

MIDFIELD CLICKS AND IN GO THE GOALS

WITH THE midfield department busy and more effective than it has been for weeks, the Town more than earned the two points against Carlisle which kept their promotion hopes flickering. In the end it was easy, partly because Carlisle's finishing was worse than the Town's.

They hit the woodwork twice, and Steve Buckley headed another effort off the line, leaving their manager Dick Young claiming that his side could have taken a point home.

Perhaps so. But it would have been an injustice. If you look for a man of the match, Carlisle had only one candidate, full-back John Gorman.

The Town, in contrast, had several, Jim Husband and John Aston in the front line, Andy King and Lil Fuccillo in the midfield, and Paul Fletcher at the back.

More to the point, the Town were nearer to being a well-balanced controlled unit as a team. And the reason for that, I think, was that the vital midfield work

Brian Swain reports

was much better than Carlisle's.

Brian Chambers was put out of the game by flu, which brought Aston back into the attack and Fuccillo back into the middle.

And even though Alan

West is still searching for his normal brilliance, there seemed to be more aggression and more commitment, which enabled the Town to dictate the flow of the game.

They opened at a roaring pace, with King and Aston carving huge holes in Carlisle's defence, and Husband always alert to the possibilities of getting into good striking positions.

He found one, from a through ball by King, after only seven minutes. Alan Ross charged down Husband's shot, and Ron Fletcher lifted the ball high over the empty net.

Five minutes later, Fletcher made amends by rising perfectly at the far post to head back into the goal-mouth a cross by Aston, who had beaten Spearritt after a pass from King.

Carlisle's defence was spreadeagled as Fletcher's header went into space in front of goal, and Husband headed the Town into the lead.

Within the next ten minutes, Carlisle looked as though they might be in

for a repeat performance of the game two years ago when the Town hit them for six.

But Ron Fletcher had a "goal" disallowed from a chance made by his determination and West's through ball, and Ross scrambled to save a raking shot from the left wing by Aston.

It took Carlisle nearly half an hour to mount their first serious raid, and it provided a nasty shock: Gorman, a full-back who was Carlisle's best attacker, overlapped fast down the wing, beat Ryan, and with the Town defence stretched laid on a simple chance for Frank Clarke.

He was on his own on the edge of the penalty area, but Keith Barber charged out, and Clarke chose to shoot quickly. The ball clipped the top of the bar before vanishing into the grateful ranks of the Oak Road end.

The unfortunate Spearritt was saved further humiliation when he was taken off at half-time, and

Joe Laidlaw was given the task of marking Aston.

He made a better job of it than Spearritt, but still could not button up the Luton winger, and Ron Fletcher was only just wide of the target with a flashing header from another cross by Aston.

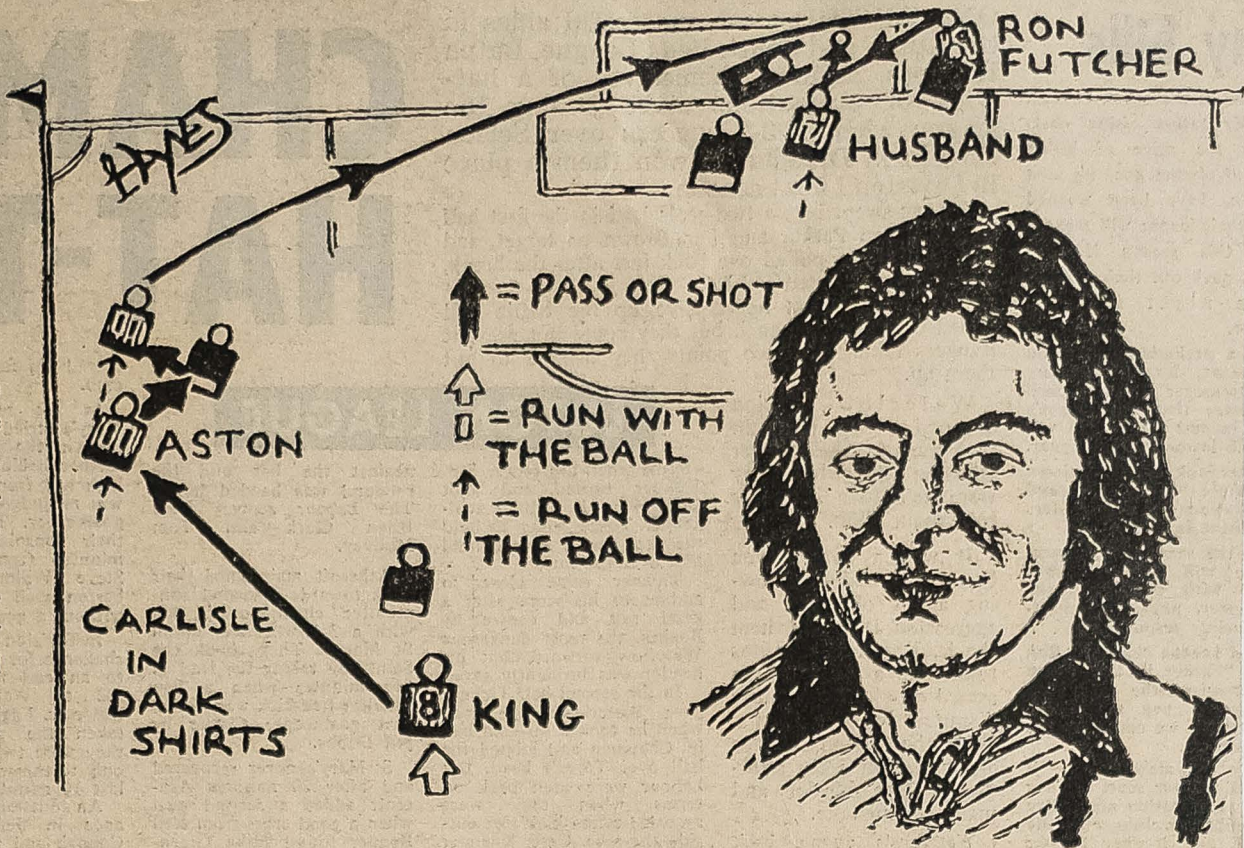
But the second goal came from the opposite flank. John Ryan, who had a game of strange mixtures, with some pitiful passes and some brilliant tackles and clearances, gave his barrackers the perfect answer.

He charged at the Carlisle defence down the right wing, and kept going even when he was fouled. Referee Bill Gow played the advantage rule, and Ryan's final pass was hammered into the net by King.

Carlisle wilted again, only to come through once more with a nasty surprise for the Town defence. Dennis Martin went on a solo run past King and Faulkner, but Keith Barber covered the angles well, and Martin's shot hit the post and was cleared.

That was the end for the visitors though, because Husband scored the Town's third goal seven minutes from time with another header from a centre by Aston.

The Town strolled through the last few minutes, and to prove to Carlisle that it wasn't their day, when they did at last produce an on-target shot to beat Barber. Buckley headed Clarke's effort off the line.



How the first goal was made and scored: artist Paul Haynes depicts the movement that started in midfield with Andy King. John Aston won a rebound off Spearritt and crossed to the far post where Ron Fletcher outjumped Owen, and Jim Husband beat Bonnyman to head into the net.

Match Details

LUTON TOWN 3, CARLISLE 0
Half-time: 1-0

TOWN: Barber; Ryan, Buckley, Faulkner, Paul Fletcher; Fuccillo, King, West; Husband, Ron Fletcher, Aston. Sub: Pollock, not needed.

CARLISLE: Ross; Spearritt (McVitie, 45 mins), Gorman, Bonnyman, Owen; Barry, Latham, O'Neill, Martin; Clarke, Laidlaw.

THE GOALS: Husband, 12 minutes, John Aston's long cross headed back into the middle by Ron Fletcher, Husband close-range header; Andy King, 60 minutes, shot after storming overlap and cross by John Ryan; Husband header, 83 minutes, from cross by Aston.

REFEREE: Bill Gow, Swansea: The best we have had for weeks.

ATTENDANCE: 8,856—a lot of people missed a good afternoon out.

ENTERTAINMENT: Plenty to enjoy.

Division II Review

'Promotion is within reach'

WITH OTHER contenders getting the jitters—Sunderland were the only promotion candidates to take both points—Town boss Harry Haslam still believes that his side can win its way back to the First Division.

"They're all helping us," he grinned as he looked at Saturday's results. The net effect was that the Town moved up one place in the league table.

They would be fourth if they had a better goal average.

Bristol City stay top after a 2-2 draw at Charlton, where the home side and their supporters were convinced that a late equaliser by Sweeney should have been disallowed for hands.

Bolton dropped a home point when Plymouth surprisingly held them to a 0-0 draw at Burnden Park.

Sunderland moved to within a point of Bolton by collecting their first away win for four months, thanks to two goals by Bobby Kerr at Orient, who entertain the Town on Saturday.

Notts County's hopes took a knock when they lost 2-1 away to relegation candidates Oxford, and West Brom had to fight back from two goals down to earn a home point against lowly Blackburn.

TOP OF THE TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	P
Bristol City	33	16	11	6	51	28	43
Bolton	32	16	10	6	49	29	42
Sunderland	31	18	5	8	49	29	41
Notts County	33	16	7	10	47	33	39
West Brom	32	14	11	7	37	29	39
LUTON	34	16	7	11	48	39	39
Southampton	33	16	6	11	55	39	38

(LAST NIGHT'S GAMES NOT INCLUDED)

Notts County's goal, incidentally, was scored by John Sims, who was once on loan with the Town from Derby County.

Other ex-Town players on target on Saturday were Bruce Rioch for Derby, Malcolm Macdonald for Newcastle, Adrian Alston for Cardiff and Rod Fern for Chesterfield.

The biggest Second Division gate of the day was 29,011 to see a 1-1 draw at Stamford Bridge between Chelsea and Southampton.



FRUSTRATION: Carlisle full-back John Gorman shakes his fist at Bobby Owen, back to the camera, who had been beaten by Ron Fletcher to pave the way for the Town's first goal. Jim Husband, who scored it, can just be seen on the extreme left, running back in jubilation while Carlisle's debut boy, Phil Bonnyman, stands in disgust, hands on hips. —PICTURE BY RON PURVES.