

GOALS ARE NEEDED TO COMPLETE THE RECIPE



● With the Town well on top at Ewood Park, centre-back Chris Turner was able to move upfield in his search for his first goal as a Luton player. The picture shows Turner contesting a centre with Glen Keeley, his opposite number. The other Blackburn player, going in back-side first, is striker John Radford.

BY STRETCHING their unbeaten run to six matches, and collecting another away point, the Town are beginning to put together a pattern which looks, on paper, the right formula for promotion.

Win at home and draw away has long been recognised as the perfect recipe for success.

At Ewood Park, the Town more than earned their point, deserving it for a no-nonsense display of tight defence and smooth attacking build-up which made Blackburn look second best throughout.

But the vital ingredient is still missing — the final touch. Two goals in five away matches so far points to the one weakness which is liable to wreck all the careful planning and hard work. Bottom club Millwall are the only side in the Second Division with an away scoring record worse than the Town's.

Blackburn could and should have been beaten by at least two goals. I recall in particular two chances missed by Brian Stein and Bob Hatton, and one brilliantly saved, from David Moss.

In addition, with the Town more incisive in attack, several times hard low crosses shot invitingly across the face of the Blackburn goal, with the scoring invitations neglected.

Town boss David Pleat, however, had every right to reply that away points have to be fought for, and there can be no complaints about how his side settled down, rolled up its sleeves

and did a good professional job in every aspect bar scoring.

"We must have saved up a few goals for the next game," he said, with his thoughts already turning to Saturday's visit by Notts County.

Blackburn, managerless and struggling in the relegation zone, were a bunch of triers, full of determination to get out of a bad patch, but short on the arts of the game.

For them, the draw was counted a success, with one of their directors admitting to me that they had faced the Town's visit with some fear and trepidation.

They had goalkeeper John Butcher to thank for a couple of good saves, the best a remarkable reflex effort to push away a cracking volley by Moss in the second half.

The best feature of a poor first half was the solid defensive power of a reshuffled Town back four, with Paul Price reverting to sweeper and Mal Donaghy moving across to right back.

Chris Turner made John Radford look like a tired has-been, and Noel Brotherston, who has set all sorts of problems in past encounters, could do nothing against Mark Aizlewood.

Hard work at the back earns one point but attack misses chances of two

Report by
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Sports Editor

The left back was again calm and precise despite the lack of a full week's training following injury.

Blackburn struggled to break through, with each midfield sterilising the other, and their best effort in a dull first half was a surge through by full-back John Bailey. His 30-yard drive brought a flying save from Milija Aleksic, and must have made David Lawson wince as he sat watching from the stand.

Some of the tackling got out of hand and after Aizlewood had been booked for a foul on the niggly Metcalfe, Ricky Hill was also cautioned for unloading Glen Keeley, the man who nearly broke Lil Fuccillo's neck last season.

Metcalfe had been booked for a foul on Price, but the injury to Keeley turned out to be crucial.

He did not re-appear for the second half, and the re-shaped Blackburn defence was weakened.

The Town began to put together some consistent attacking pressure, with Hill, Alan West and Fuccillo winning control in the middle.

In a raking right-wing move Fuccillo burst through strongly and sent Hill away down the flank. His hard low cross pierced

the Blackburn defence and Stein flung himself at the ball at the far post, but poked it narrowly wide.

Donaghy forced his way through the middle to give Hatton a chance, but Butcher reacted quickly to push the drive round a post.

Blackburn's cover was crumbling and Moss raced through it after a through-ball from West. Butcher, abandoned by his colleagues, chose the right direction to push Moss's volley over the bar when a goal looked certain.

He was let off the hook when Stein headed wide from Aizlewood and when Turner got up to get within inches of connecting with Fuccillo's free-kick as another low cross went in.

Blackburn's only serious reply, however, might have been disastrous, when Radford backed into Turner to win a free-kick on the edge of the box.

The Town's wall failed to hold, and Alan Birchenall's low drive got through it, but Aleksic dropped at high speed to make the save of the match.

He deserved to have a good game, having battled against a knee injury the day before. Lawson was at Ewood Park as a precaution, and while both players are in contention for the goalkeeper's jersey it is a pleasure to report that Lawson was the man who helped Aleksic in his Friday work-out to shake off his injury.

Match Details

BLACKBURN ROVERS 0, LUTON TOWN 0

TOWN: Aleksic; Price, Aizlewood, Turner, Donaghy; Hill, Fuccillo, West; Stein, Hatton, Moss. Sub: Jones, not used.

BLACKBURN ROVERS: Butcher; Hird, Bailey, Keeley (Waddington, 45 minutes), Fazackerley; Metcalfe, Fowler, Birchenall; Brotherston, Craig, Radford.

GOAL ATTEMPTS: Town ten off target and six saved; Blackburn four off target and six saved.

ATTENDANCE: 7,450—a sorry sight in a ground that holds 47,000.

REFEREE: Ronald Bridges, Dee-side: Kept tight control although several decisions were suspect.

BOOKINGS: Stuart Metcalfe of Blackburn for a foul on Paul Price which seemed to be a reaction against two decisions which had gone against Blackburn; Mark Aizlewood for a wild kick on Metcalfe; Ricky Hill, for following through with a late tackle on Glen Keeley.

ENTERTAINMENT: Generally poor, with the Town doing more attacking, but both sides short of finishing power.