

LUCKY WREXHAM LET OFF LIGHTLY



● DEFENDERS OF THE ATTACK: With the Town so much on top, Paul Price, above, goes down the flank in support of his forwards.

PLAYER-MANAGER of Wrexham, the wily Arfon Griffiths helped himself to some of the credit for the top-quality entertainment put on at Kenilworth Road on Saturday.

Wrexham, he said, had played a major part in making it such a good game to watch, full of open and enterprising soccer.

"We tried to attack and entertain," he said, "But Luton played well and even if we did come close to snatching something in the second half I can't complain about the result."

His comments left me a little perplexed, because as far as I was concerned the Town's performance put the spark of excellence into the game, and if a higher proportion of chances had been tucked away Wrexham would have become further fodder for the Kenilworth Road goal machine.

Nearly another hatful of goals

Report by
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Sports Editor

Stand-in goalkeeper Eddie Niedzwiecki had to make some better than average saves to keep the Town out, and when he was beaten shots and headers whistled marginally the wrong side of the woodwork.

At the other end the Town goal was far less endangered although Griffiths was right in claiming that his side might have scored more than the one that did go in.

He himself was guilty of an incredible miss when his side were battling against the Town's two-goal lead. The defence all missed a corner driven hard and low across the goal, and Griffiths shot wide from about five yards.

Wrexham played a 4-4-2 formation for the first 70 minutes, trying hard to hold the Town in midfield. But the tactics failed as the Town scored twice in the first two concerted attacks.

Bob Hatton laid on the first, pulling the Wrexham defence out of position with a run down the left. His cross was perfectly weighted, and as Ricky Hill drew one defender on a clever dummy run, Brian Stein came in from behind him, unmarked, and headed his eighth goal of the season with expert precision.

Four minutes later the Wrexham covering was split again when David Moss went down the right wing, fed by a pass from Alan West.

His long cross looked too powerful for everyone, but Hill retrieved the ball on the other wing and pulled back a pass to the edge of the penalty area. Lil Fuccillo looking a better player than he has done for some weeks, met it first time to shoot through the crowded area low into the far corner.

Hatton hit the bar with a header from Hill's cross, and Wrexham came under steady pressure. Hill bam-

**LATEST
ON THE
INJURY
TO MARK
AIZLEWOOD
—P 67**

boozed Whittle and shot just over the bar, and the full-back later almost put into his own goal as he cleared a cross by Moss.

Wrexham, with only two men up front, rarely threatened to do much damage to the Town's defence until midfield man Mike Thomas started buzzing.

For a spell of perhaps ten minutes each side of the interval, his hard work levelled up the balance of play, and two minutes after the miss of the match by Griffiths, Thomas managed to force his way past Paul Price and score with a swerving shot across Milija Aleksic's body.

But as time ticked away the Town's midfield three resumed control over Wrexham's four, and with the added use of long passes from the back the Town once more took command.

Niedzwiecki had to make a good save to hold a header from Hill.

In my book, it looked a much more comprehensive victory than Griffiths thought it was, with the only dark cloud on a bright horizon a late injury to Mark Aizlewood.

Cultured and precise in everything he did, he spent a lot of time supporting attacks down the flanks, and was competing in midfield when he went down heavily in a tackle with John Lyons.

He twisted his hip and was carried off, cruel luck for a youngster who had attracted the scrutiny of Welsh manager Mike Smith less than a week previously.

Match Details

LUTON TOWN 2, WREXHAM 1

Half-time: 2-1

78/79

TOWN: Aleksic; Price, Aizlewood (Jones, 84 mins), Turner, Donaghy; Hill, West, Fuccillo; Stein, Hatton, Moss.

WREXHAM: Niedzwiecki; Hill, Whittle, Davies, Roberts; Thomas, Sutton, Griffiths (Lyons, 70 mins), Cartwright, Shinton, McNeil.

THE GOALS: Brian Stein, header from left-wing cross by Bob Hatton, 9 minutes; Lil Fuccillo, 20-yard low drive from Ricky Hill's pull-back, 13 minutes; Mike Thomas for Wrexham, swerving angled drive, 43 minutes.

OTHER GOAL ATTEMPTS: Town four off target, 11 saved, one hit the bar; Wrexham three off target, four saved.

ATTENDANCE: 8,683. What would it be after a home defeat?

REFEREE: Brian Daniels, Brentwood: left both managers less than satisfied.

ENTERTAINMENT: A cracking game, with the Town's only failure the inability to put away more of their chances, particularly in the second half.