

RUBBISH WIPES OUT A BRIGHT START

FOR THE first 20 minutes at Blackpool the Town's soccer bore the quality hallmark of genuine First Division class. They moved smoothly into the lead, and looked every inch a promotion outfit.

But then they slipped away, and by half-time, with the scores level, they looked little better than run-of-the-mill Second Division.

And in the second half their play degenerated so much that at times it had a Third Division look about it, and Blackpool deserved their victory.

The result left us to ponder on what might have been. The Town's blistering opening could have brought at least three goals instead of one.

If the midfield had shown its normal power and control . . . If Phil Boersma had got in a vital shot instead of trying to beat an extra man . . .

If Ron Futcher had not blazed over an empty net . . . If Paul Price had not been suffering the after-effects of a stomach infection . . . If pigs could fly . . .

Blackpool were able to quote some similar thoughts, though not as many, and the final verdict was delivered in his usual blunt style by Town manager Harry Haslam: "We played some rubbish in the second half."

PRIORITY

The priority now is to pick up quickly and not make the same mistakes at Burnden Park on Saturday, because 45 minutes of rubbish there is likely to be punished harder than it was at Blackpool.

The second-half flop was in marked contrast to the Town's opening. In the very first minute Paul Futcher, Price and Ron Futcher carved open the Blackpool defence, and Ron very nearly scored with a low drive. Bob Ward did

By **BRIAN SWAIN**

well to push it round the post.

Blackpool showed their respect for the Town's reputation by starting the game with a 4-4-2 formation, concentrating their efforts on swamping the midfield.

The policy seemed to be in ruins after only seven minutes when Alan West fed Boersma on the left flank. He beat his man and centred to the far post, and Jim Husband was unmarked and given more than enough time to place his header wide of Ward to put the Town ahead.

CHANCE

Within a minute, Boersma might have made it 2-0. He hared through in the inside-left position, and cut inside his man. That left him a shooting chance on the edge of the box, but he tried to go closer, and his attempt to get round Stan McEwan failed.

From the stands, it looked as though the Town were easing off in the belief that they held too much skill for Blackpool.

Perhaps they did, but Blackpool showed the fighting spirit. The Town's right flank was sliced open when Mickey Walsh put Bob Hatton through, and he shot wide when he might have scored.

Big Paul Hart started to cause trouble by moving up from midfield to back up attacks and steadily the balance of power in the middle swung Blackpool's way.

Milija Aleksic was given some rough treatment and Hart was penalised for fouling him seconds before the ball ran loose to Walsh, who shot into the net.

EQUALISER

But there was no dispute about Blackpool's equaliser, in the 26th minute. Ricky Hill, who never got into the game, lost possession in midfield, and a three-man move ended with Ronson slamming a spectacular equaliser from the edge of the box in the inside-right position.

Blackpool were in control for almost the rest of the game, although later a couple of half-chances arrived and went begging

● **A HEAD START:** Jim Husband, the Town's leading scorer, put his side ahead in the seventh minute at Blackpool with his seventh goal of the season. Goalkeeper Bob Ward, in the centre of the picture, can only turn and watch as Husband jumps to it. The player on the right is Phil Boersma, whose accurate centre laid on the goal.

at the feet of Boersma and Husband.

Yet the Town should have gone 2-1 ahead two minutes before the interval. Husband hustled Milligan into a dreadful back-pass, and the ball bounced off the grounded Ward's chest to Ron Futcher. From three yards out, and at an angle, Futcher snatched at the chance and shot wildly high over the bar.

The second half was notable mainly for some sterling Town defensive work as Blackpool pressed forward.

Hill managed to break forward once and send Husband away, and his low cross left the goalkeeper stranded, but flashed a foot too far forward of Lil Fuccillo.

John Faulkner and Paul Futcher played magnificently in defence, with Steve Buckley not far short of their high standard.

But the tide had turned Blackpool's way, and

another Town midfield error led to the winner in the 73rd minute. West laid off a poor pass in midfield and Hart began a move which Ronson continued and let in Alan Ainscow to score another very good goal from the inside left position on the edge of the penalty area.

MISTAKES

From then on the more the Town tried to push forward the more mistakes they made, and a better team than Blackpool would have exacted further punishment.

Ron Futcher completed his miserable afternoon by collecting a booking. He expressed dissent by kicking the ball away when a free kick was given — and the kick had been given in the Town's favour.

That's three bookings for Futcher, which is one more than his total of league goals.



Match Details

BLACKPOOL 2, LUTON TOWN 1

Half-time 1-1

TOWN: Aleksic; Price, Buckley, Faulkner, Paul Futcher; Hill, West, Fuccillo; Husband, Ron Futcher, Boersma. Sub: Heale, not used.

BLACKPOOL: Ward; Gardner, Milligan (Finnigan, 57 minutes), McEwan, Suddaby; Hart, Ronson, Ainscow, Weston; Walsh, Hatton.

THE GOALS: Jim Husband, header, after seven minutes, from far post cross by Phil Boersma; Billy Ronson for Blackpool, 26 minutes, punishing Town slackness in midfield; Alan Ainscow for Blackpool, 73 minutes, again after midfield mistake.

ATTENDANCE: 12,167, including a big following from Luton who deserved better than the Town's slipshod performance in the second half.

REFEREE: Trelford Mills, Barnsley: Sharp and quick, and there would be few complaints if they were all like this one.

BOOKING: Ron Futcher, for the third time this season, for being daft enough to show dissent.

ENTERTAINMENT: Blackpool's supporters and the neutrals enjoyed it, but Town followers suffered after a bright opening spell.