling the

By ERIC PUGH

and given the job of becoming the driving, motivating force in midfield.

This is a move for which there has been support in various quarters for some time, and after the match with Blackpool I put the point to the coach, Jimmy Andrews.

He weighed it up like this: "Ryan shows a lot of drive in midfield, but he has been

number 2 berth proved to be easy enough, because the Town simply turned to "Mr Reliable" himself, Alan Slough.

Were a recent history of the club to be written, Slough would figure largely in it, because he has given invaluable service in a number of positions.

Now, as I recall it, he is back in the spot where he

began his professional career and where, from the look of things, he can prepare to settle down for another prosperous spell.

One thing certain is that Ryan has arrived as a midfielder player. Beforehand, he confided that he was hoping for a goal, and that he had been practising his shooting all week with that in mind.

In fact, he got two, should have had three, and generally provided the speed and directness that has been largely missing in midfield this season, and from which some of the Town's problems have arisen.

I am not suggesting on the evidence of one showing, against a moderate Portsmouth side, who lost their way just about as thoroughly as the Town did in the first half against Blackpool, that all the Town's troubles are over.

But at least we saw a display which placed more emphasis on attack, and there were indications from other players that some of their recent form has been below their true worth to the side.

Verve and life

In this respect, I am thinking mainly of Givens, who had been having an unproductive spell, and Hindson. Givens, given the number 9 jersey and a front-runner's job, uncomplicated by responsibility in midfield, led the line with plenty of verve and life.

This despite the fact that he was badly carved down in the sixth minute by what I described in my book as a "wild, undisciplined tackle" by Youlden.

Not that it impressed the referee that way, because he did not even think it worth while awarding a free kick,



RYAN'S FIRST

John Ryan gets up to head his first goal for Town after 31 minutes in the game at Portsmouth on Saturday. John, converted from full-back to midfield for this match, got another goal in the second half.

let alone the booking that seemed on the cards.

For some little time Givens felt the effect of his injury, but he kept going, as did Halom after being brought down heavily on two occasions.

A challenge by Halom on Milkins caused the goalkeeper to drop the ball and led to Ryan missing a chance from four yards by achieving the highly improbable by banging the ball over.

Penalty goal

However, a minute later, in the 15th, the Town were awarded a penalty, which seemed no more than marginal when Blant handled a centre by Shanks, and GIVENS, expert with this sort of opportunity, slid the ball past Milkins.

Chiefly through hustle and bustle, Portsmouth gained some snap chances, mostly missed by Reynolds and Hiron through inaccurate shooting, and then, after 31 minutes, came RYAN'S first goal. Keen began the move with a sweeping pass to Givens, whose centre was headed firmly into the net.

For a short spell towards half-time, Portsmouth hit back, but their finishing did not improve, and Givens pointed the way six minutes after half-time when he hit the back of the net with a fierce drive.

Halom and Ryan had done the spadework, and the decision to disallow the goal

for offside looked controversial, to say the least.

However, the goal that really clinched it was not long in arriving, because RYAN was on hand to sweep the ball in after Collins had cleared a shot by Givens straight to him.

Adapting himself to the general mood was Hindson, of whom I am convinced we have not seen the best yet. He was more go-ahead on this occasion and more willing to have a crack at goal.

As always, Halom was in the thick of things and, generally, the Town looked more potent up front, due, there is no doubt, to the prompting of Ryan.

With someone to take part of the midfield responsibility off his shoulders, Keen was seen in a better light than in some recent games. Wainwright made some neat contributions, but tended to be caught in possession too often — something that could be avoided easily.

Some initial difficulty was experienced by Garner stemming from Hiron's liking for wandering from the middle, but he overcame this to put up another strong defensive performance, in which he was aided and abetted by the reliable Moore.

In fact, no-one could point to any hint of weakness in this department, because Slough soon settled down and Shanks excelled recent performances and, in addition, put the shackles on the talented Piper.

Such was the quality of the Portsmouth shooting that Barber would not claim to have had an arduous day, but he exuded confidence and looked completely at ease.

PORTSMOUTH: Milkins; Smith, Collins; Blant, Youlden, Munks; Piper, Reynolds, Hiron, Wilson, Ley. Substitute: Pointer.

LUTON TOWN: Barber; Slough, Shanks; Keen, Garner, Moore; Wainwright, Halom, Givens, Ryan, Hindson. Substitute: Court.

Referee: N. P. Paget, Coventry. Attendance: 8,552.