

Graham French 'shattered'... but he's king of Kenilworth Road



GOAL AND A DREAM 'DEBUT'

● Graham French goes through to score Town's second goal after 51 minutes. Below, he turns and raises his arm with a joy only he can know. At his first attempt he had again become king of the terraces



LUTON 2, MILLWALL 2

GRAHAM FRENCH made a dream return to the Town team against Millwall on Saturday, demonstrating all his old brilliance and delighting the crowd by scoring a superb goal.

But the triumph was dulled to some extent by the Town's home jinx, which has seen them without a win at Kenilworth Road since September 16. They outplayed Millwall, took a two-goal lead, and yet the jinx persisted. Millwall came back to equalise and steal a point.

Manager Harry Haslam commented ruefully afterwards: "I shall be glad when this year is over."

But, looking realistically at the Town's most recent failure to make certain of both points at home, he said: "People ask me is there an answer? There is an answer. Millwall's second goal should not have been allowed to happen."

How the Town came to let a poor Millwall side off the hook remains a mystery to me. They were so much in command in the first half that I can't remember goal-keeper Barber having a single direct shot to handle for the whole 45 minutes.

French tormented the opposition mercilessly. He obviously enjoyed the great

the ball in the face of a challenge by French.

The Town did have the ball in the net again through Aston, but the goal was disallowed by referee Roger Kirkpatrick, of Leicester, for offside against Butlin, who had slid the ball back to Aston.

There were further narrow escapes for Millwall before half-time. King made a reflex save to prevent Butlin scoring with a long-range drive, and then injured himself when he collided with the crossbar as he did well to tip over the top a splendid header by Aston.

There were signs that French was finding the going a bit hot in the 10 minutes before half-time, and Aston switched positions with him

THE LINE-UP

LUTON TOWN: Barber; Shanks, Thomson; Anderson, Garner, John Ryan; Jimmy Ryan, French, Butlin, Halom, Aston. Substitute: Fern.

MILLWALL: King; Bolland, Cripps; Dorney, Kitchener, Burnett; Brown, Possee, Wood, Dunphy, Alder. Substitute: Smethurst.

Referee: R. C. Kirkpatrick, Leicester.

Attendance: 11,550.

along, and they got back into the game with a good header by POSSEE from a well-placed free-kick by Dunphy.

A let-off

For the first time, the Town were in trouble following this, and there was short-lived relief for the fans when Possee broke clear of Luton's advancing defence with only Barber to beat, but pulled his shot wide from 20 yards.

Luton weathered the storm and came back again through Graham French, who sent Anderson through with a well-judged pass. Anderson finished well with a powerful drive that needed all King's skill to save.

Equaliser

The game was completely in the balance. Barber was having more to do than at any other time, and was tested again by a snap drive by Brown.

The unfortunate slip that cost the Town a point came in the 74th minute when Garner, who otherwise had

had a sound game, slipped up badly in letting Alder go running clear.

Barber did the only thing open to him. He pulled the Millwall player down, and referee Kirkpatrick pointed immediately to the penalty spot. **BOLLAND** drove the ball firmly into the net for the equaliser.

Afterwards, Harry Haslam quite rightly claimed that the penalty was conceded in exactly the same circumstances as when French was brought down by King, but on that occasion the referee had just glanced at his linesman, and all the Town got from the incident was a corner kick.

After the game, Graham French had no comment at all to make to reporters, and the manager explained. "I asked Graham if he wanted to speak to the Press, but he felt shattered."

"It is understandable. It is just like you joining us on one of our seven-mile training runs. You would not feel like doing a lot of talking immediately afterwards."

By **ERIC NORRIS**

welcome he got from the crowd when he led the Luton players out, and he responded to their encouragement.

Another constant menace to a shaky Millwall defence was Barry Butlin. He almost opened his account in the very first minute, forcing King to fall on a header from a free-kick taken by Don Shanks.

Sharp as a razor

The new centre-forward looked as sharp as a razor, and scored his second goal for the club in the fifth minute, when King, who looked none too certain in some of his handling, went down to save a shot by Anderson, but lost control of the ball.

BUTLIN was on to it in a trice, and had no difficulty in sliding the ball into an empty net.

With the Luton attack really buzzing on all cylinders, it looked only a matter of time before the second goal came, yet Millwall were fortunate to survive up to the interval without further setbacks.

King was uncertain in his handling when he went down to make a save from Halom, and was fortunate to regain

to give him a breather on the wing.

He also appeared to be limping slightly, probably as the result of King bringing him down heavily to save an otherwise certain goal earlier in the half. The Town claimed a penalty, but were turned down.

But French, who may well have been considered to have done more than enough in his first experience of league football for three seasons, came back rejuvenated in the second half, and went from strength to strength.

The crowd rose to **FRENCH** in the 51st minute when his dream comeback was made complete with the goal they had been praying for.

From midfield, French went through with an exciting run. He showed all his old skill and judgment as he drew King from his goal and slipped the ball expertly past the stranded goalkeeper into the empty net.

It was a perfectly executed individual piece of football, and the crowd were still buzzing over it when things started to go wrong at the other end.

Millwall, who had never looked dangerous, suddenly started to attack, with Cripps moving up to push them