

TOWN WIN A POINT AT THE SEASIDE

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THE LUTON FANS who think they suffer badly when they watch their team throw away points at Kenilworth Road don't know how lucky they are.

For on Saturday, Blackpool, despite being equal with Luton in the league table, played such pathetic soccer that long before the end a section of their own fans were cheering for Luton.

The Town, barely extending themselves in a period when league points no longer matter, could have beaten Blackpool, but settled for the draw against a team that was jaded and mistake-prone.

And if anyone was looking for pointers for the Town's next cup match, this game was not the place to look.

It was the sort of match when only the goals provided highspots. They were both good ones, but there are bound to be questions about how Blackpool's came about—from a free kick, 30 yards out.

Until that goal, the Town had looked well capable of handling Blackpool, with John Aston once again the best forward on the field.

He put one shot inches wide of the post, and in the first quarter of an hour Blackpool rarely had sight of Willie Carrick in the Luton goal.

But then came a referee's decision which could have cost the Town the game.

The ball was booted high out of the Blackpool defence, and as they waited for it to return to earth, Alan Garner and Blackpool striker Bill Rafferty were jostling each other.

It was the sort of case where the free-kick could have gone either way—or, as I thought, shouldn't have been given at all.

Rafferty was backing into Garner all the time, trying to position himself to control the ball while keeping Garner behind him. Garner tried to stand his ground—and was penalised for it, about 30 yards out from the Luton goal.

The Blackpool reporters in the Press box fell about laughing when the Luton defence contented itself with a three-man wall as Suddick and Hatton stood over the ball for the free-kick.

"Ay-up," said the chap next to me. "Just watch this goal from Suddick . . ."

We did—and so did the Town defence. Hatton made a dummy run, and Suddick walloped the free-kick in a hard and fast curve around the wall. Carrick, moving to his left, went too far, and could only just touch it with his right hand, and Blackpool were one up.

But Blackpool's lead never looked safe, and with their whole team looking jittery, the Town had more of the play.

Shanks and Thomson were so much on top of their attackers that they were both able to venture over the halfway line to back up Town attacks.

Shanks had a shot headed clear by a defender, and Hindson twice went close. The danger was coming mostly through the wings, and Aston, Jim Ryan and Bobby Thomson were all en-



And they could have had both,
Says BRIAN SWAIN

joying themselves.

So although the Town were trailing at half-time, no-one was too worried. Suddick once got away from Shanks to put in a shot which was tipped round the post by Carrick, but Blackpool's play slowly disintegrated.

It has to be admitted that at times the Town did not look very much better, but it was obvious all the time that they were playing well within themselves, while Blackpool just got worse the harder they tried.

The Town's goal started from a Blackpool error. Burns was robbed by Thomson when he had plenty of time to cross the ball, and the Luton captain showed exactly how it should be done.

With the Blackpool defence scampering back, Thomson made ground quickly down the left, and from near the halfway line slung over a perfect pass to Jimmy Ryan on the right.

The pass split the defence and Ryan took the ball on to the edge of the penalty area and then right-footed it past goalkeeper Wood.

It was as good a goal as we have seen all season, both in its making and its taking, and it reduced the Blackpool crowd to complete dejection.

A lot of them went home, but others stayed to jeer and slow-handclap. Their chants changed from "What a load of rubbish," which it was, to "Potts must go," and "Come on Luton."

Peter Anderson, who had looked capable of regaining his last season's form on this appearance—he came in for Alan Slough, who was injured—had to go off with a minor leg injury.

He was replaced by Rod Fern, back from his loan to Coventry, and he looked a different player from the last time I saw him.

He was full of running, looked eager for the ball, and generally made an impression on the game, even though he was on the field for only twelve minutes.

Barry Butlin still out of action, it is nice to know that there are players capable of making a challenge for first team places.

Fern nearly produced the winner for Luton, with a shot which was only just too high, and Aston also had a chance. He broke through on the left, and shot over the bar from an angle when he might have done better to lay the ball off to three Town forwards—including Fern—who were waiting in the penalty area.

Blackpool substitute Tully came on for Suddick at the same time as Fern, but by that time the match was over for the Seaside.

If the need for points had been desperate, I have no doubt the Town would have won easily.

As it was, a point away from home is always welcome, and manager Harry Haslam looked a lot happier at the end than Blackpool manager Harry Potts. And with every reason.

MATCH DETAILS

BLACKPOOL 1, LUTON TOWN 1

Half-time: 1-0

TOWN: Carrick; Shanks, Thomson, Anderson (Fern, 78 minutes), Garner, Moore, Jim Ryan, John Ryan, Busby, Hindson, Aston.

BLACKPOOL: Wood; Hatton, Bently, Alcock, James, Suddaby, Burns, Suddick (Tully, 78 minutes), Rafferty, O'Neil, Ainscow.

GOALS: Suddick, for Blackpool, 20 minutes; Jim Ryan for Luton, 70 minutes.

REFEREE: Harold Williams, Sheffield; patchy.

ATTENDANCE: 6,947, Blackpool's lowest ever.

ENTERTAINMENT: It looked better through Luton eyes but it wasn't much of a spectacle.

BANANA SHOT SLIPS THROUGH

THE "banana shot" abilities of Blackpool's Alan Suddick show up clearly in this picture, above, of the goal that put the Town behind.

Willie Carrick saw the ball go round the wall, and it seemed to be heading for the corner of the net to his left.

But by the time he had started to throw himself at it, the ball was swinging back again, and in fact it passed him on his right. He deflected it, but not far enough.

Otherwise, Carrick had a

good match, making one good save from Suddick, and only once coming out of his goal and then failing to make his catch.

The rest of the Town defence also had a good day, with Shanks and Thomson looking the best pair of fullbacks in the Second Division.

The picture on the right shows Shanks beating Suddick to the ball, with Jim Ryan on hand ready to take the ball upfield.

