

A DIABOLICAL START TO THE SEASON

AFTER WEEKS OF CAREFUL and strenuous preparation, the Town came unstuck to a ridiculous degree when they opened their new league season at Nottingham on Saturday. They were run off the park by a team of 11 ordinary players and the referee.

The referee gave them the first shove towards defeat, and the team stumbled to failure from then on.

The defence had a continual struggle because the Town had so little in midfield and up front that the ball was always coming back at them.

Forest Manager Dave Mackay said after the game that he had been amazed by how well his team had done. I should think he was also amazed at how diabolical the Town were.

They never got going, and if we cannot find more power in the forward line, it looks like being a season of struggle.

The game was 12 minutes old when referee Raby from Leeds, playing like a homer hero, penalised Keith Barber for taking too many steps, and the indirect free-kick, about eight yards from goal, was a gift which Jackson accepted to put Forest one up.

Penalty gift

Three minutes before the interval, McKenzie tripped over Bobby Thomson, and the decision was a penalty. I swear it would never have been given at the other end, but Jackson greeted his second early Christmas present without bothering about the rights and wrongs of it, and the match was as good as over.

Forest had been given a couple of goals without being able to carve out any real chances, but in the 48th minute they scored a beauty. O'Kane robbed Aston on the Town's left, and his cross was spot on for Martin to head past Barber, and a minute before the end McKenzie headed the fourth from a Martin cross.

And although the Town might just have been worth one goal, they can have no quibbles about the result. Forest, who looked little more than workman-like to me, were a good two goals better than the Town.

By
BRIAN SWAIN
Sports Editor

MATCH DETAILS

**NOTTINGHAM FOREST 4
LUTON TOWN 0**

Half-time: 2-0

TOWN: Barber; Shanks, Thomson, Faulkner, Garner; Anderson, Jim Ryan, John Ryan; Aston, Cruse (Finney, 60 mins), Butlin.

FOREST: Barron; O'Kane, Winfield, Serella, Cottam; Jackson, McKenzie, Dennehy; O'Neill, Martin, Lyall. Sub. Galley, not needed.

GOALS: Jackson 12 mins, Jackson, penalty, 37 mins, Martin 48 mins, McKenzie 89 mins.

ATTENDANCE: 10,793

REFEREE: R. E. Raby, Leeds: He'll get a good report from Forest.

ENTERTAINMENT: None for Town fans.



● Two of the Town's men of the moment: Barry Butlin, left, who will be looking for a return to form against Carlisle on Saturday; and £20,000 signing Tom Finney, who got his first taste of English league football at Nottingham when he went on as sub for the last 30 minutes of the game against Forest.

Hammering will not cause panic

By BRIAN SWAIN

THERE WILL be no panic changes for Saturday's first home match of the season at Kenilworth Road, despite that four-goal drubbing at Nottingham.

That much was clear on Saturday night as Manager Harry Haslam talked about the Forest result. The Town officials were still furious at a string of refereeing decisions which went against them.

But they also admitted that it had been an off day for the team.

The biggest disappointment for me was that the two front runners, Barry Butlin and Peter Cruse, made no impression on the game at all.

The Town also lacked width in attack, so much so that in the first half Forest full-back Winfield was given all the time and room he wanted to forsake defence and join in attacks.

Chances

The Town did create some chances, Cruse had a shot cleared off the line, Anderson netted from an offside position, Jim Ryan shot over from 18 yards, and Don Shanks twice went close.

John Ryan put one on target, but it hit Barry Butlin, and it became one of those days when nothing would go right.

Tom Finney came on for Cruse for the last half hour, and although he stopped Winfield's upfield wanderings, he was treated to a couple of bone-shaking tackles and was given no scope at all.

Booking

Jim Ryan blotted his copybook in the first half by failing to get near to goal, and completed an unhappy day by being booked.

It was tough luck, because he had been penalised by a referee's mistake. Ryan was breaking out of defence when he was held back by a Forest player.

Tough and tenacious, he rode the foul, and was about to go forward again when the ref blew up, giving the Town a free kick—and giving Forest the advantage of time to get back and cover.

Jim picked up the ball, and hurled it away in disgust... and it hit the ref. I suppose Mr Raby then

had no choice but to bring out his little black book, but it was tough on Ryan.

After the game, Harry Haslam reckoned that the ref's early decisions destroyed the Town, giving Forest a two goal start.

But at least the Town tightened up in the second half, and stopped the Forest full-backs being given acres of space to join in attacks.

Said Haslam: "They would have scored eight, never mind four, if we had not learned that lesson."

And while Saturday's defeat was a big disappointment, Haslam had no inclination to be filled with gloom.

I hope his cheerfulness is justified: I felt as miserable as sin by the time the final whistle went. But I remember another occasion when the Town had four put past them on the first day of a new season—at Bolton. And we won promotion after that.

Promotion?

I don't see us winning promotion this season, but nor do I see many teams being given such a head start as Forest had.

But for Town fans who, like me, always live in hope, the only pointers that can be drawn from Saturday's game are gloomy ones.

The defence was opened up all too easily, and, more important from the fans' point of view, there was little to suggest that the goals famine is over.

At one stage, I remember marking down Don Shanks as our most likely-looking attacker. But much as I would like to see him—or any other defenders—get into the scoring lists, it would be nicer still to see someone in the front line who looks as though he is always likely to pop one in.

We had no-one on Saturday who looked really sharp.

RESERVES FOUND THE GOING A LOT TOUGHER

Luton Town Reserves 1,
Crystal Palace Reserves 2

IT WAS a dismal return to the Football Combination for the Town Reserves on Saturday when they were well beaten by a strong Crystal Palace side that gave the Town fair warning that life is not going to be easy for them this season.

The Town Reserves were "double" winners in the Mid-week League last season, but the opposition was nothing like as strong as they encountered at Kenilworth Road on Saturday, when their team was a mixture of youth and experience.

Palace looked the more assertive from the start and took a quick lead through Ian Phillip, their big-money signing from Dundee. Phillip was one of the leading lights in their First Division side last season, and it came as something of a surprise when Malcolm Allison relegated him to the Reserves at the start of this season.

As though to prove his manager wrong, Phillip powered home a great shot in the seventh minute to put the Palace ahead and followed up

By ERIC NORRIS

with a second goal midway through the half.

The Town defence were hard pressed, but Paul Price showed up well. But it was a young player who has come up through the youth team, Pasquale Fuccillo, who took the eye with some fine attacking runs, and one fine shot that brought the best out of Jackson.

With Ken Goodeve and John Moore working hard to plug up the gaps that had appeared in the Town defence early on, Luton did more attacking in the second half, but had to wait until ten minutes from time for their goal, when Fuccillo scored after good work by Billy Holmes.

A disappointing result, but it was a good afternoon of football for over 800 fans who basked in the Kenilworth Road sunshine.

CRYSTAL PALACE: Jackson; Prince, Wall; McBride, Parker, Phillip; Hinshelwood, Pinkney, Norris, Pain, Walley. Substitute: Lindsay.

LUTON TOWN: Horn; Price, Malcolm; Goodeve, Moore, Fuccillo; O'Connor, Fern, Litt, Mellis, Holmes. Substitute: Rouse.

Referee: I. R. Kenny, Hinckley.

● The stars came to Kenilworth Road on Saturday—for a reserve match. Pictured left are Crystal Palace goalkeeper John Jackson, dropped by manager Malcolm Allison from the first team, despite the fact that he is on the verge of international honours, and expensive signing from Dundee Ian Phillip (number 6) who was a star player last season and was surprised to find himself in the reserves this term.

