

BOOST FOR VITAL GAME IN LEAGUE BATTLE

BIRMINGHAM CITY 1, LUTON TOWN 0

ALAN SLOUGH, who has been waiting patiently on the substitute's bench since the start of the season for a chance to re-establish himself in the Town team, will get his break on Saturday.

He will come into the side not in one of the midfield positions he had been hoping to win, but as a member of the back four, replacing Alan Garner, who pulled a groin muscle in the League Cup replay against Birmingham at Northampton on Tuesday night.

The injury occurred shortly before half-time, and Garner knew instantly what had happened, and signalled to the trainer's bench for substitute Alan Slough to take over.

The absence of Garner at Sheffield on Saturday means that there will also be an opportunity for Gordon Hindson, Don Shanks or

By ERIC NORRIS

Peter Anderson and Vic Halom picked up the midfield instantly, and City danger men Francis and Bob Latchford were so subdued that you had to look hard to see if they were still out there on the field.

The First Division defence, too, was in deep trouble as the Town, yards faster to the ball, sprayed the passes about and built up swift attacks which led to a hail of shots at the Birmingham goal, most of which were well on target.

Aston, Busby and even John Ryan cracked in tremendous drives that had the large contingent of Birmingham fans gasping, and it was more than 10 minutes before Birmingham even managed to get anywhere near the Town's penalty area. Barber, who once again played with stitches in a hand injury, stood a mere spectator in the Town goal.

In contrast, Dave Latchford in the City goal was kept very much on his toes, and it was fortunate for Birmingham that he proved equal to the situation. However, he was left groping when Jimmy Ryan tried a scorcher from fully 35 yards which shaved the top of the bar.

Luton's first emergency came when a mistake by Faulkner put them in trouble as he miskicked in trying to clear from Francis, but generally Birmingham were never being able to threaten in the same manner as the rampant Town forwards.

The first of three Birmingham players to have their names taken was booked in the 25th minute, when Burns

had his name taken for a foul on Anderson. This was the second booking that Burns had received in the tie, because he also went into the notebook at Kenilworth Road last Wednesday. Before the ball was cleared from the free kick, the ever alert Busby sent a header just wide.

Still the Town kept pressing forward, and Latchford made a splendid save by the far post to prevent a long, angled drive by Jimmy Ryan from the right wing from finding a billet in the net. Next, he flung himself across the goal to foil Luton again with a flying save from Aston.

Chances

Birmingham probably had their best chance of the half when Burns headed just over the top from a free kick on the edge of the area just before half-time.

But the best chance of the match fell to the Town straight after half-time when Halom sent Busby through with a great ball. The centre-



● In line for a return to the Town's back four as a replacement for the injured Alan Garner.

forward, with only the goalkeeper to beat, delayed his shot and Latchford saved.

Before this Town flurry ended, there were other good efforts from Halom and Fern.

Hope became the second Birmingham player to go in the book for showing dissent after Hynd had been penalised for a foul on Aston, and Hynd, who was the stumbling block to Luton's attacks, also had his name taken in the heat of the battle, for a foul on Anderson in the 70th minute.

Seven minutes later came the goal that settled the issue after 287 minutes of football. A ground pass from Bob Latchford found Francis, who hammered it into the net.

LINE-UP

BIRMINGHAM CITY: Dave Latchford; Carroll, Pendrey; Campdell, Hynd, Page; Burns, Francis, Bob Latchford, Hope, Hatton. Substitute: Whitehead.
LUTON TOWN: Barber; John Ryan, Thomson; Anderson, Faulkner, Garner; Jimmy Ryan, Fern, Busby, Halom, Aston. Substitute: Slough.
Referee: R. W. Ridden, Colchester.
Attendance: 11,451.

John Moore, the other three players who are looking for an opening, to take the number 12 shirt.

Certainly, the Town will go with confidence into this tough one at Hillsborough on Saturday after their fine performance against Birmingham on Tuesday, when they were desperately unlucky to finish on the losing end to a goal by **TREVOR FRANCIS** in the 77th minute.

Acclaimed

Afterwards, the Town were disappointed, naturally enough, but roundly acclaimed as being the better side over the three matches.

They played some superb, crisp football that had the First Division team reeling and the number of attacks built up could be measured on a 10-1 ratio in favour of the Town.

Harry Haslam said, "This game will do the lads a lot of good. They looked the First Division side and played the better football. We were the best team in all three matches, and I thought every one of the lads did great."

Birmingham City, who considered themselves very unlucky to be beaten 1-0 away to League champions Derby County, on Saturday, were given the run-around by the Town, particularly in the first half, and were made to look a very ordinary side indeed.

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