

INEPTITUDE IN MIDFIELD TO BLAME FOR DEFEAT

76/77

MANAGER Harry Haslam summed up the basic cause of the Town's flop at Hull on Tuesday night: "We were inept in midfield," he said.

That was putting it mildly. The Town were not half the side they had been against Sheffield United, although they did contribute to a game which left the home fans highly delighted with the quality of the football they had seen.

Unfortunately, most of the quality had come from a Hull side which looked no more than workmanlike at times, but was always enthusiastic and looked as though it wanted to win.

The Town had no midfield control, and Hull thoroughly deserved their victory, though they needed some dubious refereeing to put them on the road to a win.

The Town's back four performed creditably enough, but the midfield failed to provide much of a service to the attackers, with the result that Town attempts at goal were few and far between.

In attack, Jim Husband and Dixie Deans failed to combine, and by wandering on their own only added to their problems.

John Aston always looked the most dangerous man, but Hull had ob-

Hull City details

HULL CITY 3, LUTON TOWN 1

Half-time: 1-1

GOALS: Sunley for Hull after a corner in 40 seconds; Hill for the Town after four minutes; Daniel penalty after a foul by Faulkner 52 minutes; and Hemmerman header 58 minutes.

TOWN: Barber; Price, Buckley, Faulkner, Futch; Chambers, Fuccillo, Hill (Smith 64 minutes), Husband, Deans, Aston.

HULL CITY: Wealands; Daniel, DeVries, Haigh, Croft; Hawley, Gibson, Lyall; Hemmerman, Sunley, Stewart. Substitute: McIntosh, not needed.

ATTENDANCE: 5,499.

REFEREE: Michael Lowe, Sheffield — Highly unpopular with the Town.

BOOKING: John Faulkner, Town's first of the season, for a late tackle.

ENTERTAINMENT: Good value for money for the home supporters, but a disappointment for Town fans.

viously been warned of his capabilities. They tried to close him down all the time, and succeeded sometimes.

And when they failed to cut out the menace of Aston the tall centre-backs were too powerful for Deans.

To add to the Town's problems referee Michael Lowe produced some strange decisions and even Raich Carter thought that

Hull had been lucky in the way things went for them.

But the game was a cracker so far as action was concerned. There was an incredible start when Hull took the lead with a goal timed officially in 40 seconds.

Hull's first attack ended with a corner on the Town's right flank. Stewart took it, and sent the ball high to the far side of the penalty area.

Ricky Hill failed in an attempt to head clear, and Sunley was able to control the ball, step forward a couple of paces, and then drive it into the corner of the net.

Within three minutes, Steve Buckley had almost equalised after an Aston corner — the full-back's pile-driver brought a brilliant diving save from Wealands.

The match was still only four minutes old when Hill made up for his mistake. Husband robbed Croft, made ground to the edge of the penalty area and calmly waited for Hill to arrive.

From Husband's square pass, Hill dragged the ball past one defender, dummed another, and then carefully placed a swerving shot wide of Wealands. It was as good a goal as we are likely to see for a long time.

The game swung back and forth, and Faulkner was unlucky to be booked for a late tackle on Lyall.

Fuccillo and Chambers broke into the action every now and again and Fuccillo almost scored when the three-man move ended with Hill crossing the ball over to the goalmouth. Wealands saved bravely as Fuccillo closed in.

The Hull goalkeeper was lucky when Husband put a header narrowly wide after an overlapping run and centre by Buckley, and Husband was also off target with a 25-yard drive.

The Town's defence was pulled apart after a mistake by Chambers which ended with Hawley going through on his own. He should have scored, but Barber

spread himself low and the ball was scrambled away.

The Town lacked the assurance and confidence they had shown on Saturday, but a referee's decision knocked them for six after 52 minutes.

DeVries banged a high through-ball forward and Faulkner and Sunley went up for it on the angle of the penalty area. There was no threat to the Town goal until Sunley fell over and referee Lowe gave a penalty.

Hull had to wait while a succession of their players shook hands with Sunley, presumably to congratulate him on a dive.

Manager Haslam said later: "I thought it was a harsh decision, but I'm not complaining. You have to take the rough with the smooth."

Daniel thumped the spot kick low past Barber's right, and six minutes later Hull knocked the last resistance out of the Town with another goal.

This time there were no Town complaints, because it was taken beautifully by Hemmerman who went up with Faulkner and beat him to get in a glancing header into the corner of the net from a free kick by Daniel.

The Town went to pieces after that, there was no aggression in midfield, and no confidence in their own ability.

Hill, beginning to look tired was pulled off after 64 minutes and replaced by 17-year-old Jim Smith. He, at least, looked as though he wanted to get into the game, where too many of his colleagues didn't.



● RICKY HILL, the Luton midfield man, had an eventful start to the game at Boothferry Park. He missed a clearance that gave Hull City the lead in 40 seconds, but atoned for his error within four minutes by scoring a superb goal to put the Town on terms.