

Fluke goal helps bring first away win for two months

RELEGATION-THREATENED Oxford were made to look Third Division material as the Town collected their first away win for two months on Saturday at the Manor Ground.

But Oxford, with the worst defence I have seen since York were thrashed at Kenilworth Road, were almost given the chance to come back by some brave goalkeeping and some sub-standard finishing which marred the Town's bright first half.

Oxford could not have complained if the Town had been three or four ahead by the interval.

But Roy Burton made good saves from Jim Husband, Ron Futcher and Lil Fuccillo and was rescued by a controversial refereeing decision when Brian Chambers netted in the 17th minute.

The referee and linesman were both certain that Chambers had handled the ball as he controlled a pass and shot on the turn past Burton from near the edge of the penalty area.

Chambers said that the ball dropped to his feet from high on his chest, and that it was a perfectly good goal.

But there were no arguments six minutes later when one of many defensive errors was pounced on. Ron Futcher passed to West, and he slipped the ball diagonally into the path of Steve Buckley.

OXFORD DETAILS

OXFORD UTD 1, LUTON TOWN 3
Half-time 1-1

BRIAN SWAIN'S VERDICT: ★★★

TOWN: Barber; Ryan, Buckley, Price, Paul Futcher; Fuccillo, Chambers, West; Husband, Ron Futcher, Aston (Pollock, 69 minutes).

OXFORD UNITED: Burton; Taylor, Shuker, Lowe, Colin Clarke; Briggs, Houseman, Foley, Tait; Derek Clarke, Gibbins (Aylott, 75 minutes).

THE GOALS: Steve Buckley piledriver, 23 minutes; Derek Clarke equaliser, 43 minutes; Lil Fuccillo, 78 minutes, with a long centre that bounced into the net; Jim Husband, 89 minutes, from a rebound after Ron Futcher hit a post.

ATTENDANCE: 7,633, including a big contingent from Luton.

REFEREE: Brian James, Surrey; Had a good game but angered Town by disallowing a "goal" by Chambers.

BOOKING: Ron Futcher for childish throwing the ball away to demonstrate dissent.

ENTERTAINMENT: Fell away after an enjoyable first half in which the Town might have had four or five goals.

The full-back, charging through at full pelt, hammered the goal he has often threatened. He tends to be a bit one-footed, but his booming left foot was more than the acrobatic Burton could cope with, and the ball was in the top corner from Buckley's 20-yard drive while Burton was still making his dive.

The Town's defence had been able to amble through the game until then, but two minutes before the interval Oxford were given a survival lifeline they scarcely deserved. Briggs thumped a long ball towards goal and Derek Clarke outjumped Jim Ryan to head in an equaliser.

The Town lost their rhythm in the second half and the game lost a lot of its pattern.

John Aston, suffering from a foot injury received at Stamford Bridge the previous day, ended a quiet afternoon by making way for Matt Pollock, and the little midfielder man almost grabbed the goal that put Town ahead again.

Instead, Lil Fuccillo got the credit, although it was more a case of the otherwise dependable Burton collecting the blame.

Fuccillo was 30 yards from goal, near the Town's right wing, when he crossed a looping centre into the goalmouth.

Pollock and Ron Futcher both moved towards it, and Pollock said later that the ball brushed his hair without making firm contact. Burton and his defenders did not know whether to go for the ball or players, and went for nothing at all, with the result that the ball bounced once and gently wandered into the corner of the net.

And if that didn't finish Oxford, Keith Barber did, with the sort of save from Clarke which has made the goalkeeper my man of the season.

To rub it in, dispirited Oxford were caught cold in the last minute when Ron Futcher intercepted a shot from Fuccillo, then hit a post, and Husband nipped in to crack home the rebound.