

PATHETIC SHOW ENDS GOLDEN CUP CHANCE

Injury-time winner puts Chester into the last sixteen

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RARELY will the Town have a better chance of reaching the last 16 of the FA Cup than they had at Chester. Facing a third division team which had won only six of its ten home games in the League, the Town tried to stroll through the first half, then blew it completely in the second.

And they didn't even have the excuse of being up against a classy side. Chester were a little better than mediocre. The Town were worse.

The winner came at an ironic time. Earlier in the week manager Harry Haslam had been singing the praises of his team for its 90-minute staying power when two late goals beat Hull City.

Chester underlined the message by booting the Town out of the cup when Saturday's game was 20 seconds into injury time.

By that stage the Town seemed to have decided that they couldn't

By BRIAN SWAIN

beat Chester, and that a draw and a replay would be good enough. The defence, which had been cracked a couple of times, lost concentration and Chester made them pay as Edwards swept the ball into the net.

The first realisation that the Town might be in trouble had dawned at half-time as the big following from Luton realised that their team had been easily the better of two poor sides, but had failed to turn its advantage into goals.

Chester were all hustle and bustle, but after their early enthusiasm had been faded off, the Town settled down to show that they were the better footballing side.

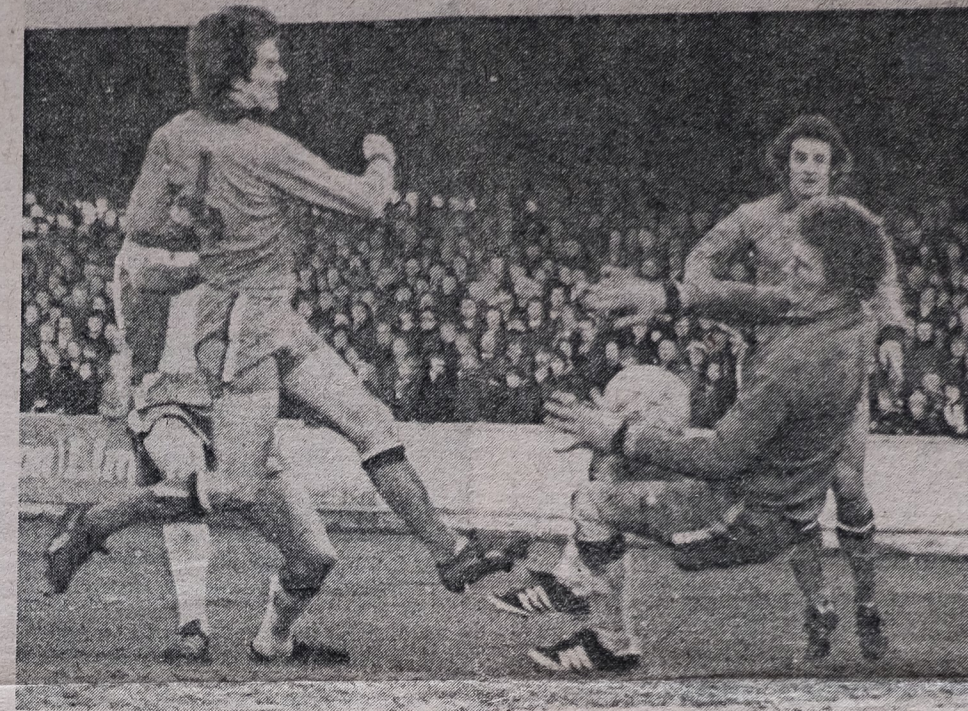
The game should have been won in a five-minute spell mid-way through the half.

In the 19th minute Lil Fuccillo broke through on the left. Jim Husband's attempt to connect with the cross failed, but left John Aston in the clear.

HIT POST

With only Millington in front of him, Aston shot straight at the keeper's legs. The ball rebounded to Fuccillo, and he shot against a post and the ball bounced back into Millington's arms.

Four minutes later Aston, Ron Fuchter and Husband combined neatly to send Fuccillo through at an angle, but his fierce rising shot was tipped over the bar by Millington, and Aston was narrowly wide



● ONE THAT GOT AWAY: Brian Chambers joins in one of the Town's rare second-half attacks, but Chester goalkeeper Millington, a former Welsh International, comes out fast to smother the shot.

of the target shortly after.

Chester had rarely threatened to be any sharper, although Ian Edwards was giving John Faulkner too much trouble for comfort, and Steve Buckley and Paul Price were both occasionally caught on the break.

But after the interval, the whole Town team seemed to contract a strange loss of self-confidence. Every now and again they would put together a burst of short-passing football and look good.

But all too often they played a negative and defensive game, kicking anywhere and becoming

more ragged as the match progressed.

Chester were allowed to take command. They "scored" in the 50th minute after a terrible header by Faulkner, but referee Willis ruled that Milija Aleksic had been fouled as Edwards netted in a scramble on the line.

Billy Dearden whipped a couple of shots just wide, and when the Town did move forward again Brian Chambers thumped a shot straight at the keeper's body after a neat head-down by Ron Fuchter.

We had settled for a draw as the watch ticked past 90 minutes, but 20 seconds later Chester, the

no-hope underdogs, caught the Town with a sucker punch.

They had tried an overlapping raid down the wing, and been penalised for a foul. He failed to get back into defence quickly enough, and Dearden got the ball on the flank where Buckley should have been goal-side of him.

Paul Fuchter spotted the danger, and went across to cover, and for the first and last time in the match was beaten. Dearden slipped past almost to the by-line and crossed low.

Faulkner and Price were taken out as Howat sold a dummy and the ball ran

on to Edwards, unmarked ten yards from goal, and he had plenty of time to direct his shot wide of the diving Aleksic.

FAILED

The Town had failed by a long way to play the sort of football they showed in the previous three games, and Chester got through on spirit and enthusiasm.

It is hard to pin down where the major cause lay. In attack, Ron Fuchter was the pick of the bunch, with some neat touches in approach, but not enough support from Husband and Aston.

PATHETIC

The midfield was pathetic. Alan West looked as though he was not recovered from flu, and never got into the game. Chambers and Fuccillo both faded in the second half.

Faulkner had a worrying afternoon and was not as dominating as he can be, and Price and Buckley were both caught out too often at the back.

MARRED

For Paul Fuchter the day was marred by the result, and by some "professional" tackles which failed to endear him to the Chester fans who expected more. He at least could leave the field without feeling guilty about work-rate or application. So could Aleksic, who did everything he had to.

Unfortunately not enough of their team-mates could say the same. The only consolation is that they won't often play that badly. With a bit of luck Burnley will cop it on Saturday from a team that wants to prove that the Chester visit was just one

Match Details

CHESTER 1, LUTON TOWN 0

Half-time: 0-0

TOWN: Aleksic; Price, Buckley, Faulkner, Paul Fuchter; Chambers, Fuccillo, West; Husband, Ron Fuchter, Aston. Sub: Ryan, not used.

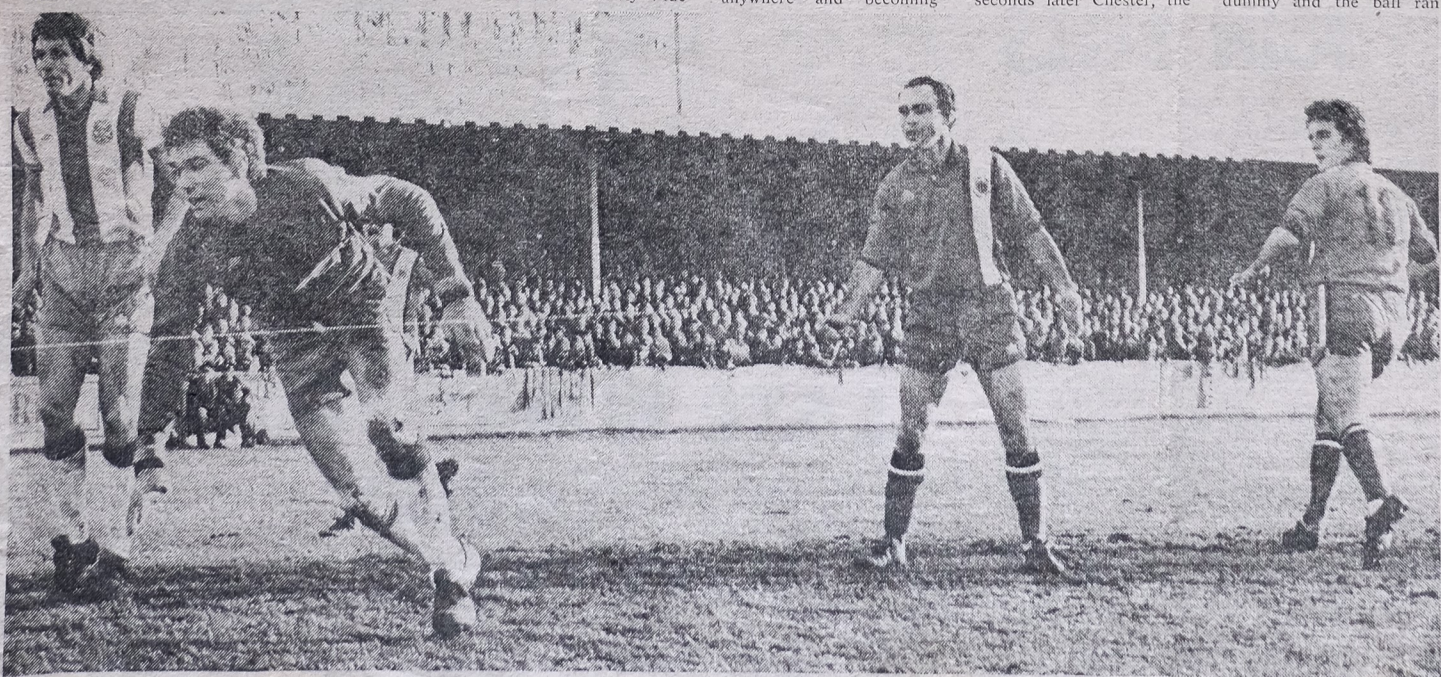
CHESTER: Millington; Edwards, Walker, Storton, Delgado; Oakes, Dearden, Richardson; Edwards, Howat, Crossley. Sub: Owen, not used.

THE GOAL: Edwards, 20 seconds into injury time, when the Town thought they were already safe for a replay at Kenilworth Road.

REFEREE: Peter Willis, Meadowfield, Co Durham: had a better game than half the Town team did.

ATTENDANCE: 10,608: more than double Chester's previous best this season, but lowest of the day in the FA Cup.

ENTERTAINMENT: Pathetic, with the Town contributing a little in the first half and hardly anything in the second.



● LUCKY ESCAPE: Lil Fuccillo, on the right, beats the goalkeeper after John Aston had shot weakly at the 'keeper's legs. But as Millington and his defence watched anxiously, Fuccillo's shot hit the post.