

A POINT GOES — BUT WHAT A THRILLER

LUTON TOWN 2, BLACKPOOL 2

A THEORY as to the reason the Town are getting better results away from home than they are on their own ground this season, was put forward by Bob Stokoe, the manager of Blackpool, who play a similar style of adventurous football to the Town, and were well satisfied to gain their point.

He said Blackpool are going through the same experience, and added "We play better away from home. I don't think our fans have seen us at our best at Bloomfield Road, because opponents are more defensive when they visit us than when we visit them."

Certainly, Town manager Harry Haslam cannot have failed to be impressed by the manner in which Blackpool took a leaf out of his own book and had the bravery to take the game to Luton, even though they suffered the shock of going a goal down after only three minutes.

The goal was the direct result of some typical determined play by Vic Halom,

with a drive from 20 yards that the goalkeeper did well to stop.

Biggest thorn in the side of the Town defence was Blackpool's clever outside-right Tom Hutchison. He was playing under the eye of Coventry City's general manager, Joe Mercer, who was widely quoted as being set to splash out £140,000 for the Blackpool star.

HUTCHISON was certainly out to prove that he was well worthy of the price tag, and he put Blackpool back on terms in the 17th minute with a fine opportunist goal. He met a cross by Bentley and he volleyed it in after it had been partially headed away by a Town defender.

This was the signal for the Town defence to be put under pressure, but they managed to hold out well for another five minutes before Hutchison struck a second time.

He cracked over a fierce low cross that caught the Town defence unawares, and AINSCOW was on the spot to stab the ball into the net from close range.

Danger signals

Danger signals were really flying for the Town now as the visitors captured the initiative. Ainscow and Burridge were finding themselves plenty of room to manoeuvre, and there was further danger for the Town when Ainscow got away from John Ryan, but Bobby Thomson, covering well, stepped in to block him.

Before the pressure was relieved, Blackpool had another good opportunity to score when Ainscow tried a shot from 18 yards, but it flew too high.

Tireless Vic Halom, who has made tremendous strides since his conversion to midfield from a striking role, and who, in my opinion, was the Town's man of the match, forced the Town forward again before half-time and tested Burridge with a 30-yard drive.

And it came as something of a relief when the Town secured their second goal, just when it was most

Town pile it on

Right, Viv Busby in the thick of the action in the Blackpool goalmouth. Below, Rodney Fern slips neatly past two Blackpool midfield men and pushes the ball out for John Aston to run on to. Pictures by PETER NUNN.



LINE-UP

LUTON TOWN: Barber; John Ryan, Thomson; Anderson, Faulkner, Slough; Jimmy Ryan, Fern, Busby; Halom, Aston. Substitute: Hindson.
BLACKPOOL: Burridge; Hatton, Bentley; James, Suddaby, Barton; Hutchison (Fuschillo), Suddick, Parker, Ainscow, Burns.
Referee: W. J. Gow, Swansea.
Attendance: 12,073.

who worried, Hatton into giving away a corner with a careless back pass.

Taken by Jimmy Ryan, out on the left-wing, the ball curled over to Rodney Fern, who headed against the cross bar, and it rebounded to ALAN SLOUGH who headed into the net gave Burridge no chance at all.

Blackpool were visibly shaken, and with the Town moving forward swiftly and menacingly all the time, the stage looked set for a convincing victory.

But, to their credit, the Seasiders stuck to their attacking guns and play flowed excitingly from one end of the field to the other.

Warning

A promising Blackpool raid broke down when Parker and Ainscow got in each other's way in their haste to chase on to a good ball from Suddick which had split the Town defence. It was warning that Blackpool were still very much a force to be reckoned with.

Most of the threat from the Town was again being spearheaded by Aston. He tried a header from a John Ryan free kick, and then gave Burridge a more difficult task



needed to revive their flagging spirits, four minutes from half-time.

However, Burridge, who had played so well throughout, must shoulder the blame for his side losing their advantage, because he should have made an attempt to save ASTON'S 35-yard angled drive. Instead, he appeared to stand rooted to the spot as the ball found its billet in the far corner.

Town tonic

This goal acted as a tonic to the Town, and they came out looking rejuvenated after the interval, when it was Blackpool's turn to struggle in defence.

Burridge had to atone for

his fatal lapse, and he did it well with a series of good saves, one of them a brave dive at the feet of Halom, who had again powered his way through the middle. Halom was injured in the clash, but was able to continue after treatment.

The fire went out of the Blackpool attack when Hutchison received an ankle injury on the hour, and he continued to limp for a further five minutes before being led off and replaced by substitute Fuschillo.

This must have caused Joe Mercer in the stand some anxiety, but this was removed after the match when Blackpool chief Bob Stokoe reported that the injury was only of a minor nature and would not affect any possible deal.

There was now every sign that the Town, who were right on top, would take both points, and the hard-working Busby was unlucky not to put them ahead from a free-kick, well placed by John Ryan, but he saw his shot go over the top from close range, in the 70th minute.

Blackpool appeared to have settled for a point, but were still mounting the occasional attack, and there was a let-off for Luton when John Ryan missed a through-pass by Hatton which went to Ainscow. Luckily for the Town, the Blackpool man missed a sitter by putting the ball wide.

There was furious pressure from the Town in the closing stages, with Halom very much in the picture, making

a good cross to Fern, whose header was saved by Burridge.

In one hectic spell in front of the Blackpool goal, headers from Thomson, Halom and Fern all flew narrowly over the top in rapid succession.

Then, in the very last minute, it looked as if the Town had clinched it when a cross by John Ryan found Busby perfectly placed. Busby's header looked booked for the top corner of the net, but Burridge thwarted him with a fantastic save. Throwing himself backwards as the ball went over his head, the goalkeeper somehow managed to tip it over the bar and choke the triumphant shouts in the Town fans' throats.

Good stuff

Once again, this was a match of the highest entertainment value, and even if they are dropping valuable points, nobody can deny that the Town are giving the fans full value for their money by playing football as it should be played. Blackpool, too, must take credit for the part they are playing in this crusade to bring back the missing fans.

Surprisingly, the Town's gate was slightly down on the previous week's home game against Burnley, despite the Indian summer weather which brought many people out in shirt-sleeve order, and despite the attraction which Blackpool undoubtedly are.