

TOWN DESERVED A POINT AT

SWINDON TOWN 2, LUTON TOWN 1

71/72
SWINDON

OVER the years, on their sporadic visits to the County Ground, Swindon, the Town have never had a great deal of joy, but tussles have always tended to be closely fought, as two recent goalless draws would indicate.

Predictably, perhaps, Tuesday's clash followed a similar pattern, and had the Town returned with a point, then it could have been considered fairly to be no more than their due.

There were only eight minutes left, when Swindon took the lead for the first time, and I regret having to record that the winner came as the direct result of a boob by Barber.

Regret, because I have a high regard for this relatively inexperienced goalkeeper. He has looked so mature since his return to the side, and until the fatal 82nd minute, had given another impeccable display.

Rogers, a player with a touch of genius whom no-one can ever afford to neglect, lobbed the ball high into the goalmouth. Obviously, it was the goalkeeper's ball, as Barber acknowledged by his shout of "Right."

GILT-EDGED

Unfortunately, the ball somehow bounced out of his hands, almost at the feet of **HORSFIELD**, a lively leader, who gratefully accepted a gilt-edged chance.

Players in less vulnerable positions can get away with mistakes, but goalkeepers frequently have to pay the penalty in full, though there was probably some excuse for Barber.

Just five minutes earlier, he had had to emerge in daring style to throw himself at the feet of Trollope, who had come racing through following an error by Keen. Nothing less than a suicide dive could have saved the situation, and Barber made it, smothering the shot and getting hurt.

Afterwards, it was said that he received a kick on the spine, so, I repeat, that

a line of extenuation could be taken in this case.

Had the Town held on to the point to which, even if they were not exactly coasting, they at least seemed to be retaining with composure, Barber would have figured largely in the honours list.

ROGERS GOAL

Tipping the game in Swindon's favour was a goal, on the hour, from **ROGERS**, who, after spending the first half wandering without effect to all points of the compass, began to play in more orthodox fashion.

At the outset of the movement, I thought an offside decision was justified. During heavy pressure, Barber made a decisive one-fisted punch, but Rogers secured possession.

Without trying to make unreasonable excuses, I thought at the time that he used a hand to control a difficult ball, but there was no support for this in the Press Box. However, in the dressing room afterwards, coach Jimmy Andrews confirmed that the players had made this claim.

Whether Rogers handled or not, the end product was the same, because he made room for himself, clear of Slough, and gave Barber absolutely no chance.

THE SPUR

This was the spur Swindon needed. Full-backs Thomas and Trollope began to come through, and the whole accent switched to attack, producing some harassed moments for the Town, during which Barber saved

brilliantly from Rogers, Noble and Horsfield.

The only light relief for the Town came when Wainwright made a fine drive from 25 yards, obviously pushed over by Downsborough, but the award was a goal kick, which was not the only injustice the Town received from officialdom this night.

Yet, the Town were seen in a very good light in the first half. They pushed the ball about accurately and

LINE-UP

SWINDON TOWN: Downsborough; Thomas, Trollope; Bunkell, Burrows, Butler; Hubbard, Smart, Horsfield, Noble, Rogers. Substitute: Peplow.

LUTON TOWN: Barber; Slough, Shanks; Keen, Garner, Moore; Wainwright, Halom, Givens, John Ryan, Hindson. Substitute: Faulkner. Referee: A W S Jones, Aughton, Ormskirk. Attendance: 8,960.

quickly in midfield and, generally, seemed to be at the point of achieving some of their latent promise.

From the first minute, when Halom brought Downsborough full-length, they looked as if they were genuinely interested in goals, and John Ryan was not much too high with a shot made on the volley.

BRILLIANT GOAL

At the same time, the dash of Horsfield, from whom Barber twice saved well, was troublesome but, in the 28th minute came a brilliantly worked goal.

It came from a four-man move begun when Shanks sent away Hindson. His centre was headed on by Halom to **GIVENS** who crashed it into the net.

After that, we saw the Town at their best, but they needed another goal, and it very nearly came just before half-time, when Ryan worked the one-two with Hindson, and Downsborough only just got down to his shot in time.

Generally speaking, I

would say that some of the Town's approach work was as good as anything we have seen from them recently, and there was the threat of goals, even though, in the end, they did not get enough of them.

GOOD SIGNS

Givens is one who gives the impression that they are imminent, now that he is back in his original position, and there were signs from Halom, who again worked willingly, that he knows where the target lies.

Proving the value of a natural left-winger is Hindson, who, on his last two appearances has looked altogether more lively and confident. This could well be the striking force for which the Town have been looking.

With things not always going the Town's way, Ryan was able to appreciate that there is more to midfield play than coming through to score goals. He worked hard to get things going, but I felt that there were times when he found difficulty in keeping contact.

SPASMODIC

Particularly in the first half, Wainwright was prominent with good use of the ball, but seemed to flag later, and Keen was far from accurate in his distribution. So, by and large, domination in midfield was only obtained spasmodically.

More experienced centre-halves than Garner have had trouble in dealing with Horsfield, who wanders intelligently and is difficult to beat in the air, but Garner solved his initial problems, and is learning quickly.

Moore, of course, was ever ready to help, and I thought Shanks gave another outstanding performance, while Slough, in the second half stuck as close as he could to Rogers, and was helped by his shrewd positional sense.