

Town match verdict ★★ ★

First-half blunders hit Town's hopes

DEFENSIVE blunders, giving Everton a two goals start in the first 26 minutes at Goodison Park on Tuesday night, put the Town back in trouble in the relegation zone.

But they still did enough in a second half fight-back to give us plenty of hope that the fight for survival can be won.

Victory put Everton on top of the table—and made them the bookies' favourites to win the championship—but in terms of most of the basic skills and football inventiveness, there was little to choose between the sides

But there was a frightening gulf in two aspects: Graham Horn dropped two clangers at one end, and Jim Husband did the same at the other.

The Town gave themselves a mountain to climb before the match had got warmed up.

Yet in the first few minutes they looked competent and set for at least a point as the Everton attacks were held up before they could reach the danger zone.

And the Town should have gone ahead after nine minutes when Peter Anderson, winning the ball in mid-field, and bursting forward explosively, slotted a neat pass between two defenders for Jimmy Husband.

Husband lashed at the ball first time, and produced a cracking drive which flew a couple of yards wide of a post.

But after 15 minutes a corner conceded by Ryan led to the first goal — and a peculiar affair it was.

Telfer had been taking corners on Everton's left wing, but John Ryan's tackle had injured his ankle, and Gary Jones was called over to take the kick.

Telfer nipped into the penalty area and knelt down to rub his ankle. Then, as Jones put the ball over with a right-foot inswinger directly into the six yards box, Telfer jumped up and was given a free header to score.

But if that was not bad enough, even worse was to follow, because after 26 minutes the Town gave another soft goal away.

Substitute Mick Buckley took a free kick on Everton's right and swung the ball high into the Town's goalmouth. Horn got to it easily, catching the ball with both hands above his head, but then dropped it and Martin Dobson had a simple chance and scored from close range.

The goals shattered the Town's confidence for a few minutes, and some bad temper crept in which was only stifled when John Aston was booked for a late tackle on Sargeant a few minutes after he had subjected Buckley to similar treatment.

As Aston was booked, Jim Ryan made a gesture to show what he thought of the referee, and got cautioned as well for showing dissent.

But the Town began to lift their heads again, and 10 minutes before the break, Husband had another chance to make his mark in front of his old supporters.

Report by BRIAN SWAIN

An Everton attack was cleared, and Husband found himself on his own on the half way line. He ran like a greyhound and as Jim Ryan went charging up the right flank, Husband chose to turn to the left and ran straight into Hurst whose tackle ended that move.

But the defence was caught out again after 52 minutes when Latchford scored Everton's third goal. The Town had been driving forward, and Paul Futcher lost possession just inside the Everton half.

The ball was whacked out to Lyons on Everton's right flank, and the Town defence stopped to wait for the off-side whistle. Unfortunately they had all moved up except Faulkner, and Lyons was able to hare down the wing unhampered and put over the cross for Latchford to score.

Everton then made the mistake of trying to play it cool and clever, and for the rest of the game the Town were their equals. And they scored a well deserved goal after 68 minutes.

It started with a long free kick from Paul Futcher. Husband and Anderson went up for it on the edge of the box, and the ball was knocked off to Aston in the inside-left position.

Ice cool, he scored his second goal of the season with a low drive inside the far post from a sharp angle.

But that, after 68 minutes, turned out to be the last we saw of any Town sharpness in attack.

MATCH DETAILS

74/75
EVERTON 3, LUTON TOWN 1
Half-time 2-0

EVERTON: Davies, Bernard, Sargeant, Clements, Kenyon, Hurst, Jones, Dobson, Lyons, Latchford, Telfer.

TOWN: Horn, John Ryan, Buckley, Anderson, Faulkner, P. Futcher, Jim Ryan, Husband, R. Futcher, West, Aston.

THE GOALS: Telfer for Everton after 15 minutes with a header; Dobson for Everton after 26 minutes after Horn dropped the ball; Latchford for Everton after 52 minutes with Town appealing for offside; Aston for Luton after 68 minutes with a low drive from a sharp angle.

ENTERTAINMENT: Spoiled from the Town point of view by first-half errors.

ATTENDANCE: 35,714.

REFEREE: Tony Morrissey (Bramhall, Cheshire), finicky and inconsistent).

BOOKINGS: John Aston for foul on Sargeant; Jim Ryan for dissent.

TOWN'S LEAGUE POSITION: Down to 21st behind Leicester on goal average, four points behind Spurs with two games in hand.



A goal and a booking

JOHN ASTON, pictured above in action against Stoke City last Saturday, had a quiet night at Goodison Park on Tuesday.

He was booked by referee Tony Morrissey, of Bramhall, Cheshire, in the first half for a late tackle on Sargeant of Everton, and then came up with the Town's goal, his second of the season, scored from an acute angle, in the second half.

For his troubles, Aston finished the match suffering from a badly bruised left leg, but he should be fit for Saturday's match at QPR.