

NO GOALS, BUT BOTH TEAMS ENTERTAINED

It should have been called off — Brown ^{76/77}

TWO MAJOR mysteries emerged from the Town's ice-rink meeting with Blackpool at Kenilworth Road — how the players managed to produce as much excitement as they did, and how both defences managed to keep clean sheets.

If there had been three goals at each end, most of the frozen supporters would have gone home well satisfied. And a 3-3 scoreline might have been a better reflection on how the game went. It was a match neither side deserved to lose.

Blackpool manager Allan Brown, a former Town player and manager, knew what to expect as soon as he saw the pitch. Half the width, shaded from the sun by the main stand, was bone hard and frosty. The other half had a little give in it.

Said Brown: "I don't think the game should have been played. The choice of studs was impossible because conditions were not uniform over the whole pitch."

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"But both sides did well, and I am not grumbling about taking a point."

Town manager Harry Haslam was also happy with the outcome. He thought a draw was a fair result, and 17-year-old Tony Knight came through well enough as Keith Barber's replacement in goal.

Blackpool's league record suggests that they might well win promotion, but as Haslam said: "We still haven't met any team this season that we need to be frightened of."

"The real heroes today are the crowd who came out into the cold to watch us."

Both sides produced spells of action which warmed up the atmosphere, and on balance I thought Blackpool looked slightly the more balanced outfit.

There was nothing to choose between the two goalkeepers, with both making good saves and both enjoying a spot of luck when they might have been beaten. Spence hit the bar for Blackpool, but Dixie Deans lobbed over when he was clean through, and in one hectic scramble Deans, John Aston and

Match Details

LUTON TOWN 0, BLACKPOOL 0

TOWN: Knight; Price, Buckley, Faulkner, Paul Fitcher; Chambers, Fuccillo, West; Deans, Ron Fitcher, Aston. Sub: Husband, not used.

BLACKPOOL: Wood; Gardner, Harrison, Hart, Suddaby; Ronson, Weston, Bentley; Spence, Walsh, Hatton. Sub: McEwen, not used.

REFEREE: L. F. Burden, Broadstone, Dorset: Would have improved the flow of the game, and the entertainment, if he had made sensible allowance for the frosty conditions.

ATTENDANCE: 9,163—and they were all heroes for braving such a cold day. The citation came from Harry Haslam.

ENTERTAINMENT: Far better than it might have been on a pitch covered in frost down one flank, and slightly softer down the other. Allan Brown thought the game should have been postponed.

BOOKING: Bill Bentley for unloading Steve Buckley after being given a warning earlier about dangerous tackling.



● A LONG KNIGHT: Tony Knight, 17, thrust into league action again because of Keith Barber's injury, stretches to make one of the catches that helped keep Saturday's score-sheet blank. Paul Fitcher is the player in plimsolls, with Paul Price in the background.

Alan West all had shots charged down on the goal-line.

Paul Fitcher, in rubber-soled shoes, was the most elegant player on view, and twin brother Ron worked well in the attack, and was unlucky not to score with a brilliant first-time angled shot.

So with little to choose between the two defences and the two attacks, the crucial factor was in mid-field.

Here Blackpool had the edge, with little Billy Ronson looking a bright spark compared with the more pedestrian performances of the Town's middle three.

One answer to that, of course, is that this was no day for midfield niceties. With defenders unable to turn, the best tactic was the quick forward pass.

Both sides used it intelligently, and if some players were occasionally taking it easy and keeping out of trouble, who could blame them on a pitch like that?