

JUST THE FINAL TOUCH IS NEEDED

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LUTON TOWN 1, PRESTON NORTH END 0

THE TOWN opened their points account at Kenilworth Road on Saturday against Preston in a game which in many ways turned out to be frustrating for manager Harry Haslam, as well as for the fans, who had come expecting a rich diet of goals.

That the ration should be limited to one was not due to a failure of the Town's much heralded attacking policy, but more to the old problem — the lack of a striker sharp enough to add finishing touches to some well rehearsed moves.

Afterwards, Haslam said he was pleased with his team's victory, but added, "We were making chances, but missing them."

"We have practised and practised in training to create the openings, and they were there. The score could easily have been five."

"If the lads keep working at it, the goals are going to come."

Certainly, the Town always held the promise of goals,

By ERIC NORRIS

and dictated most of the play against a moderate Preston side, who owed a big debt to goalkeeper Alan Kelly, who kept them in the game to the last kick with some fine reflex saves.

He was given no chance at all in preventing the decisive goal which came in the 36th minute, when John Ryan took a free-kick out near the touchline and floated it accurately towards the far post, where ANDERSON rose to meet it and headed expertly into the net.

Earlier, Preston had survived a couple of narrow escapes. Jimmy Ryan turned the ball in, but was judged to be fractionally offside, and Busby broke clean through to slide the ball past the advancing Kelly, only to see it rebound from the foot of a post.

Too eager

In many ways, the Town forwards were defeated by their own eagerness. Busby, in particular, fell foul of a series of marginal offside decisions in his haste to chase on to the long, through-passes that came his way.

Busby ran himself into the ground in his efforts, and was a thorn in the side of the Preston defence in the first half. However, as he tired after the interval, Preston cut down the menace by delegating two players to police him continuously.

While it was obvious that Preston's main concern was to try to make sure of their first point of the season by playing safe, they did build up some purposeful moves, mainly through the efforts of Heppollette, a clever winger, but, like the Town, they lacked a marksman.

This was not surprising

when it was considered that two of their strikers, new signing Hugh McIlmoyle and Alan Lamb were out through broken bones suffered in the midweek League Cup match at Workington.

This caused their manager, Alan Ball, to reshuffle their forward line completely, which did not make a great deal of impression on the Town's strong defence. The Lancashire side look likely to continue to struggle at the wrong end of the table if, as it is feared, the injured men are out for a long period.

However, they had the will to keep going and were successful in taking the sting out of Luton early in the second half, when they came more into the game. Afterwards, Alan Ball said: "I was proud of the contribution my lads made to making it an attractive game."

While Kelly took the main honours for Preston, Luton's goalkeeper Keith Barber also

LINE-UP

LUTON TOWN: Barber; John Ryan, Thomson; Anderson, Faulkner, Garner; Jim Ryan, Fern, Busby (Slough), Halom, Aston.

PRESTON NORTH END: Kelly, McMahon, McNab; Bird, Hawkins, Connor (Spark); Heppollette, Wilson, Tarbuck, Young, Clark.

Referee: T. Spencer (Wootton Bassett).

Attendance: 11,507.

claimed his share of glory for ensuring the Town's success with some fine saves in the closing stages, notably from Heppollette and Neil Young, the latter being a superb full-length diving save.

It would have been an injustice to the Town on the balance of play had Preston succeeded in snatching a point at this stage, and the numerous misses by Busby, Halom and Fern earlier could well have proved costly.

But speaking generally, the Town continued to show considerable promise for the



future. They played some very good football at times, and are progressing on the right lines.

Alan Slough received a warm welcome when he made his first appearance of the season, coming on as substitute in place of Busby 15 minutes from the end.

He went straight into an attacking midfield role and brought extra life to the Town's attacks. Afterwards, Haslam confided that the switch was planned before the game.

He said: "I wanted Busby to run and run, and give everything he had got. Then when he got tired I would bring on Slough, and push another man up."

Star rating

Another player who ran hard was Anderson, who once again took the star rating in the Luton team. Apart from his fine goal, he was always in the thick of things, and obviously is

the key man in the new set-up.

Up front, Rodney Fern got through a tremendous amount of work, and with a little more luck in his finishing might well have opened his League account.

Jim Ryan was a live wire, particularly in the first half, but not so much was seen of him as the game wore on, while on the other wing, Aston got through a great deal of work quietly and efficiently.

Halom was guilty of some missed opportunities, but was by no means alone, and his value is in his ability to take a great deal of weight off his fellow attackers.

The defence was generally very strong and always in command, with John Ryan having a fine game, well supported by Garner, Faulkner and Thomson.

John Ryan's gift

There was a colourful start to the match when the Town turned out in brilliant orange track suit tops, which were presented to them 15 minutes before the kick-off by director Eric Morecambe on behalf of the John Ryan boutique.

Another pre-match event was a lap of honour by Luton's victorious "It's A Knockout" team. They paraded round the ground with their trophy, and received a big ovation.



SPORT

1

PETER ANDERSON, above, rises high to head Town's vital goal in the 36th minute. Left, Peter is in the thick of it again, this time with John Aston, in the foreground.

VERDICT: We should have had five goals