

FULHAM PINCH IT BY AN OWN-GOAL FLUKE

Match Details

FULHAM 1, LUTON TOWN 0
Half-time : 1 - 0

TOWN: Findlay; Price, Aizlewood, Turner (Jones, 45 mins), Donaghy; Carr, West, Hill; Stein, Hatton, Moss.
FULHAM: Peyton; Evans, Strong, Lock (Greenaway, 45 mins), Money; Evanson, Bullivant, Margerrison; Davies, Guthrie, Marinello.

THE GOAL: Mark Aizlewood, own goal in the seventh minute, under pressure from Davies and trying to clear after Findlay was unable to hold on to a shot from Guthrie.

OTHER GOAL ATTEMPTS: Town seven saved, three off target and one hit the bar; Fulham five saved, four off target, one hit the post.

REFEREE: M. J. Taylor, Walmer, Kent—didn't impress either club, with both agreeing that he failed to give two penalties.

ATTENDANCE: 8,914. Day's second lowest in the Second Division.

ENTERTAINMENT: Very poor first half, slightly better in the second, but both sides found the swirling wind difficult to contend with.

DEFEAT AT Fulham on Saturday was much less than the Town deserved as they fought back after giving away a fluke own goal. Forced to reorganise after losing Chris Turner, they showed a lot of promise in the second half, but were let down by failings in front of goal.

Manager David Pleat was disappointed but not despondent. "We definitely deserved a point," he said. "We created five or six half-chances, and in normal circumstances we would have taken one or two of them.

"Fulham didn't cause too many problems for us and even they have to admit that their goal was very fortunate."

Few Town supporters who made the trip to wind-swept Craven Cottage on a bitterly cold afternoon could disagree with that.

But it should be added that Fulham were not one of the best teams we have seen this season and the Town paid for inability to

REPORT BY BRIAN SWAIN

produce the final touch in the penalty area.

They had a dreadful first half, although things might have been different if referee Taylor had been braver. In an early attack David Moss took on the defence in the penalty area and Les Strong brought him down.

No penalty said Mr Taylor, to the annoyance of the Town players and the relief of Fulham's. Later on Ricky Hill handled the ball in the Town's area, and once more Mr Taylor waved away appeals which looked justified to many of us, the Town manager included.

But if those decisions were laughable, it was sheer slapstick when the match-winning goal arrived, in the seventh minute.

Peter Marinello, the £100,000 Arsenal failure of eight years ago, looked a better bargain at £30,000 from Motherwell a couple of weeks ago.

His work on the wing caused most trouble to the Town defence, although the service he provided was minimised by some very good covering, particularly by Mal Donaghy, who was

the Town's man of the match.

Marinello became the match-winner with a strong run from midfield in which he got past Alan West and David Carr. His long cross was met by a first-time lob by Chris Guthrie, and Jake Findlay had to arch backwards to stop the ball creeping into goal just under the bar.

Fulham were appealing for a goal, saying that the ball was already over the line, and in his efforts to complete the save Findlay feli and the ball dropped out of his grasp.

Gordon Davies reacted quickly, and in the attempt to beat him to the ball Mark Aizlewood stuck out a leg to try to put it out for a corner, but watched in anguish as the ball trickled into the net, just inside the post.

The goal gave little new heart to Fulham, and the Town looked as poor as the home side. There was precious little creative work from either midfield, and the Town dropped to Fulham's level by concentrating everything on long passes out of defence.

Both sides kicked and hoped, losing possession in turn, and neither goalkeeper was given much to do. Fulham's best effort was wasted when Davies got clear down the right,

then hit the outside of the post when he should have pulled the ball back.

The Town failed to produce a decent attacking effort until the 22nd minute, when Bob Hatton, effective in approach but not in finishing, blazed a reasonable chance over the bar after Aizlewood neatly dropped a long pass over Money's head to the Town striker.

The Town also produced the only piece of skilled build-up work of the first half, when Donaghy, Carr and Hill combined to mount an attack on the break.

Hill's final through-pass was a peach, played at exactly the right weight for Brian Stein to run onto, and goalkeeper Peyton had to leave his area and handle to make a spreading save at Stein's feet. Moss's free kick hit the wall and was cleared.

Strangely, more misfortune for the Town led to an upturn in their game. Turner, who had played Guthrie out of the game, injured shoulder ligaments in a heavy fall, and after struggling for the last 12 minutes of the first half he went off.

Graham Jones was put on at right back, with Price joining Donaghy in the centre of the defence, and it looked a sound rear-

guard unit.

Certainly Fulham could make even less of it than they had done before the break, and when attacks were tried down the flanks Findlay was dominant in his penalty area. He was caught out of position only once, and Price calmly headed clear when Greenaway's shot might have scored.

The Town gradually took over the running of the game, with Hill at last stamping some of his personality on the game.

Attacks began to carry a lot more menace, and Fulham were forced to fall back and fight hard to preserve their lead.

Peyton, who had finger-tipped a shot by Hatton over the bar, was beaten completely when Hill rattled in a 25-yard swerving shot.

It hit the bar, and as West headed the ball back into the danger area Stein was unable to get in hard enough, and his weak shot was grabbed by the grounded keeper.

It turned out to be the last as well as the best chance of the game. Fulham never looked like adding to their lead, and in the end were happy to pull their troops back into deep defence and hold the Town at bay outside the penalty area.

Reorganised Town deserved a point